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Original Citation

Yaneva, Miroslava, Ioannou, Maria, Hammond, Laura and Synnott, John (2018) Differentiating Contract Killers: A Narrative-Based Approach. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*. ISSN 1468-2311

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Differentiating contract killers: A narrative based approach

Abstract

Previous attempts to determine contract killers' behaviour have not benefitted from any formal psychological framework of behavioural distinction. The Narrative Action System model (NAS model; Canter & Youngs, 2009) offers an empirical basis for differentiating contract killings and examining the psychological underpinnings of different contract killer styles. The model identifies four major narrative offender types – Professional, Revenger, Hero, and Victim. The present study aims to examine whether these themes can be applied to contract killing. Content analysis of 75 contract killer cases identified 56 crime scene actions. Data were subjected to a non-metric multidimensional scaling procedure, namely Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I). Findings revealed four distinct types of contract killers that could be related to the four modes of offending proposed by the NAS model. Differences in the thematic structure of contract killing offences are discussed, and implications are offered for clinical and investigative purposes.

Key words: Contract killers; multidimensional structure; crime scene behaviors; criminal differentiation; Investigative Psychology

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, scholars have been arguing that contract murder is more frequent than any other type of crime and appears to be increasing (Schlesinger, 2001a). An increase has been reported in the United States (Schlesinger, 2001a, 2001b) and the United Kingdom (Jones, 1995), both beginning around the 1960s, as well as in Russia - around the 1990s (Lally, 1997). However, psychological research around this type of homicide is lacking.

Although studies investigating contract murder have been so far useful in establishing which individual offending behaviors and characteristics tend to co-occur, a broader understanding of the different offending styles may benefit from the application of a formal theoretical framework of the psychological bases of behavioral variation. This would, in turn, inform consideration of the processes that generate contract murder scenarios, or alternatively the diverse nature of this offence, thereby throwing light on this poorly understood type of homicide (e.g. Dietz, 1983; Blackshaw, 1996; Black, 2000; Black & Cravens, 2001; Schlesinger, 2001b; Mouzos & Venditto, 2003). More broadly, a formal understanding of what it is that distinguishes contract offending patterns from one another may provide a framework for the development of diverse causal explanations of these types of criminals.

Previous studies draw on a wide range of models of the differentiation of contract killer types; however they do not make any reference to the psychological nature of these styles. The variety of these ideas about the nature of contract killers is well illustrated in several studies of offender typologies. Revitch and Schlesinger (1981) drew on ideas about method of killing (the level of planning), the crime scene (identifying any sign of physical evidence), the typical target (relationship to the victim), the contractor's motive, and the offender's personality (mental condition) to characterize three major types of contract killers: amateur, semi-professional, and professional. Other researchers (e.g. Mouzos & Venditto,

2003), using official data, have proposed a two-fold typology of contract killers. Mouzos and Venditto (2003) examined contract murder types based on the alleged motive of the instigator (solicitor or contractor), which led to the formation of two dramatically different types: attempted and completed contract murder. These two types were mainly distinguished on the basis of number of offenders involved, intimate partners involved, gender of victims and offenders, and whether or not the contract was completed or its completion was prevented through police intervention. Crumplin (2009) used a behavior-based approach by examining the patterns of co-occurrence of behaviors across different crimes using multidimensional scaling. This suggested the existence of three offending styles in contract murder - aggressive behaviors, inept behaviors, and criminally sophisticated behaviors.

Blackshaw (1996) looked into the motivational patterns of the instigator. All cases were grouped into the following five motive-based categories: sexually-intimate relationships; non-intimate family relationship; business; criminal network; and undetermined. However, in almost every case of contract killing the actual person who commits the murder may not be previously known to the victim (Black, 2000), resulting in an absent crime motive, thus making these criminals extremely difficult to detect. Understanding the underlying behavior of these offenders through the application of a formal psychological framework would allow us to make inferences of the type of individual involved in a particular crime and whether this individual could be linked to other offences.

Thus, there are more direct investigative implications of being able to characterize dominant styles of offending that differentiate one contract killer from another. This differentiating problem may be more viable if psychologically similar crimes are compared rather than comparing cases purely on legal grounds. Furthermore, any attempt to draw inferences about offender characteristics from crime scene information, referred to by Canter

and Youngs (2003) as the “profiling equations”, will benefit from recognizing which crimes are psychologically similar, and therefore may be hypothesized to hold similar offender characteristics.

