Behavior Analysis and the Patrol Officer

Rick Parfitt, Florida SouthWestern State College
FIRE RESCUE and SURVIVAL TRAINING for OFFICERS

Inside...

Fire Rescue Training
Timely Warnings
Web Based Training
Use of Canines
Behavior Analysis and the Patrol Officer

By Richard A. Parfitt, Lieutenant, University of Pittsburgh (PA) Police Department

Patrol officers, out of necessity, become students of human behavior, but the most effective patrol officers develop their study of human behavior into a science. From the earliest days of policing, officers have been trained to watch for “suspicious” behavior, to look for that which is out of place, those persons “whose glances and actions betray possible criminal intent; persons who appear not to belong on the beat.” (O’Connor & Vanderbosch, 1967, p. 30). This aspect of training continues in academies and field training programs today. Over a period of time and with experience, officers active in patrol become adept at identifying those individuals involved in or planning criminal behavior, as well as identifying persons in distress by their behavior characteristics. Behavior is said to be the major phenomenon that the police officer must deal with daily and the diligent patrol officer, when observing a particular behavior, will be asking himself, “why is this person doing what he is doing?” (Russell & Beigel, 1976, p. xi, 21). That being the case an officer must learn to observe, analyze and correctly act on human behavior because being wrong carries with it the possibility of civil or even criminal liability.

Various training programs over the years have incorporated aspects of observation techniques and some of the programs have refined those techniques to be easily utilized on the street, especially in practicing officer safety awareness. From Street Survival Seminars® and Calibre Press publications, most patrol officers have experienced or at least can describe the “thousand yard stare” or identify an emotionally disturbed person by characteristics. Pierce Brooks, former Los Angeles Police Department investigator of the Onion Field police murder case and pioneer in officer safety awareness advised officers to be alert for those things that do not look right. One of the ten deadly errors he popularized was to watch a suspect’s hands as the likely point of attack (1975). Since then officer safety awareness training has expanded on the observation of body language. Officers’ observation skills become refined so that they watch for subtle, but significant moves which are often associated physiologically with a person’s preparation to attack (Remsberg, 1986, p. 445). These moves, including the boxer stance, the shoulder shift and target glance signal that the person may attack and where he intends to strike the officer (Remsberg, 1986, p. 445-446).

Reading behavioral indicators such as these is far from an exact science, but officers find that most people do unconsciously give indications of their intention to assault (Remsberg, 1986, p. 445). To be safe and successful, an officer has to observe and analyze these warning signs and act accordingly, but to complicate the matter the analysis process may require rapid decision-making and rushed decisions. The behavioral indicators that are being analyzed are not only from aggressive or potentially violent persons, but from those attempting to be deceptive. An officer’s day deals in communication with complainants, victims, witnesses, suspects and suspicious persons, many having motives to deceive. When an individual is trying to lie or evade answering questions, astute officers will observe deception cues such as hesitancy in answering, stalling, memory lapses and other tactics (Remsberg, 1995, p. 195-199).

Behavior analysis is most effective when officers are serious students of human behavior; but a problem in studying human behavior is that an officer’s observations are directly related to his life experiences, education, personal beliefs and biases. Before acting on what he observes, an officer must make certain that his decisions are objective and based on behaviors that are widely accepted as suspicious or abnormal all the while being cognizant of the influence of his own attitudes and opinions and keeping his evaluations and conclusions of the observations separate (Basinger, 1973, p. 3). Officers must be aware that what they are observing may not always be what it appears. Experienced criminals can mask their behaviors so that even those closest to them are not aware of their criminal

Continued on page 33
Patrol officers must be allowed the ability to make a flexible analysis of what is observed, but also specific enough that educated assessments of behavior can be made. For example, serial killers and rapists many times live and function in society for years before being caught. Experienced criminals also become adept at analyzing human behavior, especially for the purpose of targeting certain people for victimization; but also to learn to spot police officers, not so much from what they may be wearing, but by their actions or behaviors, especially their people-watching behavior (Green, 1976, p. 100).

