Reversal Theory: Understanding the Motivational Styles of Espionage

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Is espionage a question of preference? Are there definite psychological needs that compel individuals to seek satisfaction through spying against the interests of their own country? To address these questions, I apply Dr. Michael J. Apter's Reversal Theory (RT) to the espionage or insider threat problem to further our understanding of what may be done—proactively—to counter what the former U.S. National Counterintelligence Executive calls "the top counterintelligence challenge to our community."[1] About the varied application of his theory, Apter writes:

> New patterns become evident wherever we look, whether our interest is in family relations, violence, humor, risk-taking, leadership, sport, or almost any other topic. As a result, reversal theory is a theory of unusual generality that can act to integrate seemingly unrelated topics into a single overarching and comprehensive framework.[2]

The application of this versatile theory—that psychologists have applied to topics ranging from smoking cessation to enhancing athletic performance—may have value for security professionals and the U.S. counterintelligence community. This is because RT may answer questions such as:

- What are the basic motives of human beings?
- Is there a pattern underlying different types of mental disorder?
- Why is it that sometimes people voluntarily do unnecessary things that might harm them?
- Why do people sometimes enjoy doing things that are forbidden?[3]

Goal of this Article

The goal of this article is to present a better understanding of the psychology of those who have engaged in espionage—not to diagnose or establish a profile of those who might become a spy. I examine the motivational states and metamotives of only some of the individuals who have committed espionage based on research the U.S. government has conducted and through open published sources. Extremes in experiencing certain motivational states may contribute to the decision to commit espionage, and it may make a person vulnerable to volunteering. Additionally, the frustration of failing to make needed psychological shifts (or "reversals") over time can override the directional signals of an otherwise decent person's moral compass.

Roadmap of Content

Espionage viewed through the RT lens will focus on three aspects of Apter's theories. First, I examine what Apter calls the "motivational styles" of several convicted U.S. spies and the spies' metamotives. Apter calls metamotives "the motives for having motives."[4] For example, if money is a motive to spy, RT asks: What motive lies behind this? Does money represent achievement, a form of thrill, a way of escape, and more?[5] After considering metamotives and patterns of motivational styles, it is arguable that these individuals were seeking—but not receiving—necessary psychological satisfaction because they were unable to reverse or shift back and forth on four pairs of opposite motivational states.

Second, Apter's notion of the "protective frame" is explored, which leads me to make two hypotheses. One hypothesis is that those who have committed espionage have a skewed sense of this psychological buffer to anxiety Apter calls the protective frame. The other hypothesis is that perhaps individuals who turn to espionage might thrive on or seek out the arousal that comes from engaging in risky behavior because the protective frame is active at the time of such craving.[6] Apter postulates that the spy may seek out particularly high arousal and take particularly high risks when compared with other people. This is an avenue for further study.

Third, spies tend to suffer from a "significant emotional event" before becoming spies, and they lack mitigating positive factors in

their lives that may lead them to consider and volunteer to commit espionage. Along comes a member of a Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) to support the individual in the choice to become a spy; arguably, much of an FIS agent's tradecraft is based on his or her rebuilding the volunteer's protective frame. This rebuilding of the protective frame and the manipulation of metamotives, I assert, is a more subtle way of thinking about motivations for espionage than looking at the traditional categories of MICE—money, ideology, compromise, and ego.[7] While these broad categories may be easy to understand, MICE offers the security professional little *prospective* guidance on what may make a person shift from leading a normal conforming life to rebelliousness through risk taking and espionage. Reversal theory may provide that guidance.

Reversal Theory—About "Dancers, Not Statues"

Reversal theory is an alternative model for personality analysis that has, as its premise, the idea that people and their behavior change regularly over time.[8] People's motivational states are dynamic, and their behavior they undertake to get satisfaction is likewise changeable.[9] "Personality is dynamic not static: we are more like dancers than statues."[10]

The RT postulates that personality results from patterns of change, rather than fixed traits. Most psychometric work on personality, however, is based on the concept of traits—that is, the idea that people have *fixed traits* or ways of being that at all, or most of the time, remain the same.[11] This has been the theory that the U.S. Intelligence Community has traditionally accepted. For example, Ronald D. Garst in his monograph, "Intelligence Types: The Role of Personality in the Intelligence Profession," states, "Personality types are associated with predictable patterns of behavior."[12] Yet, if personality were based on fixed or static traits, then all human behavior would be predictable—which we know it is not.

Reversal theory challenges the assumption that personality traits or commonalities of behavior are predictable and understandable. According to Apter:

> There are some theories in psychology which, like reversal theory, accept that people change during their daily lives. But the explanation is always along the lines that people change because situations change: for example, people must perform different roles at different times.

> Reversal theory is more radical than this. It argues that people change not only because external contexts change but also because of the changing internal contexts that are represented by reversals between [motivational] states.[13]

It is in the unpredictability or changeability where trait theory hits its limit. If trait theory were correct and personality types make for predictable behavior, every insider threat that the U.S. Intelligence Community has suffered might have been screened out during the agent's initial adjudication to receive a security clearance.

Trait theory fails to account for "the full richness of human life" because "the temporal aspects of personality are systematically excluded or diminished."[14] Apter states:

> [W]e are very different kinds of people at different times in everyday life, and this is the essence of what makes us human. . . . Tell someone that a test they have taken shows that they are extroverted and they will probably respond (as I have found on many occasions) that this may be true sometimes but sometimes they are also introverted. . . . The reason for this seems to be that there is an ever-changing internal context to our actions as well as external environmental forces. We want different things at different times and, partly as a consequence, we see things differently. In this respect, our personalities are shifting and unconstant.[15]

Static trait theory also fails to allow for the idea that a person may change, grow or develop over time. Again, Apter acknowledges the complexity of the human psyche by stating, "To give someone a test and then tell them that this is how they *are* is to do them a grave disservice by limiting them and their possibilities."[16] Nevertheless, this is the premise of most psychometric tests, such as the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator or the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R), because they are based on the assumption that people are "hard-wired" with certain fixed personality traits.