Canter and Youngs’ Narrative Action System Model Applied to Contract Killers

One important framework of behavioral variation centers around the idea that making inferences about offenders from their actions requires further theoretical modeling. Canter and Youngs’ (2009) theory emerged directly out of the need to understand these actions and the aspects of an offender that are salient in his or her criminal activity (Canter & Youngs, 2012). For the full range of human action, four different fundamental narrative action modes were proposed: Professional’s adaptive adventure, Revenger’s conservative tragedy, Victim’s integrative irony, and Hero’s expressive quest. In psychological terms, criminal and deviant behaviors form a distinct subset of this general set of human actions, distinguished from other behavior by the absence of legal or moral code.

The Professional’s adaptive adventure refers to individuals who see life as an opportunity to master the environment and gain control over it. They readily acquire the self view of a professional who is on adventure. The confident feeling of being “professional” is clearly expressed by a carefully premeditated crime. The methodical nature of these offences further recognizes the insignificance of victims.

The Revenger’s conservative tragedy is the ultimate distressed and wronged hero seeking revenge in order to redress hurt caused to them. Individuals are characterized by a selfish and ambivalent nature typically associated with extremely violent outbursts, which reflect "the story of an angry revenge, where the offender is 'getting (his) own back'" (Canter & Youngs, 2009, p. 132).

The Victim's integrative irony describes a personality made of generalized impotence and meaninglessness, typically caused by the offender's confusion and powerlessness against the world. The Integrative mode is proven to have individually focused, expressive components. However, these components are not that apparent from the crime scene evidence.

The Hero's expressive quest rests upon the belief in a mission that needs to be accomplished. Individuals constantly seek opportunities to demonstrate manliness and preserve their honor. From a psychological perspective, heroes use their victims as vehicles for the offenders' own emotional state of anger and frustration. In these cases, the victim is usually subjected to extreme violence and abuse (Canter & Youngs, 2006), but the overall emotions that these offenders experience are positive.

The above narrative themes have been identified in a number of previous studies, for a range of different crime types (Canter, Kaouri & Ioannou, 2003; Ioannou, 2006; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Canter & Youngs, 2012; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Ioannou, Canter, Youngs & Synnott, 2015). The present study aims to examine whether the Narrative Actions System (Canter & Youngs, 2009) can also be applied to contract killing.

Method

Sample

Obtaining data concerning murder for hire often poses a challenge to research mainly because of two reasons (1) many successful contract killers remain undetected (MacDonald, 1986) and (2) many contract killings are never identified as such (MacDonald, 1986). Therefore, due to the limited access to such data, the present study has adopted the following data collection approach.

A variety of online sources, mainly newspaper articles, were examined in order to assemble a representative and diverse sample. The initial pool comprised of 114 cases, of which a total of 75 cases were selected. Case selection was based on the following criteria: (1) the details around the case had to be confirmed by at least two other online sources; (2) the offence must have occurred over the last 25 years; and (3) only those cases that clearly stated the involvement of a third party and a form of material gain were selected for inclusion in the sample. The 75 cases were then content analyzed and a total of 83 individual variables were derived. For the purpose of the investigation 65 behavioral variables (crime scene behaviors) were subjected to multidimensional scaling (Table 2) and the remaining 18 variables (e.g. victim and offender characteristics) were used for descriptive purposes. Table 1 provides a description of the sample.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

It is of note that there were a number of challenges to the present study, which mainly relate to the nature of the data employed and the cases included in the sample. For instance, very successful offenders remain well hidden from public attention and authorities, and as such may not be detected and thus will not have featured in the data. Indeed, ‘messier’ cases that typically receive high levels of media coverage are likely to have been more heavily weighted in the data. However, whilst court cases would provide more detailed information, analyzing crime scene behavior as described by the media is not uncommon to the field, including in studies of contract killers (e.g. Crumplin, 2009). The sample also featured offences which occurred in nine different countries. The majority were from the United States (48) and the United Kingdom (10) followed by India (8), Nepal (1), Canada (1), Mexico (1), South Africa (1), Puerto Rico (1), and Finland (1). However, it is of note that case selection was largely dependent on the availability of cases at the time of data collection and not

specifically targeted, which allowed for a larger and more diverse sample. This in turn provided a firm basis for a generalized framework of contract killers' behavior. However, this posed yet another challenge such that the results of this study may be more accurate when applied solely in the context of the countries that produced the most offences in the sample.

The most frequently involved crime scene behaviors were: weapon brought to crime scene (88%), victim was ambushed (84%), victim's body left at crime scene (83%), murder happened as planned (83%), victim was found as fell (80%), victim was shot (68%), offender used vehicle (53%). The majority of victims had wounds to the area of the head (58%) where the weapon was brought to the crime scene. Victims were less likely to be controlled - bound (13%), gagged (8%), or blindfolded (3%). They were more likely to be lured to a remote area (23%), abducted (21%), chased (21%), or beaten (17%). Extreme crime scene behaviors, such as cutting victim's limbs (5%), dismemberment (4%), burning victim alive (2%), decapitation (1%), or hanging (1%) were less likely but also present.