Patrol officers must be allowed the ability to make a flexible analysis of what is observed, but also specific enough that educated assessments of behavior can be made. Part of this assessment involves identifying groups or clusters of behaviors that are suspicious as a single suspicious behavior may not warrant further investigation, but several suspicious behaviors may. This behavior analysis is similar in some aspects to the “profiling” made popular by the FBI. This criminal profiling is a process whereby the investigator infers the personality characteristics of those committing crimes (Turvey, 2002). The profiler, using all the evidence available, puts himself “mentally and emotionally in the head of the offender” (Douglas & Olshaker, 1995, p. 151). Starting in 1978 to interview “serial killers,” agents in what was then the behavioral science unit researched the lives of these killers and studied in depth the crimes and subsequent police investigations.

First called psychological profiles, they involved the analysis of unsolved murder cases by studying the case files, autopsies protocols, photographs and other records. This analysis allowed agents to arrive at a profile or characteristics of the type of person who would commit such a crime. The FBI has profiled numerous cases of serial killers and rapists and several agents have written extensively of their successes and high profile cases. Even so, the FBI was not the first agency to use such a method in identifying behavioral characteristics of an unknown criminal subject. After fifteen years of being victimized by “the mad bomber,” New York City Police in 1957 enlisted the aid of Dr. James Brussel, a psychiatrist, to come up with a profile of the mad bomber. The profile turned out to be quite accurate and aided in the capture of George Metesky (Douglas & Olshaker, 1995, pp. 33-34). Other law enforcement agencies have studied the behavior of known criminals in attempts to find some behavioral indicators that may help in identifying criminals or even preventing crimes.

The U. S. Secret Service, responsible for protecting the president and other public officials, found that a profiling system was not adequate for their needs. They developed threat assessment and protective intelligence programs to help identify, assess and manage people who might pose a threat to the president. The Secret Service studied 83 individuals who attacked or came close to attacking prominent public officials and compiled characteristics of these individuals. These characteristics aid them in assessing individuals who may pose a threat to the president or other public officials (Fein & Vossekui, 1998). The Secret Service recently lent its expertise in threat assessments to the Department of Education to study school shooters of the last ten years. The study has led to training for school officials to make threat assessments of potential shooters.

Profiling has not always been viewed in a favorable light. Negative connotations attached to what has become known as racial profiling, which is police initiated action that relies on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual (Ramirez, McDevitt & Ferrell, 2000). This stems from a program started in the late 1980s by the Drug Enforcement Administration called operation pipeline. This program involved specialized training that focused on indicators of narcotics trafficking in which officers would profile individuals based on their race and where they lived or were traveling, especially what were considered drug destination cities. This police practice has been challenged in a number of jurisdictions and subsequently disallowed by lawsuits and legislation.

It has been shown from the information presented that behavior analysis or criminal profiling is something patrol officers do daily, and have done for years. It is not uncommon to hear of an officer described as having street smarts or acting on gut instincts and these terms provide some of the basis for behavior analysis for police officers. A police officer on the street is not in a position to make an in-depth analysis of behavior, but instead must make profiles of individuals he encounters. These profiles aid in identifying individuals who may be violent, armed, wanted or pose a danger to the officer or others.

What has become the benchmark case of police behavior analysis began with the observations of Detective Martin McFadden, a 39-year veteran of the Cleveland, Ohio, Police Department on the afternoon of October 31, 1963. Detective McFadden, on a beat that he had patrolled for many years, watched two strangers alternately walk back and forth and pause to stare into a store window. These two men did this a number of times and then conferred with a third man on a corner. Detective McFadden testified that he had developed routine habits of observation over the years and that he would...
Behavior analysis is one of those tools used by patrol officers and street crimes units.