When these tests are administered to the same individual over time, the changeability he or she may indicate on the test—due to variables ranging from experience to their mood that particular day—may be dismissed as "noise." For RT, according to Apter, "the noise may actually contain the message and accurately portray patterns of change over time."[17] These messages, that RT allows and interprets through the Apter Motivational Style Profile (AMSP) or the longer Motivational Style Profile (MSP), could indicate patterns of those who may be at risk of becoming a spy.

What Are the Eight Ways of Being or Motivational States?

In RT, there are eight motivational states or "eight ways of being" organized into four pairs of opposite mental states as depicted in the graphic below:[18]

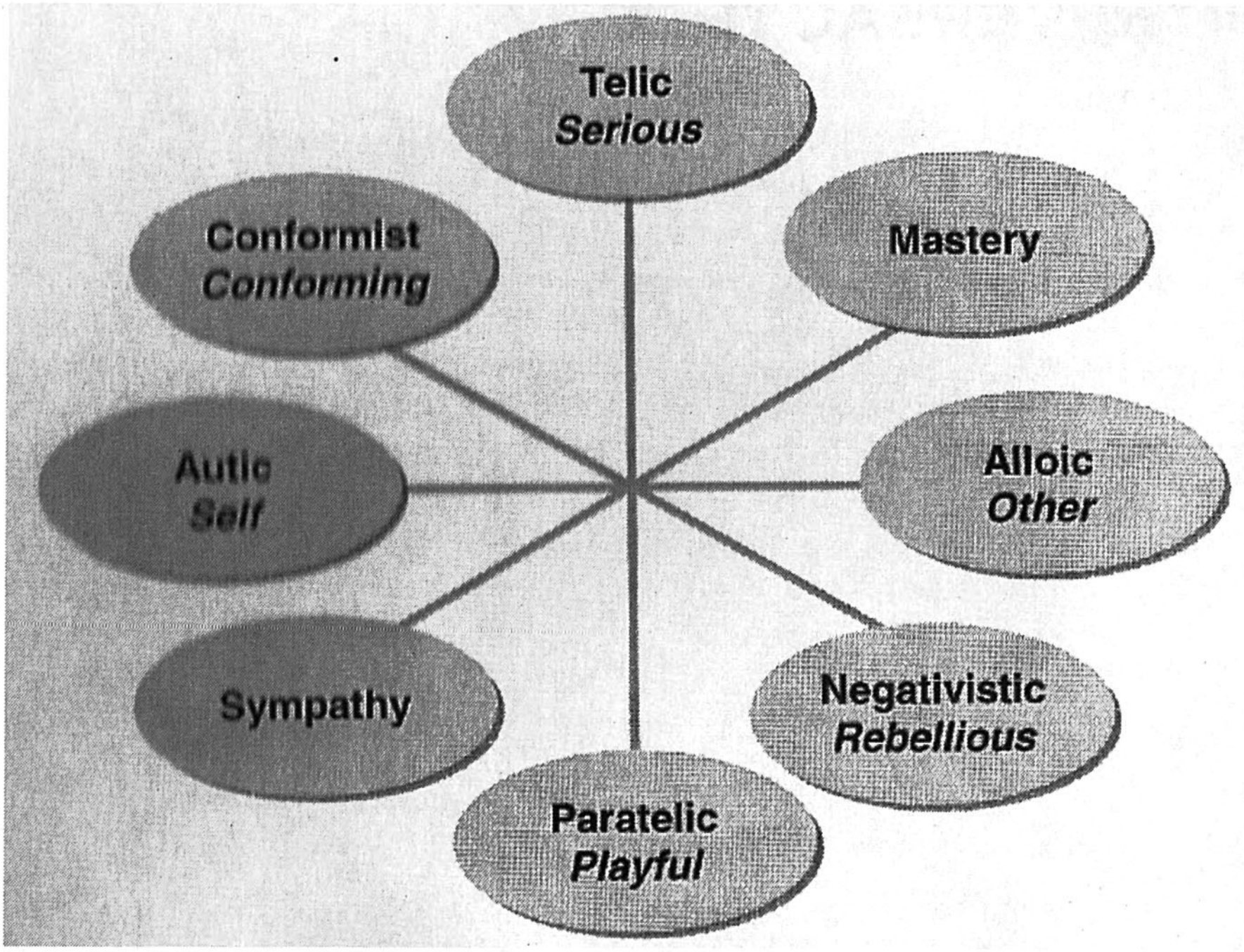

Figure 3.1. The Eight Motivational States

In the four pairs of opposite mental states, each one is based on a particular **motive.**[19] Hence, the opposite poles are called ***motivational states.***[20] Each pair of motivational states makes up a ***domain.***[21] The domains are considered in the following ways.

The Means-Ends Domain: Playful (Paratelic) and Serious (Telic)[22]

This domain governs how a person feels about his or her progress in reaching goals. "It is possible to focus either on the 'end' or the 'means.' . . . Is it the journey or the destination that matters?" Reversal theory calls these opposite states of mind the *serious* and the

playful state. For example, in playing a game, our purpose for engaging in it may be to achieve the goal (serious state) or enjoying the time spent with friends playing the game (playful state).

