Case Report

Terrorism and the ‘utility’ of people with ASPD trait patterns
Forensic significance of MCMI III and Rorschach Inkblot assessment.

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Abstract
Terrorist attacks have become the bane of the state of Maharashtra in particular, and India in general, in the recent past. Many cases have remained sub judice and hence it has often not been possible to share psychometric test findings of the same with the academic community of psychiatrists and psychologists.

This paper presents a case study of one such profile, which clearly reveals a profile of an ASPD personality style (301.7) with the use of the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory – 3rd edition (MCMI III) and the Rorschach Inkblot Test. The assessment for the prison inmate was completed in April 2011 and is published now since the case is no longer sub judice. The report reveals the equal importance that must be laid on both, empirical and projective testing, as well as on a carefully obtained history and mental status examination findings.

(key words: terrorism, antisocial personality disorder, Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory, Rorschach Inkblot Test)

Introduction

Terrorism is a phenomenon that is spreading its tentacles worldwide. The role that extremist subcultures play in the induction of young people into the ranks of terrorist groups is well documented. Fanaticism and fundamentalism, aggression and frustration, inequality and extreme poverty, all have their role to play in drawing people into this net. India in general, and the state of Maharashtra, with Mumbai as its capital has perhaps become an easy target for terrorist groups.¹

A strong socialization process by the mentors of these young terrorists helps to dehumanize and stigmatize potential victims, and fan the flames of ambition and the desire in young recruits into terrorism to seek a niche for themselves. Use of technology is certainly a marker of 21st century terrorism and there is no doubt now that recruiters are now adept at recognizing certain characteristics in those to be enlisted.

Various observations about recruitment into terrorist activity have been made by experts. “A principal reason for the lack of psychometric studies of terrorism is that researchers have little, if any, direct access to terrorists, even imprisoned ones. Individuals who become terrorists often are unemployed, socially alienated individuals who have dropped out of society. Increasingly, terrorist organizations in the developing world are recruiting younger members. The only role models for these young people to identify with are often terrorists and guerrillas.”²
Forensic psychological profiling of those terrorists who have been apprehended can give us some insight into these profiles. This paper presents a single case study of one such young terrorist whose psychometric assessment was completed using MCMI –III and Rorschach Inkblot Test.

The MCMI –III consists of 175 statements which require a Yes-No format of response, and takes about 35-45 minutes to complete. In the current case, the questions were asked of the respondent in Hindi and his Yes/No responses were recorded and later scored. Ideally, the MCMI III should be administered to individuals of 18 years or above, if there is evidence of some psychological disturbance. In this instance, psychological assessment was recommended by a government appointed psychiatrist and hence the investigation was undertaken. The MCMI III consists of 14 Personality Disorder scales of which 3 are considered severe personality disorders, 10 Clinical Syndrome scales, of which 3 are severe clinical syndromes, as well as one validity scale and three modifying indices, X, Y and Z.3

The Rorschach Inkblot Method is perhaps the best known of the various projective techniques of personality assessment. 4 This consists of ten plates of which five are black and white and five are colored. Once again, three of the latter are multihued, and two have black, white and red designs. There are various approved methods of scoring the Rorschach, of which the Klopfer approach was used in this case. The Rorschach inkblot method has been critiqued for the apparent subjectivity of its interpretations, and at the same time lauded for the flexibility of its use and application, and the sheer volume of its usage over the years.4-5

The Klopfer approach allows for a judgment about the speed with which the client responded, indicative of depressive pointers if any, as well as an insight into reality testing of the respondent, in addition to many other aspects of interpretation based on the location, determinants and content of the responses.6

Case study and findings.

Observations and interview:

The respondent was small built, compact and agile, although he walked slowly to the testing room. He gave his age correctly, indicating good orientation. He was coherent and relevant and answered to the point. His time orientation was also reflected in his awareness of meal and prayer times, even if there was no clock in the testing room. He showed discipline and declined a second cup of tea, and also kneeled and prayed without seeking permission, showing motor agility. He looked down often, avoided eye contact and needed to be coaxed to respond.

His memory was unimpaired, since he could report his age, name of school, names and marital statuses of siblings, lack of relationship with parents, site of incidents for which he was apprehended, as well as date of departure from his country and arrival here, number and names of people accompanying him, equipment and cards, currency they carried, etc. although several years had elapsed since these incidents occurred.

The respondent admitted to occasional use of alcohol, charas, ganja, bhang and cocaine in the past and claimed to be a vegetarian. He had contradicted this claim on past occasions, and could be using such contradictions purposefully. He also claimed knowledge about brewing
local liquor, crafts such as bag making, as well as expertise at weaponry and knowledge of English without attempt to feign, possibly reflecting some overconfidence.

He responded appropriately to all questions although he tried to stall on some by feigning lack of comprehension or smiling to delay answering. He spoke in a thin, soft voice, again probably purposefully produced since he sang later in a full throated voice. He shows a sense of humor, and occasionally tried to joke at the expense of the doctor who regularly visits him. He spoke as if he had a higher status than her, conceding that “she works very hard”.

The respondent showed absolutely no remorse for any deaths, either of his colleagues or victims, attributing it to divine will. In fact, at a point he spoke of people in his group in glorifying terms. Further, he showed alertness and intelligence in admitting to the reason he was trained and sent to this country, but totally and consistently denying any involvement in the deaths attributed to him. Psychologist Jerrold Post opines that the most dangerous terrorist is likely to be the religious terrorist, ‘who can justify the most heinous acts’ in the name of faith, and can still maintain a cool and unruffled demeanor.  

