

Pattern Analysis Factors

Once the analyst believes he has detected a **crime pattern**, the next step is to analyze the pattern and the individual incidents that compose it, with the ultimate goal of providing the information that the department and the community need to suppress or eradicate it.

The analyst provides this information by describing the **commonalities** that form a particular pattern. A pattern with common offenders is a **crime series**. A pattern with a common location is a **hot spot**. Such commonalities are easy enough to identify and come to the average analyst naturally. The danger, however, is focusing on one or two obvious commonalities and ignoring others that might have equal importance to the pattern, and that might provide the department with more avenues for strategy development. For instance, while it is vital to a series of confidence games that the suspects have all been Greek males in their 40s, it may be equally as important that all the victims have been Asian females in local colleges. Where the analyst may carefully note that all of the commercial burglaries in a pattern have occurred between 20:00 and 03:00, he may overlook the fact that they were also all on weekends. And while an analyst may describe in detail the fact that a current house burglary pattern is occurring in two parts of the city, he may fail to note that the burglar consistently alternates between the two.

In all three cases, the analyst's failure to consider *all* potential factors in the crime pattern has limited the agency's ability to respond to it. Specifically, the agency has missed the chance to conduct community outreach to the vulnerable population, the ability to focus its patrol overtime on the most likely day of the week, and the capability to anticipate the area of the offender's next crime.

Remember: the commonalities in a pattern are the keys to its causes, and the causes are the keys to its solution.

Because of the numerous potential factors at work in any given crime pattern, the analyst benefits from a "checklist" of factors to consider when performing his analysis. We present such a checklist below. Not all factors will apply to all patterns (for instance, "weapon used" will apply only to violent crimes). Analysts are encouraged to copy this sheet and use it during their pattern analysis process.

The analyst need consider most factors only briefly, and he will probably dismiss most as not being a commonality in the current pattern after scanning his matrix or quickly totaling the appropriate numbers. Otherwise, the question becomes: How many incidents need to exhibit similarities for the factor to be considered a commonality in this pattern? If a burglar steals laptop computers in five incidents out of 12, is this enough to be considered a factor common to the pattern as a whole? The answer, like so many others, is that it depends, and the analyst will have to use his skills, experience, intuition, and common sense to determine whether to include a particular factor in his write-up. If out of 20 burglaries, only four involved entry by prying a rear door, this method of entry probably should not be considered important to the entire pattern. However, if out of 20 burglaries, the suspect vehicle was described as a black Mitsubishi Eclipse in four cases, then this information might be vital to apprehending the offenders. If the analyst is in doubt, he always has the option to write in his report, "In five out of 12 incidents, the thief stole a laptop computer," and the readers may do with that information as they will.

Factors to Consider When Analyzing a Crime Pattern

<p><i>What Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Incident Nature (Crimes against Persons/Property/Society) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typological Categorization • Sub-Categorization <input type="checkbox"/> Number of Incidents in Pattern <p><i>Who Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Number of Offenders <input type="checkbox"/> Offender Characteristics <input type="checkbox"/> Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex • Age • Race/Ethnicity/Nationality • Height • Weight • Build • Other Physical Characteristics • Clothing • Property Carried <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Economic/Political¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation • Education • Lifestyle • Income Level <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make & Model • Year • Body Style • Color • Stolen/Not Stolen <input type="checkbox"/> Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Crime Activity • Post-Crime Activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intent ▪ Motivation <input type="checkbox"/> Number of Victims <input type="checkbox"/> Victim Characteristics (Primarily for Violent Crimes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sex ▪ Age (Actual & Apparent) ▪ Race/Ethnicity/Nationality (Actual & Apparent) ▪ Height ▪ Weight ▪ Build ▪ Other Physical Characteristics ▪ Clothing ▪ Property Carried • Social/Economic/Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occupation ▪ Education ▪ Lifestyle ▪ Income Level ▪ Political Affiliation ▪ Organizational Affiliations/Activity ▪ Pre-Crime Activity ▪ Post-Crime Activity <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Property Characteristics (Primarily for Property Crimes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry • Name • Logo/Sign • Physical Appearance • Physical Size • Stories • Number of Units • Locations of Portals • Political Affiliations • Social/Political Activity 	<p><i>Where Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic Location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address • Location Type <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting • Degree of Seclusion • Geographic Proximity to Other Locations/Events • Topology <input type="checkbox"/> Route/Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Direction of Travel/Flight <input type="checkbox"/> Geographic Progression of Pattern <p><i>When Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Time of Day <input type="checkbox"/> Day of Week <input type="checkbox"/> Type of Day (weekday, weekend, holiday, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Week of Month <input type="checkbox"/> Month of Year <input type="checkbox"/> Temporal proximity to other events <input type="checkbox"/> Days/Time Between Hits <p><i>How Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Actions Essential or Incidental to Crime Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of Entry • Method of Entry • Weapon Used • Property Stolen • Words Spoken • Injury Inflicted • Property Damage Inflicted • Miscellaneous Actions² <input type="checkbox"/> Actions Not Essential to Crime Commission (Signature)
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¹ Most of these characteristics will not be readily known, but the analyst may be able to take an educated guess based on clothing, appearance, and other factors. For instance, if the offender is wearing a grease-covered jumpsuit with his name embroidered over the pocket, the analyst might investigate the possibility that the offender is a mechanic.

² It is impossible to itemize all of the potential actions an offender may take during the commission of a crime. Burglars often ransack residences, eat the food in the house, or use a pillowcase to carry off the loot. Robbers may force their victims to lie on the ground, discard wallets after removing money, or inflict unnecessary injury. Analysts will have to consider these special, "miscellaneous" actions on a case-by-case basis.