The Rules Domain: Conforming and Rebelliousness[23]

Spending time in the ***conforming*** state means "fitting in" or doing the right thing at the right time. Being ***rebellious***, however, does not mean what typically comes to mind; that is, acting like a reckless teenager. Although this example may embody someone who may spend a lot of time in the rebellious state, the basic motive behind this state is freedom. "Feeling free and unrestricted, even liberated" is what may contribute to, for example, challenging assumptions, creativity, encouraging innovation, or demonstrating a desire for change.

The Interaction Domain: Mastery and Sympathy[24]

When a person interacts with a person, object, group, situation, or task, there are two opposite ways of experiencing the interactions. We want control, to be in charge, or to win. The ***mastery*** state is all about the transaction. "We care about winning or losing, dominating or being dominated." In the ***sympathy*** state, however, we are concerned with building or maintaining relationships. The sympathy state is all about the relationship while "the Mastery state, is all about power."

The Orientation Domain: Self (Autic) and Others (Alloic)[25]

The basic motive in the ***self-oriented*** state is individualism as opposed to collectivism in the ***others-oriented*** state. "The central question in this domain is this: Is the focus of your motivation on yourself or on others?" When we mentor or coach others, are sensitive to others' needs or encourage team spirit, we are spending time in the other-oriented state. Taking personal responsibility or feeling satisfaction from doing a job well indicates time spent in the self-oriented state.

Just as each state corresponds to a domain, each domain corresponds to a set of values. A graphic and easier-to-read way of depicting the states, domains, and values is as follows:

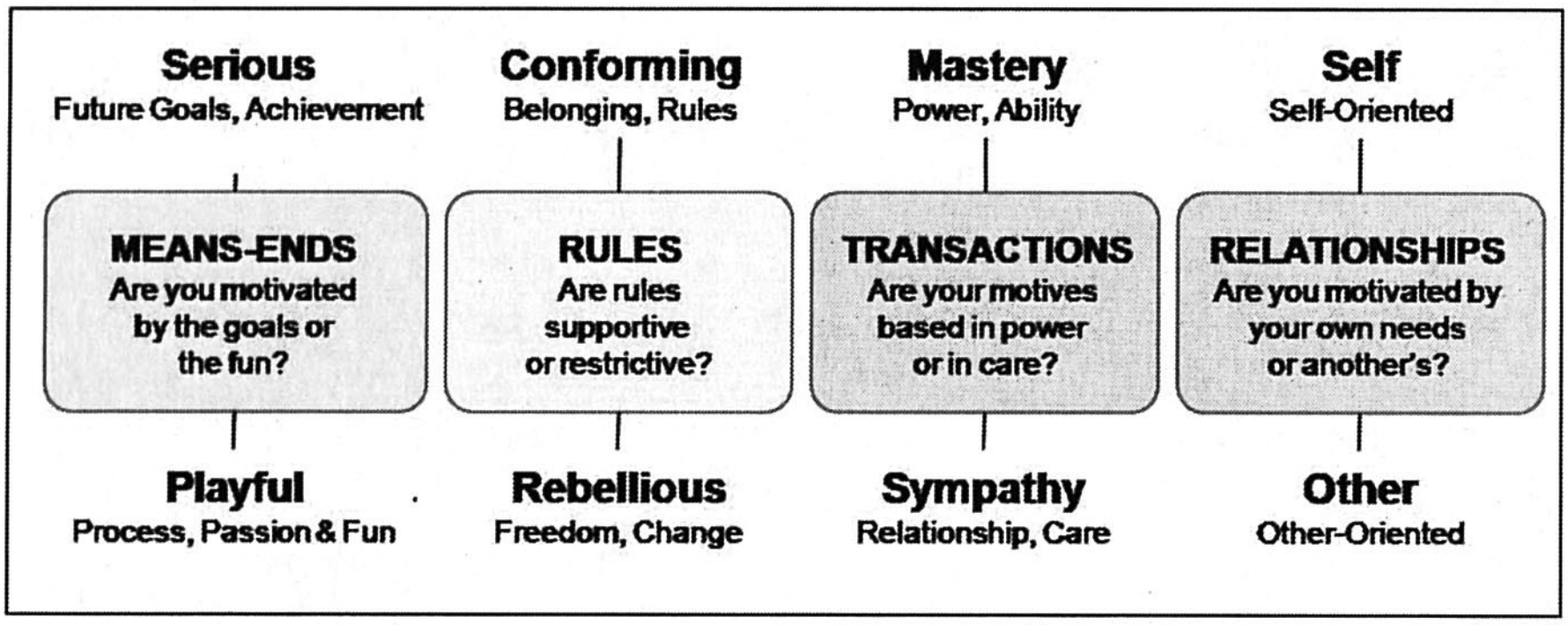

Figure 3.2. Apter's Motivational States, Domains, and Values[26]

Healthy People Don't Commit Espionage: "To Be Healthy Is to Be Unstable"

Because each state has its polar opposite, only one state from each of the four pairs will be active at any given time.[27] Each state in a pair is mutually exclusive of its opposite at any point in time—one state from each pair. Fundamental to RT is that "we are inconsistent and changing, reacting to the same thing in different ways on different occasions, depending on our state of mind."[28] Switches in reversals in these states, therefore, regularly occur. According to Apter:

> As we confront different situations during our daily round of obligations and opportunities, we tend to **reverse** in terms of one or another of these opposites, so that our mental lives are a kind of ever-changing kaleidoscope.[29]

Indeed, reversals are necessary for people to be mentally healthy.

