

# **Case Studies of Deviant Creative Individuals and Their Major Life Achievements: An Executive Summary of Rusin's 2002 Master's Project**

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## **Is History Doomed to Repeat Itself?**

### **Project Purpose:**

To examine three historical cases of deviant individuals and isolate their major life achievements to determine if there is any relationship between CPS and great atrocities.

### **Project Questions:**

- Are there significant similarities and differences in terms of biological data among the three cases?
- Can elements of CPS be identified in deviant cases?
- What type of relationship, if any, will there be between CPS process and deviant individuals' achievements?

### **Project Significance:**

This study addressed the concern that although creative geniuses like Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud have used their abilities to improve humankind in many groundbreaking ways (Gardner, 1993), little has been written about examining highly intelligent deviant individuals and their use of CPS (Simonton, 1994). The purpose of this study was to determine if there were any characteristics that were similar or different among deviant individuals, to more fully understand how the creative deviant mind functions, and to explore how deviant individuals may utilize CPS, regardless of what their intention was (Rusin, 2002). More in depth information about this population is timely, especially in the wake of the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on September 11, 2002 because it may shed valuable light on how deviant individuals commit atrocities and how the natural aspects of the CPS stages are used, regardless of motivation.

## So, How Was This Investigated???

### The Selected Deviant Ones...

In order to gain insight into the deviant mind, five criteria were developed for the selection of three historical cases:

1. Each candidate must have created a long-term impact because of his/her deviant actions.
2. Each candidate should represent a different genius within a criminal category, i.e., political genius, serial killer, etc.
3. All candidates must have lived between the same historical period, 1900 – 1950.
4. There must be extensive biographical, and if possible autobiographical, information available on each candidate's life.
5. There must be one significant life achievement that fulfills the criteria for defining a notorious event.

Based on these criteria **Adolf Hitler**, **Al Capone**, and **Nathan Leopold, Jr.** were chosen and developed as case studies. Data were obtained through autobiographical information, where available, in addition to biographical information to determine any similarities and differences in the following four main categories (Rusin, 2002, pp. 19 - 38):

- family influences;
- childhood and adolescent influences;
- personality traits;
- life patterns.

### The Selected Deviant Achievements...

After this initial selection a second set of three criteria was established to select one major life achievement from each of the cases:

1. The act must have shown signs of premeditation and extensive planning.
2. The act must have remained notorious throughout decades.
3. The act must have shown some signs of novelty or newness.

Based on these criteria, the **Final Solution** and what role Hitler played in planning and implementing this event was examined in depth. Also, a closer look was taken at the **St. Valentine Day's Massacre** and what role Al Capone and his associates played in the planning and implementation of this notorious event. Finally, the senseless **kidnapping and murder of 14 year-old Bobbie Franks**, deemed this country's first "thrill kill" because "the child was slain for the satisfaction of a desire for deep plotting" (Fass, 1993) was examined to determine what role Nathan Leopold, Jr., a highly intelligent young Chicago law student, played in the planning and implementation.

## **Autobiographical and Biographical Findings...**

Similarities and differences among the autobiographical and biographical data were examined and the results showed that there were **nine similarities** among the following four main categories of criteria: Family Influences (**relationship with parents, deaths in the immediate family**); Childhood and Adolescent Influences (**criminal history**); and Personality Traits (**highly intelligent or of genius caliber, guilty of murder, all were deemed evil by others, paranoia or delusional thinking, sexual perversion, and egocentrism or grandiosity**).

As for **differences**, **four** were found in the following areas of criteria: Family Influences (**occupation of parents and birth order**), and Childhood and Adolescent Influences (**intellectual strengths, and hobbies and role models**).

## **And the Relationship to CPS Process...**

A timeline was developed for each of the life achievements using biographical and historical data. Once the timelines for the planning and implementation of the Final Solution, The St. Valentine's Day Massacre, and the Kidnapping and Murder of Bobbie Franks were completed, Creative Approaches to Problem Solving (Isaksen, Dorval, Treffinger, 1994) was used for the CPS framework. This framework guided the search for evidence in the following stages of CPS: mess-finding, data-finding, problem-finding, idea-finding, solution-finding, and acceptance-finding. A Likert scale was used to determine if there was minimal evidence of a particular stage, some evidence of a particular stage, and quite a bit evidence of a particular stage.

## **Well, What's the Answer? Are We Doomed to Repeat Our Mistakes???**

### **The Findings Suggest...**

Specific similarities emerged from the analysis of the autobiographical and biographical data. Among the most interesting similarities was the idealized and devoted relationship each case study had with his mother. See Rusin, 2002 in Chapter IV for discussion on all emergent themes found in the four main categories of criteria.

When looking at the planning and implementation of the three selected life achievements and the possible use of CPS, a clear relationship was established. Although there was no evidence of mess-finding found in any of the three life achievements, when combining all three timelines together, acceptance-finding was identified a total of 71 times, idea-finding was identified 52 times, and evidence of solution-finding was found 27 times. Also, a Likert scale ranging from 1 (shows minimal evidence) to 3 (shows strong evidence) for each of the stages of CPS helped determine more specifically how much evidence was found. For a specific breakdown of CPS stages identified in each life achievement and possible implications see Rusin, 2002 Chapter V and Chapter VI.

## **The Bad News was...**

### **Deviance occurred both when individuals worked alone and when they had group support.**

The Kidnapping and Murder of Bobbie Franks illustrated how two deviant individuals worked together within society to carry out their plan. The St. Valentine's Day Massacre illustrated how a deviant underworld organization worked together to carry out a deviant plan. The Final Solution defied explanation because of the vast support and collaboration it required from society to implement the murders of over six million people with deadly efficiency. Even today there are still some who claim that the Holocaust was a hoax and deny its reality. One possible implication, then, was that someone creative and deviant enough, working within our society, could in fact find the necessary support in others to bring a large scale, violent, deviant act to fruition in today's world. A powerful finding here was in the movement from individual planning to various degrees of social involvement and influence on others. In effect, it was possible, under the right circumstances, that similar atrocities could be repeated again in history. Since "creativity is complex but understandable, and natural (present in everyone)" (Isaksen, Dorval, Treffinger, 1994, p.3), and if the necessary support was found then this deviant deliberateness could mushroom into a negative, yet highly creative act.

### **The Good News was... The deliberate use of creativity can also be intrinsically good and be used as a means to an end.**

When healthy, positive and productive people access their natural ability to problem solve using their own creativity in a deliberate and ethical manner, it enhances their own lives as well as enhancing the quality of life for society as a whole. A modern day challenge is to blend the need for ethics, guidance and vision into the complex concept of creativity.

Isaac Stern, a famous Jewish violinist, refused to perform in Germany because of the Holocaust, but he taught master classes there in 1999, saying, "I forgive nothing, but it isn't very human not to give people a chance to change."

Wouldn't it be nice if in the future CPS could be used on a wide scale as a preventive measure to predict atrocities by selecting the "most promising options" and then plan warning systems to be put in place to prevent them from actually happening?

## References

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