**Test findings:**

Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory, 3rd ed (MCMI III) and the Rorschach Inkblot Method (RIM) were used, and the respondent co-operated with testing. Attempts were made to put him at ease during the assessment, and also to achieve results in the minimum possible time for security purposes. The police personnel in charge at the institution extended full support and were present throughout, as was the referring psychiatrist deputed by the government authorities. Their presence in no way restricted responsivity of the testee who was much at ease and relaxed throughout. The assessment lasted for approximately three hours, with breaks given for the respondent to rest, take tea or water, visit the toilet, etc. Due consent was taken before testing was done, and no pressure was put on him to respond. Notes were maintained, the latter process being visible to the respondent. The interview and testing was done mainly in Hindi, since the inmate expressed comfort with this language, although he seemed comfortable with English and Marathi as well, and often used these languages interchangeably.

**MCMI III profile:**

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
V &=& 1 & X = (152) 87 \\
A &=& 85 & Y = (14) 65 \\
B &=& 74 & Z = (19) 76 \\
1 &=& 71 & A = 85 \\
2A &=& 67 & H = 65 \\
2B &=& 67 & N = 61 \\
3 &=& 70 & D = 74 \\
4 &=& 36 & B = 80 \\
5 &=& 49 & T = 77 \\
6A &=& 79 & R = 65 \\
6B &=& 66 & SS = 66 \\
7 &=& 32 & CC = 67 \\
& & & PP = 69
\end{array}
\]
\[ 8A = 48 \]
\[ 8B = 62 \]
\[ S = 65 \]
\[ C = 70 \]
\[ P = 58 \]

**MCMIIII Note**: Elevated scales: 6A: ASPD personality style; A= Anxiety; B and T= respectively alcohol and drug dependence, usually also indicative of impulsivity.

**Impressions**: V=1 usually invalidates a profile. However, it must be kept in mind that the respondent is facing a high public profile case in court, which has sensitized him and at the same time, has been kept incarcerated continuously living in very unreal conditions.

His high X is probably the reflection of his need to speak and communicate after remaining in solitary confinement and being in the glare of the media. It would also be a reflection of his need to impress. Scores under 85 are not indicative of any personality disorder.

The only significant elevations seen were on ASPD personality style (8A=79) and high impulsivity reflected on B=80. A=85 seems to be a natural outcome of his current legal status and impending punishment (possibly death penalty).

**ROR profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>∑Time</th>
<th>12 min 35 sec</th>
<th>∑ R</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean RT</td>
<td>7.8 sec</td>
<td>Chr RT</td>
<td>5 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLR: F+=16</td>
<td>F-=nil</td>
<td>F+/- =9</td>
<td>F+% =64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Loc**

| W=10 | F = 10 | H = 1 |
| D= 13 | M = nil | A = 8 |
| Dd= nil | FM = 1 | Hd= nil |
| S= 4 (one was pure S) | FC = 2 | Ad = 1 |
| Cut off W=1 | CF = 2 | Obj= 13 |
| FC’ = 4 | (H) = 1 ; (A) = 1 |
| Fc = 3 |
| Fk = 1 |
| KF = 1 |
FK = 1

Notes: Adequate card turning. Some perseveration of ‘bat’ and ‘bag’ responses since the latter, i.e. bag making, was his trade prior to his current assignment.

**Interpretation:** Excellent FLR reflects totally intact reality testing, and no diagnosis is made on axis I. No psychotic pointers seen. This is supported by 6 Populars, which reflect touch with reality and strong adherence to norms (in this case subcultural norms) and even 3 original responses which reflects creativity and out of box thinking in the presence of intelligence. Determinants and content present a wide variety reflecting rich associational life and emotional health. The total number of responses (25) is also adequate, especially given his low scholastic exposure and low test sophistication.

Very “clean” protocol, no double scoring, each response usually yielded single determinant or content. Balance of W, D and S reflects normal pattern. 4 S responses reflect rebellious tendency, following one’s own set of rules. Nil M and only 1 FM reflects almost an absence of relationships or human affectional bonds. The normal FC’ responses (4) rule out depression, as does the quick mean RT (7.8 seconds) and quicker chromatic than achromatic RT (5 and 10.5 seconds respectively.) The 25 responses were given in 12.5 minutes, showing alert yet unhurried responding. ‘A’ responses seem to reflect impulsivity, and immediate need gratification, (A) and (H) reflect fantasy responses.

**Summary:**

The profile on both tests clearly reflected absence of any psychopathology, yet presence of Antisocial personality pattern traits which would render the respondent easily trainable into a terrorist regime. Hudson writes that ‘In addition to having a normal personality and not being diagnosably mentally disturbed, a terrorist’s other characteristics make him or her practically indistinguishable from normal people at least in terms of outward appearance…..terrorists tend to be in their twenties, healthy and strong, with no particular demands about social background or educational level’. Maxwell Taylor also opines that mental illness has little utility in terrorism. Even psychopathy, if at all, should be present only to a limited extent, so that the person does not become unreliable and uncontrolled. There should be no personal purposefulness to his or her acts, and they should follow the group will, remain discreet, careful, and be capable of detailed planning and well timed execution. 8

**Conclusion:**

The purpose of this paper was to outline an interesting case study to provoke academic interest in the forensic applications of psychometric assessment and psychiatric interviewing with a view to better understanding the phenomenon of terrorism and recruitment of young people into groups that create havoc in the lives of citizens the world over.
References


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