Apter compares the need for reversals to biodiversity that is similarly required to maintain a healthy ecological system. In the context of personality and psychology, he states:

> "Psychodiversity" . . . allows [men and women] to adapt to ever-changing and relatively unpredictable environments, and to have a life, which is rich with experiential diversity and allows for the expression of all sides of his or her personality.[30]

Reversals between motivational states fill emotional needs and help a person match his or her personality style to the needs of a situation or to another person. Healthy people access all the motivational states at different times, and, over time, get all the satisfaction of that which is available from spending time in the various states.

According to Apter, a full-rounded person displays ***psychodiversity***.[31] He states:

> [I]t is possible to assert that to be healthy is to be unstable—to be able to move between different kinds of personality to suit the occasion. In these terms, major types of psychopathy, like chronic anxiety, and depression, and addiction, involve being stuck.[32]

Perhaps getting stuck in certain motivational states may make people vulnerable to turning to espionage. This possibility is explored later in this article.

Limitations of this Article

Debriefing interviews or administering the Motivational Style Profile (MSP) or the Apter Motivational Styles Profile (AMSP) might have been the best way to conduct this research. The AMSP has become "the scale of choice" for applications of RT because it "measures the dominance of all four pairs of states in a single instrument."[33] The AMSP is derived from the longer MSP that Apter, Mallows, and Williams developed in 1998. Consisting of forty items, the AMSP items are simple statements such as, "I like to break rules," and "I like to be in control of things."[34] The respondent is asked to rate each item on a six-point temporal scale from "Never" to "Always." The difference in the AMSP from other personality tests, such as the Myers-Briggs Trait Inventory (MBTI), is that the AMSP measures motivational states according *to the time* the respondent reports; in general, to being in that certain motivational state.[35]

Administering the AMSP to the subjects directly, even after being in prison for a long while, could have provided some insight into how much time the spies spent in certain states. This study would have yielded an overall motivational profile and where the spy may have been "stuck" in certain states. Yet, security classification, lack of access to the subjects and lack of need-to-know of the content of direct interviews made this kind of research impossible. Therefore, the spy's word given to a reporter or to the counterintelligence investigator years ago will have to do. Naturally, some rationalization, exaggeration, and outright lying are to be expected from these sources. Nevertheless, regardless of the veracity of the statements available, it is essential to rely on the words of the spies written as close as possible to the time that they committed espionage. If it were possible, the best data would be gathered at the time the spy

decided to commit espionage or was in the process of committing espionage.

Since 1986, the U.S. Department of Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) has conducted several robust studies. The downside of relying on U.S. government (USG)–sponsored research on espionage is the limited scope of information the USG can and will release. Releasing to the public at large the nature and extent of damage of espionage causes can be self-defeating. Countermeasures the USG may take to shore up and mitigate damage can be made useless. What the USG does report about espionage, however, can be fruitful for security professionals to study. Regardless of how limited the scope or release of underlying information, these studies may provide insight into why people commit espionage, even if that insight is limited.

Sources of Information

For this article, *all* information that I relied upon is from biographies and unclassified studies that the USG has published. One leading government study, from PERSEREC, bases its information upon open sources gathered on 150 spies. These USG-sponsored research projects were designed to "further our understanding of the phenomenon of espionage."[36] One residual benefit of relying upon USG reports as a data source is that the USG will devote considerable resources to studying the subject that individual, non-USG researchers will lack.

USG Studies

PERSEREC 1992 Study

In 1986, PERSEREC began compiling an unclassified database of open source information to create an espionage database.[37] In 1992, PERSEREC published a report on it, titled *Americans Who Spied against Their Country since World War II*. Since 1992, PERSEREC has continued to update its database but has redefined the parameters for case inclusion. First, 1940s and 1950s cases that were more like those in the war years were excluded and maintained in a separate World War II–era database. Second, the update included only "Cold War" cases—that is, cases involving espionage against the

United States that benefited the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

PERSEREC's 2002 Report

By July 2002, PERSEREC issued another unclassified report based on a database of open source information on 150 individuals who were "convicted or prosecuted for espionage . . . or for attempting to commit espionage, or for whom clear evidence of espionage exists, even though for various reasons they were not convicted."[38] This report was titled *Espionage against the United States by American Citizens 1947–2001*, and like its predecessor report, it was based on its espionage database that consisted entirely of open source information. The USG kept the report and the underlying research material unclassified to foster the widest dissemination of information as possible and to improve the security posture of the USG.

The 2002 PERSEREC study found that American spies have claimed that money has been their prime motive for espionage.[39] According to the study, "[c]onsidered as a proportion of all the cases in which money appeared as one or more of the motives, 104 of 150 cases (69%) included money."[40] Of the spies that were intercepted, 87 percent cited money as their prime motivation (thirty-four of thirty-nine).[41] Nevertheless, the quest for money varies. While the study acknowledges the "greed" or "need" distinction, later in this article I assert that stating that "money motivates espionage" is too simplistic.

On the cusp of the USG issuing the PERSEREC 2002 report, in 2001, the USG had captured Robert Hanssen (Federal Bureau of Investigation), Brian Regan (National Reconnaissance Office), and Ana Montes (Defense Intelligence Agency). The Hanssen case alone was considered to be a "one thousand year flood" of espionage; therefore, more work needed to be done to reduce the risk of insider threat.

