

Anti-Scientific Criminology

In crime TV, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is often seen exercising authoritarian dominance in order to subvert criminal activity. Blurring the lines between police violence and entertainment, these portrayals prioritise sensationalising law enforcement instead of an informative representation. Such a hyperfixated concept on coercive control and police violence, however, contradicts arguments for the FBI's pro-scientific stance; Bongardt writes, "*Behavioral science seeks to understand offender motivation (the "why") and their behavioral signatures*". (Bongardt, T. 2010. *Meet the FBI's Behavioral Unit. American College of Forensic Examiners International*). Therefore evidently, the Behavioral Science Unit's (BSU) controversy at the time of their founding (1972) migrated into narratives of true-crime, critiquing how traditional law enforcement saw "the why" of a crime being a waste of resource and time. This anti-scientific stance can also be seen in Joe Penhall's "*Mindhunter*" (2017), where agents Holden Ford and Bill Tench represent the FBI's transition towards formal methodology through a series of bureaucratic frustration and resistance to be taken seriously; showing the behavioural unit weren't America's superheroes, but a marginalised group struggling to fund the FBI's approval. Set just five years after the BSU was established, the first season served as commentary on how the FBI lacked the psychological understanding to incarcerate a criminal, avoiding scientific research and ultimately leading to poor prevention of crime rates. Whereas most crime shows dramatise the position of an officer's authority, *Mindhunter* uses the basement setting to represent their shadowed commitment. This underground metaphor for how the FBI viewed the

BSU as inferior links to the true story of criminal profiler, John Douglas, who recounted, *“While traveling to instruct other law enforcement agencies about profiling, he realizes that no one from the bureau has ever spoken with convicted killers to acquire more information for the profiling process”*. (WERNER, Ashley M. 2022. *‘Mindhunter: Inside the FBI’s Elite Serial Crime Unit’*. Theory in action). A biography which shows how Douglas’ involvement in profiling, similar to the fictional protagonists of Mindhunter, were mocked by the FBI. In conclusion, by linking anti-scientific debates to the early involvement of behavioural units within the FBI, I evidence how Mindhunter truthfully portrays the mistreatment of the BSU, subverting a sensational law enforcement.