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Profiling Assault Victims

Introduction

Assaults are sadly frequent in our society. There are many factors that can push somebody to commit a physical aggression. Many of them make survival instinct as the root that drives this behaviour. But how do animals use this survival instinct in wild environments? Is there any connection between primal instincts and assaulter´s selective behaviours? We can indeed say animals select their victims based on several factors, which summed up together show a weakness on their target. Assault victims are as well targets of social predators, who unconsciously read exposed information that implicitly hints the vulnerability on their victims. This specific **study** treats body language as an evident factor for victim selection, obtaining significant **conclusions** about how a set of involuntary body movements can attract or dissuade attackers.

Abstract

Experiment below was carried out on a prison where convicts rated video-taped persons in a 1-10 scale in terms of a possible aggression. Videotaped persons were analysed on a later stage using a movement system (Labanalysis), and evidence was found on common unconsciously selective behaviours across participants, targeting individuals using same body language. **Results** allowed to portrait the perfect victim and non-victim patterns. **Conclusions** obtained also examine advantages and disadvantages on training society on the knowledge of this factors, wrapping up with recommendations on self-awareness.

Methodology

In a determination to find common patterns attackers would use to select their victims, an experiment was carried on a prison where a set criminals convicted of several crime offences were asked to look video tapes of people walking on the streets.

Criminal's ages ranged from 17 to 56, with a 75% under 35. There were married, singles, separated, divorced, and they were within several education levels and ethnic varieties.

On a first stage, a group of 12 prisoners were asked to review these tapes and discuss about a possible aggression against each of the individuals. Based on their conversations and using their own slang, a scale from 1-10 was created so it would be used on a second stage by the next group of participants.

On the second phase, a second set of **53 prisoners** (responders) were asked to watch the tapes and provide a ranking for each of the persons using the scale mentioned above. The videotapes where divided then into 2 groups:

Group	Ranking	Percentage respondent agreement	Number
Very easy victims	1-3	> 50% (27 to 36 of respondents)	20
Non victims (control group)	4-10	> 50%	19

First set of results

First set of results indicated that older women and men scored higher on the ranking list, followed by younger women and younger men. This results did not really show up anything significant although data was used for a second phase of results based on the Labanalysis code.

Classification	Potential Victims	Non-Victims
Older women	8	7
Old men	4	4*
Young men	4	4*
Young women	4	4*

*: For control purposes, persons where randomly selected from the correspondent non-victims subgroups.

Labanalysis

Labanalysis is the term used to define the "system of movement notation for the study of non-verbal communication". It came into play around 1970 by behavioural experts as Laban, who viewed the movement as an extension and reflection of our emotions and thoughts. They used this system to come to a 21 different sets of isolated movements that could be identified on the tapes.

Based on this system, both victims and not victims were rated by 2 dance analysts separately. Both were in agreement in over 90% of their evaluations.

They were mainly focused around the gait and body movements on walking, i.e. Synchronicity around the whole body.

Labanalysis Results

Significant differences were obtained on 5 of the 21 movement categories: stride length, type of weight shift, type of walk, body movement, and feet. See tables below:

Stride:

	Medium Stride	Long Stride	Total
Victims	8	6	14
Non Victims	15	(1 non classifiable)	15

Type of weight shift: (categories were collapsed into 2)

	3Dimensionally	"Other"	Total
Victims	4	6	10
Non Victims	11	2	13

*Body movement:

	Contralateral	Unilaterally	Total
Victims	9	9	10
Non Victims	none	20	13

*: Biggest difference between victim and non-victims was the body movement which measures how much body participates in the body.

Type of walk:

	Postural	Gestural	Undefined	Total
Victims	8	8	4	20
Non Victims	17	**none**	1	

Feet:

	Swung	Lifted	Total
Victims	none	7	7
Non Victims	16	**none**	16

With all this results, researchers were able to draw a victim profile, which would have either long or short stride (relative to their body). This profile would move gesturally (activating only a part of the body rather than postural (whole body), would move unilaterally, one side at a time (I.e. instead of left arm and right leg).

	Victim Profile	Non Victim
Stride	Long or Short	Medium
Body weight shift	Laterally, diagonally or up/down movement	3 dimensional pattern
Walk	Gesturally	Posturally
Whole body movement	Unilaterally	Contralaterally
Feet	Lift feet while walking	Swing feet

Literature about design, specific numbers on this study, further detail, and some other experiments that suggest same patterns is available online.

Conclusions

This and extensive further other studies suggest that nonverbal language is an external indicator of our personality and can hint behavioural traits. Although body language was the element targeted in this study, there are other several factors that can bring some persons closer to the victim role, such as facial expressions, public exhibition of valuable goods or isolation. *For example an attacker would prefer a victim that is alone rather than attacking a person on a crowd*. Although some of this elements are unconscious therefore cannot be changed, there are some others that can mark the difference between safeness and being targeted as a "*very easy rip off*" (point 1 in criminal scale). It is important that we are aware about all this key elements, including the ones we are not able to change, so we have a better understanding on how to "unprofile" ourselves from the perfect picture of a victim.

Social training on this terms could potentially derive on different selective behaviours, suggesting we need to be vigilant to the signs of potential threats by staying alert, something that could unconsciously prevent a physical assault, keeping us safe and alive.

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References

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