

Profiling abductors: Q&A with Brad Garrett



They tend to be white males, 30-40 years, have problems in relationships, desire control

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An important part of a police investigation into a long-lasting abduction is to create a profile of the possible abductor. Police would look at past cases to see if they can discern a motive, the personal characteristics and eventually the actual identity of a suspect. Of course there are exceptions but knowing the patterns often apply.

[Brad Garrett](#) was the principle FBI behavioral profiler in its Washington field office until 2006 when he started the Brad Garrett Investigations International agency. He has a PhD in criminology and is a consultant for ABC News.

CBCNews: When an abduction occurs and someone is missing but there's no ransom note, where does a criminal profiler begin?





When police begin to investigate an adult abduction, Brad Garrett, a former FBI behavioural profiler, told CBC News that profilers start by looking at the victim and then develop a profile of a possible abductor. ((ABC News))

Brad Garrett: You begin with a profile of the victim. Who is the victim? Where does the victim work, with whom does the victim associate? Do they have a profession that makes them more vulnerable, like somebody who works in prostitution?

Or do they go to locations where there could potentially be a higher risk of being abducted, assaulted, robbed, whatever. Circumstances, maybe work, takes the victim into certain neighborhoods.

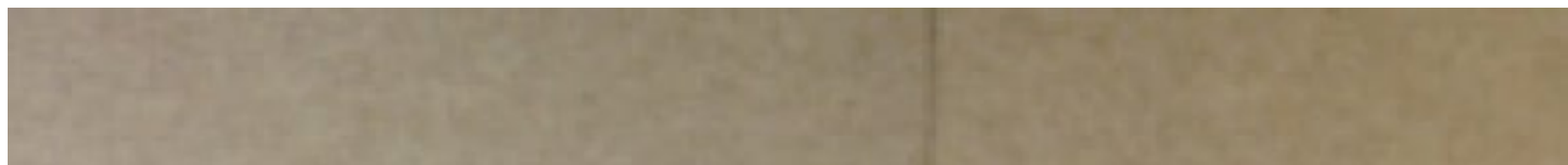
I would interview as many of the victim's friends, relatives and associates as possible to get a better understanding of her.

I would review her emails, her cellphone records and other phone records.

The first thing, in conjunction with other leads, you are going to want to eliminate, or not, did someone who knows her abduct her? Does she have an angry boyfriend, ex-husband, someone who got mad at her at work, somebody that previously threatened her?

The reason why is, if this didn't have anything to do with who she is, that she just happened to be walking down 123 Elm Street when this happened, then that tells me one thing.

At the same time that you are doing this profile of her you check if there any other similar type of abductions nearby, ideally in the part of the city that this occurred, or any place in the metropolitan area, to see if I've got anybody out there that's already done this or attempted to do it. There may be evidence in another case linked to this case.





Philip Garrido was sentenced to life imprisonment on June 1 for the kidnapping and rape of Jaycee Dugard. Garrido kidnapped her in 1991 and held her captive for 18 years. ((Rich Pedroncelli/Associated Press))

For example, someone might have gotten a car description, that sort of thing. Stranger abductions are fairly rare, so you always start with, while you are looking at other possibilities, "Could this be an abduction by a known entity?"

Abductions, kidnappings for ransom are also fairly rare.

There are people who abduct children, abductors who do it for money or politics, people who take someone hostage when a crime goes awry and people whose abductions may seem to be random. What are the major differences between these groups for a criminal profiler?

There are big differences there. Clearly child and adult abductors have different preferences but the motivations can be similar: domination, control and sexual desire.

How often is sex part of the motive for the abduction?

Most of the time it's fairly high.

In establishing a general profile of the abductor, are there patterns?

They tend to be white males, they tend to be a little older, in the 30-40 year age range, they tend to have a history of problems in relationships in general but in particular with women, they may or may not have a criminal history.

It's quite possible they have some sort of history of sexual assault, maybe not for abduction, but maybe being sexually inappropriate with women in the past. But not always.