PERSEREC's 2008 Report

In March 2008, PERSEREC issued the third in its series of unclassified reports, *Changes in Espionage by Americans 1947–2007*. Ideology, rather than money, had risen in priority as a motivation for committing espionage.[42] "Spying for divided loyalties is the motive

that demonstrates the most significant change of all motives since 1990, with 57% spying solely as a result of divided loyalties."[43]

In considering the issue of motivation for espionage, the latest PERSEREC report also distinguished primary and secondary motives and ranked them in order of prevalence. The motives that PERSEREC found in order of prevalence are: money, divided loyalties, disgruntlement, ingratiation, coercion, thrills, and recognition.[44] Based on information available in open sources, seventy-two individuals had two motives, and fifteen of those had three motives; of the 150 persons in the database, 48 percent had two or more motives. PERSEREC's three reports (1992, 2002, and 2008) were instrumental in this study, as these reports' database is the most robust and most well-maintained source of open source information on espionage.

Books

For specific personality information, Pete Earley's books, *Confessions of a Spy* about Aldrich Ames, and *Family of Spies*, about the John Walker spy ring, were most helpful. These books were particularly useful because Earley wrote these books soon after conducting hundreds of hours of interviews with the spies themselves and the people who knew them best. Two other books, *Spy* and *The Bureau and the Mole*, are about Robert Hanssen, and they are also good sources of psychological information.

Books by case agents who investigated the spies were also key sources of information. The agent's insights presented after extensive interviews and interrogation reveals much of the spy's decision-making processes and motives. These books are *True Believer: Inside the Investigation and Capture of Ana Montes, Cuba's Master Spy* and *Capturing Jonathan Pollard: How One of the Most Notorious Spies in American History Was Brought to Justice.* Further, these books were chosen because the USG had to vet thoroughly these manuscripts before publication. Accordingly, whatever information used from these books is unclassified and benign to release to the public through this article.

Some of the Spies Studied

Aldrich "Rick" Ames[45] was one of the most damaging spies in U.S. history because of his access to sensitive CIA information at the

height of the Cold War. Ames's espionage career in support of the *Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti* (KGB) spanned nine years. His espionage work from 1985 to 1994 cost the lives of ten men who were valuable sources of information inside the Soviet Union. In CIA circles, Ames was a known alcoholic. Despite his obvious drinking problem, Ames was placed in the counterintelligence section of operations. In terms of MICE, one could simplistically characterize Ames's decision to spy based on money. He says:

> Why did I do it? I did it for the money. Period. I am not lying. I wanted the cash. But the reason I needed the money was not for the reasons most people want money. I did not want it for a new car or a new house, but rather for what it could guarantee. It seemed to be the only way for me to guarantee that the *us* [referring to Ames and his second wife, Rosario] I desired so desperately would survive.[46]

During his affair with Rosario, who would become his second wife, Ames faced a financially crushing divorce from his first wife, Nan. His debt for the divorce, in 1985, was about $50,000 USD. Ames admits that had he gone to a financial counselor, he could have probably resolved this money problem legally. Regardless of this rationalization, Ames perceived his situation as hopeless and turned to espionage for relief.

John Walker,[47] a navy chief warrant officer, was also an extremely damaging spy because of the sensitivity of submarine and code-breaking information that he disclosed to the KGB during the Cold War. In his spy ring, Walker enlisted the help of his gullible brother, Arthur; his best friend, a retired naval communications specialist, Jerry Whitworth; and his own navy seaman son, Michael Walker. As with Ames, Walker committed espionage for the money—the "M" in MICE. Yet, Walker admits to having a criminal mind. In a matter-of-fact way, he states:

> Everyone makes a big deal out of the fact that I became a spy. It's because spying is such an unusual crime, but what they don't understand is that I became a spy because that is what I had access to. If I'd worked in a bank, I would have taken money. If I'd had access to dope, I would have sold drugs. The fact that I became a spy is really insignificant. The point is that I became a spy because I needed the money. It was as simple as that.

While Ames, who sought money to shore up his relationship with his greedy wife, Walker was a conspicuous consumer, purchasing a fancy car, an airplane, and renting a posh apartment in Norfolk,

Virginia. Simplistically, money may have been an obvious primary motive, but money alone cannot explain the complex metamotives that Walker experienced that sustained his eighteen-year espionage career and recruitment of his people into his spy ring.

Robert Hanssen[48] is also one of the most damaging spies in U.S. history and probably among the most psychologically complex. Two movies have been made about Robert Philip Hanssen, the 2007 thriller, *Breach*, and a 2003 made-for-television movie, *Master Spy: The Robert Hanssen Story*, starring William Hurt and written by Norman Mailer. Hanssen was a career FBI supervisory special agent; an outwardly devout Roman Catholic; a father of six children, all enrolled in parochial schools from elementary school to law school; and a husband to a non-income-generating wife, Bonnie.

Hanssen had a twenty-plus year career in spying for the KGB, the *Glavnoe Razvedyvatelnoe Upravlenie* (GRU), and later, the post-Communist successor to the Russian intelligence services, the *Sluzhba Vneshnei Razvedki* (SVR). Like Ames, Hanssen worked in a counterintelligence section. As with Ames and Walker, one could say Hanssen spied because he needed money, but Hanssen's threatened ego and need to control present more subtle motives than money alone. Dr. Daniel L. Charney, who interviewed Hanssen, stated, "If I had to pick one core psychological reason for his spying, I would target the experience he had in relations with his father."[49] In another account by psychologists who have interviewed Hanssen, they state:

> Hanssen insisted that his primary motivation for each period of espionage was the need to obtain money to provide for the welfare of his family. His concerns about surviving the cost of living in New York City, paying the $50,000 balloon mortgage, and financing his children's education were all sources of anxiety.[50]

Accordingly, the utility of MICE and personality tests to predict vulnerabilities to spying have limited utility when applied to the complexity of the spy.

