

# Research on the Correlation between Psychological Motivations and Behavioral Patterns of Criminal Marking Behaviors in Intentional Homicide

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**Abstract:** The criminal marking behavior in the crime of intentional homicide is a non-functional behavior with individualized characteristics carried out by the offender to meet specific psychological needs. Although such behaviors are not necessary steps to achieve criminal purposes, they become the explicit expression of criminal psychology through repetitive and symbolic features. Based on the theoretical framework of criminal psychology, this article systematically explores the intrinsic connection between the psychological motivations and behavioral patterns of criminal marking behaviors, and reveals their mechanism of action as the externalization carrier of criminal psychology. Research has found that the formation of criminal marking behavior stems from the interaction of personality traits, motivational conflicts and cognitive biases, and its behavioral patterns reflect the deep psychological structure of the offender through dimensions such as spatial selection, tool use and symbol presentation. The research conclusion has theoretical value and practical significance for improving the technology of criminal psychological profiling and enhancing the efficiency of criminal investigation.

**Keywords:** Intentional Homicide; Criminal Marking Behavior; Psychological Motivation; Behavioral Pattern; Criminal Psychology

## 1. Introduction

Intentional homicide, as the most heinous type of crime in criminal law, has long drawn academic attention for its social harmfulness and psychological complexity [1]. Criminal marking behavior, as a core concept in the field of criminal psychology, refers to the personalized behaviors deliberately left by criminals during the process of committing crimes that exceed the functional requirements of the crime [2].

Although such behaviors are not necessary steps to achieve criminal purposes, they become the explicit carriers of criminal psychology through repetitive and symbolic features. For instance, the American "Night Assassin" [3] deliberately drew complex code symbols in multiple serial murder cases. These symbols were neither criminal means nor escape tools, but rather used to convey resistance against authority and the desire to oppress the victims [4].

Traditional crime research mostly focuses on the objective analysis of criminal motives, means and consequences, while the exploration of the correlation between the subjective psychology and behavioral manifestations of criminals is relatively weak. The research on criminal marking behavior has broken through this limitation. By analyzing the psychological motivations behind the behavior, it reveals the internal logic of the offender's personality traits, cognitive patterns, and behavioral choices [5]. For instance, Japanese criminal psychologists have found that the motives for modern homicide crimes have evolved from the primitive food competition and property hijacking to an extreme way of achieving a sense of self-existence [6]. This change in motivation reflects the profound influence of social culture on criminal psychology and also provides a theoretical background for understanding criminal marking behavior.

This study takes the crime of intentional homicide as the research object, systematically exploring the correlation between the psychological motivations and behavioral patterns of criminal marking behaviors, aiming to provide theoretical support for criminal psychological profiling techniques and methodological references for criminal investigation practices. This research adopts the methods of literature analysis and theoretical derivation, and combines the research achievements of criminal psychology at home and abroad in the past five years to construct an

analytical framework of "psychological motivation - behavioral pattern", revealing the mechanism of action of criminal marker behavior as the externalization carrier of criminal psychology.

## **2. The Theoretical Basis of Criminal Marking Behavior**

### **2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Criminal Marking Behavior**

The core characteristics of criminal marking behavior lie in its non-necessity and personalization. Non-necessity refers to the fact that the act is not a necessary step to achieve the criminal purpose. For instance, in cases of robbery and murder, the offender can complete the crime without drawing symbols on the spot, but some criminals still deliberately leave hand-drawn patterns [7]. Personalization is reflected in the uniqueness and stability of behavior. The same offender may repeatedly use specific markers in different cases, such as fixed symbols, tool selection or criminal procedures. This stability makes criminal marking behavior an important clue for identifying serial crimes in criminal investigation. For instance, in the "Jack the Ripper" case in the UK, the criminal constructed a unique criminal marker through specific knife skills and the victim's selection pattern [8].

From a functional perspective, criminal marking behavior has a dual effect of psychological compensation and self-confirmation. Criminals alleviate anxiety and a sense of loss of control during the criminal process by carrying out marking behavior, while also strengthening their identification with the criminal act. This psychological mechanism is particularly evident in premeditated homicide cases, where the offender constructs a sense of ritual through carefully designed marking behaviors to achieve self-satisfaction at the psychological level [9]. For instance, Dennis Reid, the American serial killer (BTK killer), left the marks of "restraint, and killing" in every case, reinforcing his sense of control over the criminal process through repetitive behaviors.