Procedure

In order to explore various subsets of behavior, 56 variables were derived from offender actions at the scene of the crime (see Table 2). The variables then were coded dichotomously ("yes" or "no"), based on the presence or absence of the particular behavior in each of the reports. These variables provided a data matrix upon which analyses were conducted.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I)

In order to explore the underlying forms of contract killers behavior, the multidimensional scaling (MDS) procedure of Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I) (Lingoes, 1973) was used. This has been widely employed in the past for revealing offender patterns from arsonists (Canter & Fritzon, 1998), to stranger murders (Salfati & Canter, 1999), sexual offenders (Canter &

Heritage, 1990), and even the actions of serial killers (Canter, Alison, Alison, & Wentink al., 2004).

Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I) is a non-metric multidimensional scaling procedure in which the relationships between variables are represented as distances in a Cartesian space. Within the Facet approach (Canter, 1985), the resulting spatial configuration is examined to determine whether meaningful regions can be identified. The coefficient of alienation (CoA) (Borg & Lingoes, 1987) indicates how closely the rank orders of the distances between the points in the SSA-I spatial representation relate to the rank orders of the correlations between the variables. The CoA ranges from 0 (indicating a perfect fit) to 1 (indicating no relation at all). A coefficient of 0.20 to 0.25 is considered a reasonably good degree of fit (Borg & Lingoes, 1987).

The aim of the present study was thus to establish whether the SSA configuration would be characterized by an interpretable regional structure – more specifically; whether there would be a behavioral thematic split clearly delineating the four modes of the Narrative Action System model.

Results

The SSA was carried out on all 56 crime scene variables across the 75 cases. The resulting analysis showed a CoA of 0.22, indicating a very good fit for this data.

Figure 1 shows the projection of the first two vectors of a two-dimensional space. In this figure each point represents a crime scene action derived from the content analysis as listed in Appendix I. The closer two points are, the more likely it is that the actions they represent will co-occur. This could be best explained by viewing the two variables "body at scene" (victim's body was found at the crime scene) and "victim found as fell" (victim was

found as fell). These two behaviors are very close to each other, and are, therefore, very likely to occur in the same case (97%). By contrast, the variables "slashed throat" (victim's throat was slashed) and "burnt alive" (victim was burnt alive) are at the opposite sites of the SSA plot and are, therefore, very unlikely to occur at a same crime scene (0%). These variables therefore reflect very different types of contract killer behavior.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

Previous research indicates that there are certain behaviors that are conceptually central to contract murder, in other words at the core of it. The behaviors at the periphery reflect different aspects of the same overall phenomena, differing in their reference to the common core.

This core could be given a clearer meaning by considering those items at the centre of the plot. Such items share most with all the others around them and so are both literally and metaphorically central to the issue being examined. In Figure 1, the following variables are central:

- 1. Weapon brought to crime scene*
- 15. Victim ambushed*
- 31. Body at scene*
- 42. Went to plan*
- 49. Victim was found as fell*
- 20. Vehicle*
- 2. Partner*
- 24. Head wound*

This core represents the ultimate understanding of contract killers as previous typologies would emphasize. It includes the intent to murder, but not the variety of homicide that might have been expected if an impulse to kill was the dominant aspect of the offence. Nor are those central variables indicative of a form of satisfaction from murdering someone.

These variables indicate an impersonal, carefully premeditated, quick attack on an important part of the body, followed by the offender leaving the scene of the crime immediately after the murder. Their position at the centre of the plot, therefore, adds credibility to the whole structure and shows that, indeed, at its very core contract killing is highly instrumental e.g. it is the material gain that is of value and not the victim or the murder itself.

Modes of contract killing as assessed by the NAS model

The SSA configuration (Figure 1) revealed a clear differentiation of four themes of contract killers, which map on to the proposed themes of the NAS model. Table 3 provides a brief summary of each type.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Professional's Adaptive Adventure

This region can be found at the bottom end of the SSA plot (Figure 1). Six variables, particularly, indicate an experience-based type of offence, or at least not driven by impulse or desire to kill.

There is strong support for this professional aspect of contract killing as it is also emphasized by previous research (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981; Crumplin, 2009). Criminally sophisticated behaviors, such as offender wearing a mask and being forensically aware, have been related to certain levels of experience, suggesting a possibility of previous criminal activity, particularly close to robbery or burglary. Of note is that, the adventure narrative is often evident in burglars and robbers (Canter & Youngs, 2009).