Jonathan Pollard,[51] who spied for Israel, presents himself as an ideological spy who did—according to his wife during a *60 Minutes* interview—"what we were expected to do, and what our moral obligation was as Jews."[52] In reality, Pollard was a mixed bag of motivations that may include all dimensions of MICE. He had a lifelong ambition to be a spy, and he falsely bragged to his classmates at Tufts University that the Israeli Mossad was paying his tuition. One CIA polygrapher who examined Pollard *before* he received his top-

secret clearance had stated that in eighteen years of administering the polygraph, Pollard was *the* most emotionally unstable person he had ever examined.[53] In the course of just eighteen months of activity, Pollard stole and passed over 360 cubic feet of USG classified material. The volume of this loss is enormous when one considers the amount of information compared to the scale of this six-foot man pictured below.[54]

Pollard also demanded from his Israeli handlers money (in 1984 USD dollars)—$200,000, a salary of $1,500 per month, the money to purchase his fiancée a $10,000 ring, plus $10,000 in cash. Considering the complexity of this human psyche, it would be irresponsible to say that money or loyalty to Israel simply explains Pollard's motives.

Ana Montes[56] is the final spy specifically examined in this article, and she is one who the United States considers an "ideological" spy, putting the "I" in MICE. Montes was a sharp Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analyst informally known in the U.S. Intelligence Community as "the Queen of Cuba" because of her wealth of subject-matter expertise. On the surface, Ana was a conforming, ambitious career analyst. In fact, Montes clandestinely spied for Cuba for almost two decades because she objected to U.S. policies toward the Communist island nation. Throughout her espionage career, the Cubans gave her very little financially. Even though the latest PERSEREC study would state that ideology as opposed to money

Figure 3.3. Bankers' boxes—visual representation of the volume of classified documents Pollard provided to Israel[55]

is a more prevalent motive to spy, as Montes did, this finding is so broad that it offers little guidance on how to counter the nuances of complex minds like that of Montes.

Application of Reversal Theory

Examining the open source literature available on the aforementioned spies indicates that satiation or getting stuck in extremes of motivational states may indicate those who may be vulnerable to committing espionage. "We need to ensure that nothing is missing from our motivational repertoire . . . and . . . certain kinds of mental disorder relate to being stuck in certain states."[57] Sickness occurs, in part, because of the inability to reverse motivational states in a healthy way or to access the satisfaction from spending time in all of the motivational states at the appropriate times.

It is true that there is an internal bias that individuals have in relation to a pair of states. This is called ***dominance***. According to Apter:

> Each individual will have his or her own pattern of dominances, making up a dominance profile over the four pairs of states. . . . In some cases, however, extreme dominance is displayed on at least one of the pairs. This means that the individual is essentially "stuck" in one member of the pair and only very infrequently experiences the opposite state. . . . Such extreme dominance may also play a role in the development of one or another recognizable forms of mental illness.[58]

While the accounts about certain spies referenced above are silent as to specific psychiatric diagnoses, it is apparent that the spies studied suffered from some degree of mental illness.

United States government studies have generally found that psychopathy and narcissim/grandiosity are characteristics of the spies studied. The reading indicates that Walker, Ames, and Pollard suffered from antisocial personality disorder. They would frequently use deceit to further their own agenda. All three had substance abuse problems—Ames and Walker with alcohol and Pollard with marijuana. Robert Hanssen was addicted to pornography. Montes suffered from depression and anxiety. Apter asserts:

> [With] addiction, we see that the individual may be trapped in the Paratelic [Playful] state, spending much of his or her time searching for immediate stimulation. The problem is then a particular means of gaining stimulation, be this through drugs, alcohol, gambling, or in some other

> way. . . . Depression is another major type of psychopathology that may derive from being trapped in a particular [motivational] state.[59]

Ames and Hanssen both have failed to demonstrate remorse for the loss of life they caused through their espionage, and they can be considered narcissistic. In RT terms, these spies were fixated in the self/mastery states. Hanssen and Walker suffered from the narcissistic personality disorder, as both showed arrogance toward those they perceived as subservient, and both spies were known to be abusive to their wives. In RT terms, these spies were stuck in the self/serious and mastery states.

Feeling trapped and unable to break free and be oneself can describe Montes and Hanssen. RT would discern these two spies as being stuck in the negativistic/rebellious state. As a result of their fixation in the others/mastery state, both Montes and Hanssen saw themselves as rescuers. Both had, what they each perceived as, controlling, abusive fathers. For Montes, she had a "deep-seated guilt that [she] continued to feel for not protecting her younger and weaker siblings" from a domineering father's bullying.[60] About Montes's motivation, Defense Intelligence Agency investigator, Special Agent Scott Carmichael, writes:

> Those who commit espionage are driven to do so in order to satisfy very personal, and perceived, psychological needs. They discover that the act of espionage at least temporarily satisfies those needs. . . . What was Ana's need? . . . Ana viewed herself as some kind of secret champion for Fidel Castro, and she delighted in that role. Later, prior to sentencing, Ana herself offered an explanation: She was morally outraged by the U.S. Government's policies toward Nicaragua and Cuba, policies which caused harm to poor innocents and served to oppress them. Ana viewed herself as their heroine, someone who sacrificed herself on their behalf against a bullying northern neighbor, the United States.[61]

Even though it was "irrational, irresponsible, and unlawful," according to Carmichael, Montes's espionage "satisfied a deep and personal need" to alleviate guilt from the past and fulfill her role as protector of the Cuban people.[62]

The Protective Frame and "the Dangerous Edge"

United States government studies have generally found that at the time the spy initiates espionage, he or she believes he or she is special,

deserving, not a bad person, his or her situation is not satisfactory, and he or she has no other (easier) option than to engage in espionage. In reviewing the biographies about Walker, Hanssen, Pollard, Montes, and Ames, all viewed themselves according to these descriptions.