### **2.2 Classification and Manifestations of Criminal Marking Behaviors**

According to the nature of the behavior, criminal marking behaviors can be classified into three types: symbolic type, instrumental type and

procedural type. Symbolic marks convey information through specific patterns, words or objects. For instance, in a serial murder case, the offender might leave a blood handprint or hand-drawn symbol at the scene to express their resistance to authority or their desire to oppress the victim. Tool-type markers represent a preference for specific tools, such as repeatedly using the same type of knife or poison, reflecting the offender's pursuit of a sense of control. Procedural markers are manifested as fixed criminal processes, such as specific time selection, sequence of crimes or post-crime handling methods, reflecting the compulsive personality traits of the offender.

In the crime of intentional homicide, the manifestations of criminal marking behaviors are highly diverse. For instance, in cases of erotic homicide, the offender may use sexual abuse as a marker behavior to satisfy their extreme pursuit of sex in a pathological way. In revenge murder cases, the offender may vent their hatred by destroying specific parts of the body, such as deliberately avoiding the abdomen to attack a pregnant woman, reflecting their complex emotions towards the victim and their associated parties. In addition, criminal marking behavior may also be manifested through spatial selection. For instance, premeditated murderers often choose locations with symbolic significance as the crime scene, such as near the victim's residence, to enhance the sense of intrusion into the victim's life.

## **3. Psychological Motivations for Criminal Marking Behavior**

### **3.1 Personality Traits and Psychological Needs**

The formation of criminal marking behavior is closely related to the personality traits of the offender. People with antisocial personality disorder often strengthen their sense of resistance to society through marking behaviors. For instance, criminals who carry out bombings in public places may choose locations symbolizing authority as their crime scenes to express their dissatisfaction with the system. People with obsessive-compulsive personality tend to repeatedly use specific markers, such as fixed symbols or modus operandi, to relieve inner anxiety and uncertainty.

At the psychological needs level, criminal marking behavior is an important way for

criminals to achieve self-identity and a sense of control. Driven by the motive of power, criminals declare their dominance over the victims through marking behaviors, such as deliberately leaving hand-drawn symbols in kidnapping cases to demonstrate absolute control over the victims. Driven by performance motivation, criminals attract social attention through marking behaviors, such as deliberately creating media effects in serial murder cases to satisfy their pursuit of a sense of presence.

### **3.2 Motivation Conflict and Cognitive Bias**

The implementation of criminal marking behaviors is often accompanied by motivational conflicts and cognitive biases. In cases of vengeful homicide, the offender may simultaneously have the contradictory psychology of both the desire for revenge and moral self-reproach. At this time, marking behavior becomes a buffer mechanism to ease the conflict. For instance, a criminal might, after killing an enemy, vent their hatred by destroying the non-lethal parts of the body while avoiding a complete denial of their own sense of morality. In terms of cognitive biases, criminals often construct self-rationalizing explanatory frameworks through marking behaviors. In cases of murder due to property disputes, the offender may interpret the marking act as "punishing greed", reducing the inner sense of guilt by endowing the act with moral legitimacy. This cognitive reconstruction mechanism enables criminals to continuously commit crimes while maintaining the integrity of their self-image.

### **3.3 Social Learning and Cultural Impact**

Social learning theory suggests that criminal marking behaviors may be formed through observational learning or direct experience. For instance, crime scenes in violent film and television works may provide templates for criminals to mark their behaviors, such as imitating the use of symbols or the modus operandi in movies. Cultural background also influences the manifestation of marking behavior. In some cultures, specific symbols or rituals may be endowed with special meanings, and criminals use these marks to enhance the cultural identity of their criminal behavior.

## **4. Behavioral Patterns of Criminal Marking Behaviors**

### **4.1 Spatial Selection and Temporal Mode**

The spatial selection of criminal marking behavior is highly symbolic and strategic. Premeditated murderers often strengthen their psychological control over the victims or society by carefully selecting the crime scenes. For instance, in cases of love killings, the offender might choose the victim's workplace, school or frequently visited places to commit the crime, in order to "intrude" into their living quarters and satisfy their desire to dominate the victim. This spatial selection not only serves criminal purposes but also conveys the threat message of "You have nowhere to run" through geographical associations. In addition, serial killers may prefer specific types of locations, such as parks, abandoned buildings or highway rest areas, creating "crime hotspots" that reflect their need for a sense of environmental control.