The presence of the variable "victim was shot" in this region of the SSA plot indicates that these offenders possibly have access to firearms, further adding to the sophisticated nature of the professional mode.

Of particular interest are the variables “victim tried to escape”, “victim was chased”, and “witness”. Contrary to the common belief that victims are typically assassinated from a distance, these offenders often reveal themselves to their targets and would even chase them, satisfying a need “to master the environment”, thus derive tangible benefits from it. This is not of the type that provides pleasure from the murder itself, but rather the type that takes pride in a job well done.

Of note is that these variables are conceptually similar to those in the Professional’s Adaptive Adventure theme reported in previous studies. For example, variables such as “offender masked” and “offender forensically aware” have been reported in studies of sexual offenders (Youngs & Canter, in press, a) and robbers (Youngs & Canter, in press, b) as part of the Professional region.

Revenger’s Conservative Tragedy

This region can be found on the left of the SSA plot (Figure 1). It is characterized by a set of extremely violent behaviors, such as decapitation and dismemberment of the victim’s body, burning victims alive, and strangulation. This unusual, yet familiar type of behavior has been long detected amongst the actions of serial killers. But in contrast to serial killers, contract killers of this type focus on the pursuit of a higher goal, possibly the interests of the party they work for. Several examples in the present sample confirmed that this mode is predominantly adopted by contract killers tied to the organized crime.

As Canter and Youngs (2009) noted, the Revenger type emerges when the individual or the organization (in this case) suffered a form of unfair treatment. Therefore, a contract killer may be sent to leave a message to the rivalry organization either in the form of an extremely violent crime scene and/or possibly in order to demonstrate power, for instance. This is consistent with the overall idea of developed loyalty towards an organization where

employers and employees share the same goal. The crime scene, thus, represents the joint motive of both instigator and offender where offenders' actions are universally driven by the loyalty and respect for their employers. Of note is that the tragedy narrative often finds offenders trying to justify their actions by statements, such as "it was the only choice" or "it was right" (Canter & Youngs, 2009).

Yet, another set of behaviors under this region – that victim was either abducted or lured to a remote area – indicates a certain level of physical contact with the victim before the murder. This indicates that these offenders often establish some sort of relationship between themselves and the victim, possibly to gain their trust. However, on an organizational level, secluded locations provide a better opportunity for contract killers to successfully “do their job” away from eyewitnesses.

Hero's Expressive Quest

This theme can be found at the upper part of the SSA plot (Figure 1). It incorporates, besides the typical instrumental activities, a set of expressive behaviors that reflect offenders' own desires, often by performing these behaviors in a particularly violent and excessive manner. The victims are often treated with extreme violence (e.g. overkill, victim was beaten, bludgeoned, victim had multiple wounds, chest wound, neck wound, victim's identity hidden) but not with the intent to please the instigator – rather, to serve as an example of the offenders' own strength. Such behaviors suggest a spontaneous attack where the offender is acting out of anger. However, the presence of variables such as "staged crime scene" and "victim's identity was hidden" points to a level of preparedness and crime scene knowledge, shaping a balance between the instrumental and expressive character of this contract killer. This balance is the result of the hero narrative that, as noted by Canter and Youngs (2009), is typical for offenders in desperate need for recognition and respect. The Hero can be traced

back in the work of Dietz (1983), where some contract killers justify their actions by claiming that they were doing a public service. This is often evidenced by the presence of activities such as depersonalizing the victim by hiding their identity or glorifying the kill.

The weapon of choice is mostly a combination of manual activities, such as beating, using a blunt object, drowning, running over with a car, stabbing, and burning the victim's body, that often utilize resources available at the crime scene. One possible interpretation may be that these offenders are either acting out of absolute confidence in their abilities and/or they typically do not have the resources to find a more sophisticated weapon.

Victim's Integrative Irony

The region can be found at the lower right section of the SSA plot (Figure 1). It is an example of generalized confusion and panic, such as 'offender killed the wrong person', 'offender killed eyewitnesses', or 'multiple stab wounds'. The overall crime scene reveals a somewhat dispassionate and incompetent contract killer, possibly relying on stimulants (offender on drugs) in order to commit the murder. It is very unlikely that these offenders would look for murder-for-hire opportunities to satisfy a murder impulse. The presence of the variable "offender on drugs" in this region points to either a drug addict who needed money in order to support his/her own physical needs or someone in desperate need of financial support. This is consistent with the irony narrative, which is a manifestation of generalized sense of impotence and powerlessness (Canter & Youngs, 2009).