The USG studies have also stated that the spy often sees espionage as a victimless crime. John Walker in a *60 Minutes* interview stated that his espionage committed for the USSR was harmless because he believed that the United States was never going to go to war with the Soviet Union. Ames similarly isolates his psyche from the painful consequences of his actions—namely, the death of ten informants in the USSR. Apter would consider that these rationalizations amount to a psychological protective frame. An example of how ruthless Ames became with his protective frame comes from the book *Confessions of a Spy* about Ames. Earley writes:

> The best way for Ames to protect himself was by giving the KGB the names of every "US intelligence asset" whom he knew. Their arrests and executions were simply a matter of self-preservation. . . . "All of the people whose names were on my June 13th list knew the risks they were taking when they began spying for the CIA and FBI," Ames told me during our jailhouse sessions. "If one of them had learned about me, he would have told the CIA, and I would have been arrested and thrown in jail. Now that I was working for the KGB, the people on my list could expect nothing less from me. It wasn't personal. It was simply how the game was played."[63]

In terms that Apter might use, Ames's lack of remorse might be caused by having an extreme sense of the strength of his protective frame. More research needs to be conducted to further our understanding of the concept of the strength of a protective frame.

The protective frame, according to Apter's book, *The Dangerous Edge: The Psychology of Excitement*, protects a person from experiencing psychological pain or anxiety. For example, people seeking out excitement may go to see a horror movie. The horror moviegoer knows that he or she may be thrilled and even unpleasantly scared by what he or she sees on the screen, yet a sense of having a protective frame prevents the person from suffering psychic trauma. The moviegoer knows the people on the screen are actors, the action seen is pretend, and that the movie theater is a safe place to be. Consistent with RT terms, an individual may naturally have a greater or lesser sense of the strength of a protective frame—or reversals—depending on the situation.[64] While the protective frame waxes and wanes, people

likewise reverse into alternatively arousal-seeking states, or anxiety-avoiding states.

Apter presents this idea through the analogy of seeing a tiger in a cage. Seeing the tiger in the cage, a person may have a greater sense of having a protective frame that will allow him or her to look at the wild animal or even get close to it, because the cage appears to be strong. The cage without the tiger inside is boring. The tiger without the cage is dangerous and frightening. When some people have a greater sense of a protective frame, and they are in an excitement-seeking state, they may engage in risky behavior. Conversely, when a person has a lesser sense of having a protective frame, and he or she is in an anxiety-avoidance state, a person will seek out safety regardless of whether the perceived threat is real or imagined.

With a healthy protective frame intact, a person will modulate between opposite states of anxiety-avoidance and arousal-seeking. As stated earlier, with a great sense of the strength of his or her protective frame, a person in an extreme arousal-seeking state will engage in behavior to satisfy this need. In a healthy person, the natural reversals to the anxiety-avoiding state will temper the desire to engage in risky behavior.

On this point, Apter has written to me that it is true that frames can differ in strength in the sense that they can be more or less difficult to establish; that they depend on rational or irrational ideas; that they relate to previous experiences in different ways; and so on. In the case of spies, however, he suggests investigation into the question of whether spies have frames with different characteristics. "If they get stuck in the playful state, for example, this would imply that their protective frame is particularly strong."[65] If so, does the spies' sense of the strength of their protective frame differ at different times from the sense of strength of a non-espionage-committing person? The question may be worth personnel security's exploration.

The lure of achieving psychological excitement may be another factor that drives certain people to spy. Apter has stated:

> It would appear that people do things not just *despite* the risk but *because* of it. They enjoy being, at least in certain circumstances, at what I should like to call the dangerous edge of things. . . . Once something is labeled as dangerous, it seems to exert a magnetic attraction to young and old alike. For example, from the moment the council of my home town in Wales pronounced that the promenade along the sea-front was in a dangerous condition, the crowds flocked and not just to

> see it but to walk along it. The chance of the whole structure collapsing into the sea made it more popular than ever.

In examining our spies, it may be true that they seek out the excitement of espionage in addition to the MICE motivators or metamotives.

Hanssen, for example, for over twenty years risked his FBI career, stable family life with a wife and six children, committed espionage, and funded the lifestyle of a Washington, D.C., stripper, Priscilla Sue Galey. Before joining the CIA, Ames dropped out of the University of Chicago and took up skydiving.[66] Becoming an operational case officer may have been appealing because of the excitement of stealing secrets by secret means in foreign countries. Ames says about his own sense of having a protective frame:

> I talked before about how there were no barriers left in 1985 to keep me from slipping down the slippery slope. It may be more useful to think of it less as the absence of restraint than the existence of ideas and experiences which, when put into that Petri dish stew under sufficient stress and confusion and in an almost unique set of opportune circumstances, caused the germ to bloom and blossom into treason. To attempt to rank or segregate or declare that one factor provides the explanation is to deny how a person feels, thinks, and acts.

The Cuban intelligence service paid Montes very little considering the length and extent of her espionage career. Perhaps her need to seek excitement was another driver to committing espionage, and the Cuban Foreign Intelligence Service (FIS) provided the protective frame for her to work. PERSEREC states that 80 percent of spies examined since 1990 received "no payment for espionage, and since 2000, it appears no one was paid."[67] Clearly, FISs are providing a sense of strengthening of the protective frame for their voluntary spies to engage in such risky business like espionage.