In terms of time patterns, criminals may convey metaphors or reduce risks through the selection of specific time periods. For instance, committing crimes on weekend nights or during holidays can reduce the number of witnesses. Meanwhile, the night environment itself has symbolic meanings of "privacy" and "termination", which aligns with the criminal's psychological demands for "removing obstacles" or "restarting life". Some criminals even associate the time of their crimes with their personal experiences, such as choosing the birthday or anniversary of the victim to commit the crime, in order to strengthen their "possession" or retaliation against the victim. This timing choice is not only a strategy but also a crucial link for criminals to construct their "criminal narrative".

### **4.2 Tool Usage and Symbol Presentation**

The use of tools is an important medium for conveying psychological information in criminal marking behavior. In cases of sexual perverted homicide, the offender may deliberately choose tools with sexual symbolic significance, such as restraint devices, sex toys or specific types of knives, to satisfy the distorted pursuit of power, control or sex in a pathological way. For instance, American serial killer Ted Bundy used wooden sticks as weapons in multiple cases and strengthened his control over his body by binding the victims. The choice of tools contrasts sharply with his "hypocritical gentleman" personality mask, revealing his deep-seated desire for control and violent tendencies.

In terms of symbolic presentation, criminals may construct the "narrative framework" of their crimes by leaving behind words, patterns or objects. For instance, placing the victim's clothes, letters or items of personal significance at the scene implies "intervention" or "inheritance" in the victim's life; or engrave specific symbols (such as inverted five-pointed stars, numerical codes) to convey resistance against authority, belief in mysticism or a "mark" of the victim. These symbols not only serve the psychological satisfaction of criminals, but are also likely to become key clues for identifying serial crimes in criminal investigations. For instance, the blood-red signature used by the British "Jack the Ripper" in his letters has become an important symbol of his criminal identity.

#### **4.3 Mechanism of Behavioral Repetition and Variation**

The repetition and variability of criminal marking behavior are its core characteristics. The same offender may repeatedly use specific markers, such as fixed symbols or criminal procedures, in different cases to maintain psychological continuity. However, as criminal experience accumulates, the offender may adjust the form of marking behavior to adapt to environmental changes or evade investigation. For instance, early-stage criminals might employ obvious symbols, but later on, they would shift to more covert marking methods, reflecting the "evolution" of their criminal skills.

### **5. The Correlation between Psychological Motivations and Behavioral Patterns**

#### **5.1 The Shaping of Behavioral Patterns by Personality Traits**

Personality traits shape the specific patterns of criminal marking behaviors by influencing the cognitive styles and behavioral preferences of criminals. Antisocial personalities tend to choose confrontational spaces and tools, such as public places or offensive weapons, to demonstrate their resistance to society. People with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder may repeatedly use the same markers, such as fixed symbols or routines, to relieve their inner anxiety.

#### **5.2 The Impact of Motivational Conflict on Behavioral Variation**

Motivational conflicts lead to the variability of

criminal marking behaviors in different cases. In revenge murder cases, the initial offender may vent their hatred through intense marking behaviors, such as severely damaging the corpse. Later on, they may turn to more covert methods, such as leaving symbolic items, to reduce the moral pressure in their heart. This variation reflects the offender's dynamic adjustment to the conflict of motives.

#### **5.3 The Role of Cognitive Bias in Behavioral Rationalization**

Cognitive biases maintain the psychological balance of criminals by providing reasonable explanations for criminal marking behaviors. In cases of killing out of jealousy, the offender may interpret the marking act as "punishing disloyalty", reducing the sense of guilt by endowing the act with moral legitimacy. This rationalization mechanism enables criminals to continuously commit crimes while avoiding self-denial.

### **6. Conclusion**

This study reveals the intrinsic connection between the psychological motivations and behavioral patterns of criminal marking behaviors, and improves the theoretical framework of criminal psychology. By analyzing the influence of personality traits, motivational conflicts and cognitive biases on behavioral patterns, this study provides a new perspective for understanding the deep psychological structure of criminals.

In criminal investigation practice, the analysis of criminal marking behaviors can be used to construct criminal psychological portraits and assist in the positioning of investigation directions. For instance, by identifying the characteristics of on-site markers, the personality traits and motives of the offender can be inferred, providing a basis for suspect screening. In the judicial field, the interpretation of criminal marking behavior can be used as a reference for sentencing, reflecting the subjective malignancy and reoffending risk of the offender.

This research is mainly based on theoretical derivation and literature analysis. Future studies can combine empirical data to verify the correlation between psychological motivations and behavioral patterns. Meanwhile, cross-cultural comparative studies can explore the influence of cultural background on criminal marking behavior, providing a reference for

crime prevention and control in the context of globalization.

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