This contract killer can be characterized by a general negative mood, best understood as a pessimistic view of the world where normal social and moral codes do not apply. This notion was initially used to build the irony narrative (Canter & Youngs, 2009). The total disregard for all moral and social norms is universally provided by activities such as

offenders entering and violating the victims' homes (victim was killed at home), and killing them in their sleep (body was found in bed).

The preferred way of killing is slashing the victim's throat, but not in a manner that is suggestive of sexual motivation (Geberth, 2010) nor of the violent activities of disorganized serial killers (Canter et al., 2004). More likely, the rationale underlying this murder style is the efficiency it provides and the fact that in almost all cases it does not require a lot of resources in order to be achieved.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine whether the Narrative Actions System model (Canter & Youngs, 2009) could be applied to contract killing. It was proposed that in order to derive the characteristics of a contract killer from his or her actions at the crime scene, it was first necessary to demonstrate that these actions had some comprehensible pattern to them. A number of contract killing scenarios were reviewed in order to establish the range of offenders that fall under the general title of "contract killers". This review revealed that there were several general psychological modes underlying the phenomenon of contract killing, some of these being entirely contradictory.

The results of the SSA indicated that contract killing could be understood as various ways of carrying out a highly instrumental offence where the offender is driven by an ulterior motive, such as money, rather than a murder instinct. Results revealed four distinct aspects of contract killing that fit with the Narrative Action System model proposed by Canter & Youngs (2009). These narrative themes also tie together disparate themes from the previous literature, offering a generalized classification of contract killings.

The proposed model goes beyond previously suggested typologies in the sense that it allows for a broader and more detailed psychological understanding of contract killers. In other words, it allows for psychological interpretation of contract killers' behavior.

The Professional's adaptive adventure theme represents a high level of professionalism, identified by Revitch and Schlesinger (1981) as the 'Professional'. This reflects a degree of criminal proficiency greater than that of any of the other themes – akin to what Crumplin (2009) terms “criminally sophisticated behavior”. In contrast, the Victim's integrative irony theme reflects “clumsy” and incompetent behavior that relates to the 'Amateur' type as discussed by Revitch and Schlesinger and Crumplin's “inept behaviors”. Both, the Revenger's conservative tragedy and Hero's expressive quest could be seen as 'semi-professionals' (Revitch & Schlesinger, 1981), whose murder style could be best explained in the form of “aggressive behavior” (Crumplin, 2009). Generally, those two contract killers are experienced offenders; however, while Revengers are affected by the motive of their employers, Heroes try to maintain a balance between their personal desires and the end goal (i.e. profit), possibly causing the levels of brutality observed.

It is typical for an SSA configuration that the actions at the centre are the ones that, empirically, have most in common with each other, and that those at the periphery are the rarest. In the present study, as actions are placed further away from the common core they become a distinct part of the specific regions of the plot. This means that there are actions that have a lot in common with each other and with all the other variables, providing a common source to contract murder patterns, whereas the remainder of the actions reflect specific emphases.

The overall combination of items that form the common core describes a highly instrumental offence, carried out for the sake of an ulterior motive. It is not the case of

offenders experiencing pleasure as a result of the murder. It is a swift and effective assassination that is not suggestive of any kind of emotional state (Meloy, 1988). A line of research that focuses on the ability of contract killers to rationalize their behavior (Schlesinger, 2001a; Montefiore, 1993; Levi, 1981) argues that all of them are capable of feeling, in the sense that they would abandon their emotions in order to be able to adapt to the job. These suggestions, when combined with the present findings raise a number of questions as to the types of psychopathology that may underlie contract killing. It might be possible to identify different levels of psychopathy within samples of contract killers, as Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fitzpatrick, 1995) suggests. Previous research has suggested that most contract killers are not psychotic, but they display varying degrees of personality disturbance (Schlesinger, 2001a). While this was not the focus of this study, the thematic split, as revealed by the SSA configuration is suggestive of certain levels of mental impairment in line with the previous arguments of Canter and Youngs (2009), among others. For instance, Schlesinger (2001a) reports that personality disorders are more likely to be detected amongst amateur contract killers, rather than professional and semi-professional contact killers. The presence of the variable “offender on drugs” in the Victim region of the SSA plot (which was related to amateur contract killers) further supports this notion. Of note is that drug abuse has been long associated with cognitive dysfunction and aggressive behavior (Selby, Jeffrey, & Airy-Eggertsen, 1997). Future research could explore such links further.