beaviors in detail so they can make “useful and valid assessments about what they are dealing with” (1973, p. 10). Because the nature of a patrol officer’s job requires decisions to be made quickly, these threat assessments cannot be complicated analytic procedures. The officer has to be able to quickly assess behavior, at times having only seconds to size up volatile situations and all the while having a survival mindset. While sizing up situations officers must have a plan of action and the most successful officers accomplish this by doing crisis rehearsals or what if scenarios. When investigating a suspicious person situation an officer may want to observe an individual for several moments prior to taking any action to reinforce whatever called his attention to the person in the first place. This extra time may provide the reasonable suspicion or probable cause information necessary to stop or detain the person (Adams, McTeman & Remsberg, 1980, p. 69). It also may help to determine that the person being surveilled does not know he is being watched, as people do not behave the same if they are being observed (Green, 1976, p. 99).

As terrorism has become the most important crime concern of our time, even for patrol officers, behavior analysis will become more widely used. Currently the U. S. Customs Service, the FBI and a number of airports are training officers in behavior analysis. The Israeli El Al Airline pioneered observation of behavior and body language in the 1970s and hasn’t had a hijacking in more than 30 years (Davis, Pereira & Bulkeley, 2002). U. S. Customs revised their tactics to incorporate behavior profiling and saw their “hit rate,” where they find drugs during searches, increase dramatically. Behavior

Continued on page 35
analysis continues to be refined and with proper training patrol officers will find that they will become more effective by making informed and safe stops and arrests of suspicious persons and experience fewer complaints filed against them.

References
Gallagher, R. (1995). Identifying characteristics of the armed gunman. Training program for the Metropolitan Police Department, Patrol Services Division, Washington, DC.

President's Message
Continued from page 2

The Annual Conference in Ottawa is shaping up to be an excellent conference.

options and models regarding association dues. We have a Revenue Review Task Force being led by Steven Healy, which is reviewing current non-dues revenue sources and possible non-dues revenue sources, and exploring ways to develop new revenue opportunities for the association. We received encouraging updates at the board meeting from both Task Force chairs.

The Executive Development Institute class scheduled in San Antonio, Texas on November 16-19 was full. Thanks to Bob Bratten for hosting this important training initiative. I would also like to thank Paul Glowacki for his efforts to get the word out about this class.

The Regional Directors are hard at work putting together the IACLEA Regional Conferences for the spring. (See Calendar on this page.)

The Annual Conference in Ottawa is shaping up to be an excellent conference. We should have some previews for you in the next edition of Campus Law Enforcement Journal, so stay tuned. We hope to have an excellent educational program put together for you! Keep in mind, if the exchange rate remains stable, you will be able to attend the conference in Canada for 2/3 of what it would cost in the U.S. This will be a perfect opportunity to attend an IACLEA conference and to bring an employee or two from your department. I look forward to seeing you there!

Resource Links
IACLEA Committees http://www.iaclea.org/members/committee/index.cfm
IACLEA Calendar of Events http://www.iaclea.org/conf/calendar.cfm
U.S. Office for Domestic Preparedness http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/

IACLEA Regional Meetings Scheduled for 2004

March 17-19, 2004
IACLEA North Atlantic Region Meeting
Location and details to be announced.
Contact: Ernie Leffler, North Atlantic Region Director

March 20-23, 2004
IACLEA Mid-America Region Meeting
Location: Oklahoma
Details to be announced at a later date.
Contact: Priscilla Stevens, Mid-America Region Director

March 24-26, 2004
IACLEA Mid-Atlantic Region Meeting
Atlantic City, New Jersey
Contact: Rick Cottom, Mid-Atlantic Region Director

April 1-3, 2004
IACLEA Southeast Region Meeting
Charlotte, North Carolina
Contact: Mike Young, Southeast Region Director

April 7-9, 2004
IACLEA Mountain Pacific Region Meeting
Reno, Nevada
Contact: Steve Rittiereiser, Mountain Pacific Region Director

April 18-21, 2004
5th International Congress on Campus Security
Dublin, Ireland
Contact: Jean Luc Mabieut, International Region Director

April 21-23, 2004
IACLEA Southwest Regional Meeting
San Antonio, Texas
Contact: Robert Bratten, Regional Director