Former Austrian police commander Herwig Haidinger holds up a picture of Wolfgang Priklopil during a news conference in Vienna, Aug. 23, 2006. Priklopil kidnapped Natascha Kampusch in 1998. After she escaped eight years later, Priklopil committed suicide while a police manhunt was underway. ((Heinz-Peter Bader/Reuters))

They tend to be somewhat — but not all of the time — socially isolated. But I can think of situations where that's not the case.

In general, they feel inadequate and one of the things in abducting, controlling and sexual assaulting is: it's about power. They are in charge, they are doing what they want to do, not what someone else wants them to do. They get what they want.

It's a totally selfish, narcissistic behaviour.

Are these cases of pre-meditation or opportunity presenting itself?

They are either going to look for somebody that fits their desire, with the victim being in a "wrong place at the wrong time" kind of situation.

Or they lock on to somebody that is in their world at work, school, etc.

Say they spotted somebody at work they may not really know. They can see them at work, they follow them home, they follow them out on a date, they follow them to the movies. It's more of an opportunity thing for these guys but occasionally you do have that situation where they target an individual that they've got a fantasy about but have never met.

Jaycee Lee Dugard

When she was 11 years old, [Jaycee Lee Dugard was kidnapped](#) as she was waiting at a bus stop near her California home. For 18 years, she was held in a secret backyard compound behind the home of Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, who both later pleaded guilty to kidnapping and sexual assault. During her captivity, Dugard gave birth to two daughters.

Natascha Kampusch

[Natascha Kampusch was snatched](#) on her way to school and held for eight years in a small cellar under the garage of her abductor, Wolfgang Priklopil, in Austria. She escaped at age 18 and eventually described repeated physical and mental abuse inflicted on her by Priklopil.

Fusako Sano

Before her disappearance as a nine-year-old in her Japanese hometown, Fusako Sano had been watching a school baseball game. She was held for nine years and two months by a man who kept her on the upstairs floor of the apartment he shared with his mother, who lived downstairs.

Elizabeth Smart

Elizabeth Smart was abducted at age 14 from the bedroom she shared with her nine-year-old sister in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was found nine months later. Her abductor, [Brian David Mitchell, was later convicted](#) of kidnapping and unlawful transportation of a minor across state lines for sex and is serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison.

With child abduction the first hours are critical, what about when the victim is an adult?

It always applies.

One of the things as time goes on, and you cannot find the victim, and there is some belief, maybe even evidence that something violent happened — blood on a door, something left in her apartment or on the street — this is a real concern because it's very difficult to contain somebody that's alive, whether they're a child or an adult.

You've got to find a place to keep them and develop a way that other people don't know their location, you have to feed them, you've got to provide some bathroom facilities. You have to do something if you are going to keep them alive. The short answer is, it's a lot of trouble.

With these kinds of cases, long-running abductions, some people often say why didn't they escape sooner; what is it about the abductor that makes that so difficult?

That's partly driven by the offender's personality and ability to control the victim.

A victim may have opportunities to escape and doesn't because she fears for her life if she

tries.

Sometimes these guys will threaten them, "I'm going to leave and if I come back and find you are not here I am going to go kill your mother and sister," or child, or whoever it might be.

It's enough of a fear factor with some people that they won't leave. There is another thing that can happen with extended abductions. You've probably heard of the Stockholm syndrome.

That can happen sometimes where the victim identifies on some level with the abductor and decides to stay just because it is safer. They may even have some feelings for the person.





Brian David Mitchell, who was found guilty of the 2002 abduction of Elizabeth Smart, is escorted by a U.S. marshal as he arrives at the federal court house in Salt Lake City, Utah, Dec. 10 2010. ((Colin E. Braley/Associated Press))

That would be an interesting question in reference to Jaycee Dugard being abducted for all of those years. They interviewed people that said she came to the front door of the house to talk to people this guy worked with but never stated a problem or attempted to leave. Clearly she did not feel okay leaving and felt okay on some levels to stay there, whatever that might be. So there is that aspect to it.

I don't think that applies with these guys who put women in dungeons and keep them down there and either let them go at some point or kill them, just because the deprivation in how they're being treated would counter their ability to have any empathy at all for the bad guy.

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