Overall, the present study points to four behaviorally and psychologically distinct types of contract killers, who use different “means” (approach to crime) in order to achieve the same “ends” (material gain). However, it is crucial to remember that instrumentality is necessary for the murder to occur, being the basic premise from which these contract killer types are derived. Essentially instrumental violence is the ultimate tool to obtain some

external goal (e.g. profit-based goal) other than inflicting injury (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). Researchers (e.g. Canter & Youngs, 2009) point to potential differences in the preparedness to interact directly with a victim, or to adopt a proactive rather than reactive approach. But while instrumentality is necessary for contract murder to occur, it is not a sufficient explanation for contract killing as a whole in the sense that contract killers are typically affected by other factors, such as the influence of instigators (where the killer might end up doing things differently - for example; to please their employer, as it is the case with Revengers). It may be of value to examine each contract killer type independently in order to demonstrate if there is a comprehensible coherence to them. It may be the case that each type would have its own underlying behavioral structure, which would provide a more detailed understanding to the psychological bases and processes underlying each type and of the offender-instigator interactions involved in it.

Each of these four contract killer styles also have the potential of correlating with different types of criminal characteristics or perpetrator background characteristics. A study of these correlations would be a major step in the development of a scientific basis for the profiling of contract killers.

Implications

Apart from the theoretical implications in understanding contract killing behavior, the current study has several practical implications.

The identification of different narrative themes of contract killing behavior suggests that different law enforcement procedures may be appropriate for different offenders. For instance, this model could be used in the development of a framework for profiling contract killers by linking crime scene activities to personal characteristics. However, it goes beyond

offender profiling in the sense that it is empirically derived rather than intuitively driven. Further, the model could serve to track similarities between two or more cases in terms of murders that might be linked to the same perpetrator/s. Finally, it could be used to focus an investigation to potentially save both time and resources.

Further, the model could assist judicial inquiries in terms of identifying the severity of the offence and helping jury members to reach a suitable verdict. It could also be referred to in the prosecutions preparation of a case for court (Canter & Youngs, 2009).

Finally, the wide spectrum of contract killer characteristics suggests that - from a clinical point of view - different treatment and rehabilitation programs may be appropriate for different offenders. A forensic professional could follow the specifications of the narrative in order to uncover the deficits and the strengths of an offender and build upon them in treatment programs. One way of achieving this would be to develop interviewing techniques specific to the offender (Canter & Youngs, 2009). For instance, a contract killer that sees himself as a Hero may require a different line of questioning than someone who sees himself as Victim.

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1. *Weapon brought to scene.* Offender brought the murder weapon to the scene.
 2. *Partner.* Offender had at least one accomplice.
 3. *Victim shot.* Victim was shot with a firearm.
 4. *Victim stabbed.* Offender used knife.
 5. *Victim strangled.* Offender strangled the victim with an implement or manually.
 6. *Victim hung.*
 7. *Victim burnt alive.*
 8. *Body burnt post-mortem.* Offender burnt the victim post-mortem to hide evidence.
 9. *Blunt object.* Victim was killed by a blunt instrument.
 10. *Victim bound.* Restraints used.
 11. *Victim beaten.* Victim's body showed signs of having been beaten.
 12. *Victim gagged.*
 13. *Victim abducted.* Victim was taken from home/street.
 14. *Victim chased.* Victim tried to escape.
 15. *Victim ambushed.* Surprise attack at home/street.
 16. *Unintended victim.* Offender killed the wrong person.
 17. *Unplanned victim.* Offender killed others to eliminate witnesses.
 18. *Offender masked.* Offender wore a mask to avoid recognition.
 19. *Offender disguised.* Offender wore disguise to hide their identity.
 20. *Vehicle.* Offender used vehicle to enter and escape the crime scene.
 21. *Drugs.* Offender was on drugs during the murder.
 22. *Witness.* Offender was seen by someone at the crime scene.
 23. *Tried to escape.* Victim saw opportunity to escape but failed.
 24. *Head wounds.*
 25. *Chest wounds.*
 26. *Neck wounds.*
 27. *Cut limbs.* Victim's limbs were cut
 28. *Multiple wounds.* Offender has inflicted multiple injuries all over the victim's body.
 29. *Body moved.* Offender moved the victim's body from the crime scene.
 30. *Remote area.* Offender left victim's body at an isolated area.
 31. *Body at scene.* Victim's body was found at the crime scene.
 32. *Body in bed.* Victim's body was found in her/his bedroom.
 33. *Body on doorstep.* Victim's body was found at her/his doorstep.
 34. *Body on highway.* Victim's body was found on a highway/rural road.
 35. *Body in car.* Victim's body was found in her/his car.
 36. *Identity hidden.* Offender/s tried to hide victim's identity.
 37. *Body out.* Victim's body was found outdoor.
 38. *Body in.* Victim's body was found indoor.
 39. *Killed at home.* Victim was killed at her/his house.
 40. *Killed outside.* Victim was killed outside her/his house.
 41. *Scene masked.* Offender made the crime scene to look like a robbery or burglary.
 42. *Went to plan.* Murder went to plan.
 43. *Weapon not found.* Offender took the murder weapon off the crime scene.
 44. *Forensically aware.* Offender left no physical evidence or tried to hide it.
 45. *Secondary criminal activity.* Offender stole victim's property after her/his death.
 46. *Decapitation*
 47. *Dismemberment*
 48. *Victim drowned*
 49. *Victim found as fell.* Victim was found as they fell after the killing.
 50. *Forced entry.* Offender entered the victim's home.
 51. *Back wounds.* Victim had wounds at the back of his/her body.
 52. *Slashed throat.* Victim throat was cut.
 53. *Victim blindfolded.* Victim's eyes were covered.
 54. *Victim bludgeoned.* Victim was struck with a heavy blow.
 55. *Overkill*
 56. *Run over by a car.* Victim was run over by a vehicle.
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TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1

Sample description

Victims			
Male victims	68%	17-77 years old	
Female victims	32%	18-66 years old	
Offender – Victim Relationship			
Not acquainted	81%		
Number of Victims			
One victim	92%		
Two victims	4%		
Three victims	2%		
Four victims	2%		
Victim – Instigator Relationship			
Familial	53%		
Acquaintances	23%		
Strangers	12%		
Intimate partners	5%		
Business partners	1%		
Offender Characteristics			
Male	84%	15-62 years old	M=29.6, SD=10.59
Female	16%	17-58 years old	M=31.6, SD=12.59
One offender	52%		
Two offenders	24%		
Three offenders	16%		
Four offenders	4%		
Five offenders	3%		
Seven offenders	1%		
Relationship between Offenders			
The relationship between two or more offenders was based on acquaintance rather than being familial or intimate.			
Instigator – Offender Relationship			
Strangers	44%		
Acquaintances	32%		
Intimate partners	15%		
Family	4%		
Offender’s previous convictions			
Robbery	15%		
Burglary	13%		
Drug addiction	15%		
Instigator Characteristics			
Male	49%	M=38 years old	
Female	51%		
Motive of the Instigator			
Financial gain	43%	life insurance, mortgage, inheritance	
Personal	21%	jealousy, child custody, another intimate relationship	
Business related	11%	land dispute, criminal networks	

TABLE 2

Crime scene variables included in the present study and frequencies.

Variable name	Frequency	Variable name	Frequency
Weapon brought to crime scene	66	Offender masked	11
Victim ambushed	63	Forensically aware	10
Body at scene	62	Victim bound	10
Went to plan	62	Body in bed	10
Victim found as fell	60	Body on highway	9
Victim shot	51	Victim bludgeoned	9
Head wound	44	Blunt object	8
Vehicle	40	Body moved	8
Found outside	38	Victim strangled	7
Killed at home	35	Victim gagged	6
Partner	35	Unplanned victim	6
Killed outside	33	Forced entry	6
Multiple wounds	32	Unintended victim	4
Found inside	32	Offender disguised	4
Chest wound	27	Drugs	4
Neck wound	22	Body at doorstep	4
Remote area	17	Cut limbs	4
Witness	16	Weapon not found	4
Victim chased	16	Slashed throat	3
Victim abducted	16	Dismemberment	3
Tried to escape	15	Victim burnt alive	2
Back wounds	15	Body burnt	2
Overkill	14	Victim drowned	2
Victim stabbed	13	Victim blindfolded	2
Victim beaten	13	Victim hung	1
Scene masked	12	Identity hidden	1
Secondary criminal activity	12	Decapitation	1
Body in car	11	Run over by a vehicle	1

TABLE 3
Characteristics of the four contract killer types

PROFESSIONAL	REVENGER	HERO	VICTIM
Experience	Some experience	Some experience	No experience
Lack of emotionality	Emotionality – angry	Emotionality - positive	Emotionality-negative/desperate
Wears a mask	Often works for the organized crime	Takes pride of his/her actions; Seeks recognition	Confusion and panic-kills the wrong person/eyewitness
Previous criminal activity - burglary/robbery	Extremely violent behaviour–strangulation/dismemberment/decapitation/burn victim	Extremely violent behaviour-overkill/multiple wounds etc.	Extreme violence-slashed neck/multiple wounds
Use of firearm	Rationalization of crime	Staged crime scene	Drug use
Victim is chased	Relationship with the victim before the kill	Depersonalization of the victim	Kills victims in their homes/while sleeping
Quick attack	Kills in secluded locations	Kills via a combination of manual activities–beat/stab/bludgeon etc.	Seeks financial support
Kills in public	Devotion to the job	Weapon available at the crime scene	Lack of resources/desperation
Forensically aware	Lures/abducts/ambushes	Lack of resources/creativity	Wears disguise

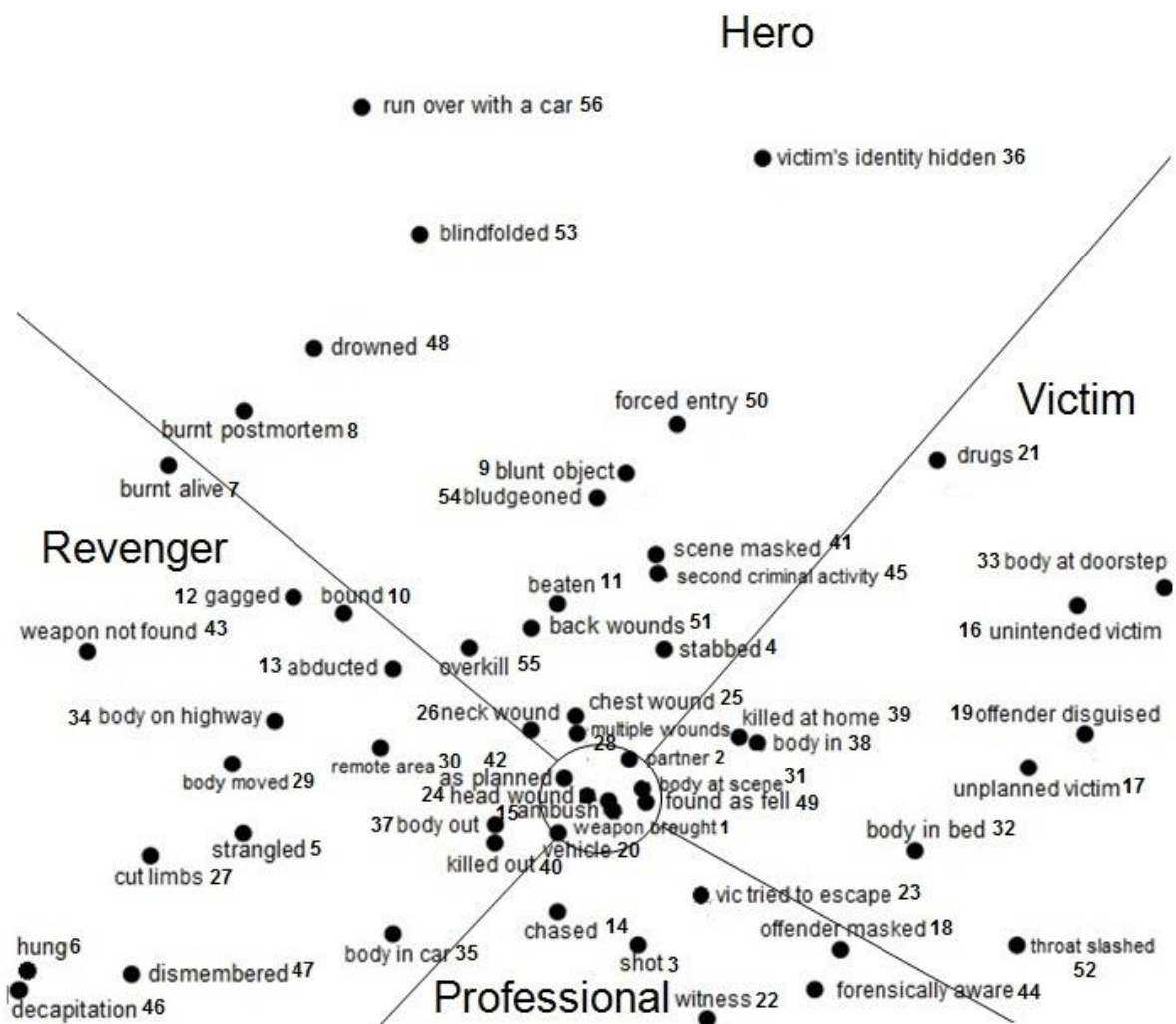


FIGURE 1. 1x2 projection of 2-Dimensional Smallest Space Analysis: Distribution of 56 Crime Scene Actions in 75 Cases of Contract Murders. Regional Interpretation: NAS Model. CoA = 0.22. Numbers correspond to variables in Appendix I.