The Significant Emotional Event and FIS Rebuilding of the Protective Frame

According to the most recent PERSEREC study, there is a clear pattern that spies turn to espionage after they experience a "trigger" that is a significant emotional event.[68] PERSEREC states:

> [P]ersonal disruptions or crises precede, or "trigger" an individual's decision to commit espionage. Researchers have speculated that if help or timely intervention had been offered, the crime might have been averted.[69]

According to these studies, this event, be it a divorce, a loss of a job or promotion, death of a family member, or bankruptcy may cause psychological stress that needs to be mitigated for a person to remain healthy.

Examples of mitigating factors are family support, religious faith, the availability of competent counseling, and the like. The presence of mitigating factors explains why everyone who experiences a significant emotional event will not commit espionage. Those who do not have adequate mitigating factors—in Apter's terms—may have a diminished sense of the protective frame. This diminished sense of the strength of a protective frame may cause most healthy people to linger in anxiety-avoidance states. Some people, perhaps stuck in the arousal-seeking state, with an enhanced sense of a protective frame, may seek out the excitement that they crave by engaging in espionage. Again, these issues suggest further exploration.

John Walker considered his decision to commit espionage analogous to committing suicide. He said, "All I did was commit another form of suicide. I became a Russian spy."[70] Although Earley, who interviewed Walker, believes that this answer seemed "too pat," it can be one piece of a greater mosaic of motives that drove Walker to commit espionage. As Walker stated about his downfall into espionage, "It's like an airplane crash. . . . Investigators check the wreckage and discover that it wasn't one single thing that caused the crash, but several different things that all came together."[71]

Once the protective frame is lost, a subject without mitigating factors may seek out protective-frame reconstruction by any means. The volunteer spy seeks out the FIS to sell secrets. The FIS, in turn, may satisfy the spy's need to have the protective frame restored. For example, convicted spy and navy seaman Ariel Weinmann experienced a significant emotional event when his high school girlfriend ended their romantic relationship. Weinmann, still a teenager, wanted to impress her and win her back. He turned to espionage by offering to sell navy secrets to an FIS. In this case, not only was Weinmann's sense of adventure being satisfied but also the FIS satisfied his need to belong by helping him reconstruct his protective frame and encouraging his espionage.

Conclusion: Recommendations to Apply Reversal Theory in Security

The U.S. Intelligence Community has a history of taking reactive countermeasures to avoid major cases of espionage from happening

again. For example, Hanssen has stated that if he had been required to take a polygraph test or if he had to make regular financial disclosure statements, he would not have persisted in his espionage for over twenty years. Now, the FBI mandates that every FBI employee have a full scope, "lifestyle" polygraph test upon an employee's entry on duty and every five years, regardless of position.

Currently, the FBI's Security Division—formed after Hanssen's conviction—also requires financial disclosure statements from employees, as does the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA started requiring financial disclosure statements from its employees after Aldrich Ames's espionage conviction in 1994. Ames was detected, in part, by tracing his financial activity, and this activity indicated inordinate and unexplained wealth for a man in his GS-14 position. Today, CIA security requires all employees to complete every other year a thorough financial disclosure statement as a "gift" from Aldrich Ames. Although it cannot be determined how many cases of espionage these reactive countermeasures have curtailed or prevented, it would be interesting to examine the cases of Ames and Hanssen to see if security professionals had prospectively applied RT through the Apter Motivational Style Profile (AMSP) over time and at certain critical points in their respective careers.

Perhaps the AMSP, given several times upon different key occasions, may have indicated these individuals to be "at risk" to becoming vulnerable to turning to espionage. Once patterns have been identified, perhaps security professionals or psychologists serving in employee assistance programs could have applied countermeasures to induce healthy reversals and to mitigate a person's vulnerability to committing espionage.

The espionage of both Ames and Hanssen was so damaging that the USG appointed special commissions to examine their cases in detail. Accordingly, there is a wealth of information about their "turning points." Perhaps the list of significant emotional events illustrate key points at which security professionals could have administered the AMSP; on a routine and ad hoc basis on both Ames and Hanssen, for example. Their situations may be similar to those of other individuals currently working in the U.S. Intelligence Community.

The USG studies have found that approximately 80 percent of the 173 individuals studied considered committing espionage *after* entering the intelligence community and having access to classified information.[72] That is, most spies did not start out wanting to commit espionage. As the most recent PERSEREC report states, "The

individuals who betrayed the trust placed in them and violated their signed contracts by committing espionage are the exemplars of insider threat."[73]

A further alarming statistic from the same PERSEREC report is that "two-thirds of American spies since 1990 have volunteered."[74] An FIS did not recruit these spies, so clearly something changed for certain cleared individuals who voluntarily turned into an insider threat. Almost as if in agreement with Apter, PERSEREC states:

> People change with time while they have access, however, which is why security programs incorporate continuing evaluation measures, and why they update their information on these criteria in order to capture changes of security concerns.[75]

Based on this information, it is reasonable to want to apply additional security measures at certain times in a person's career once a person is in a sensitive position of trust.

Administering the AMSP or MSP over time and at different points in an intelligence professional's career may indicate patterns, trends, and anomalies that could be countered with psychological intervention, as the most recent PERSEREC report suggests. Although I do not suggest that employment, promotion, or deployment decisions be based on the results of the MSP or the AMSP, I do suggest that administering the MSP or the AMSP could be another tool for security professionals—like the polygraph and financial disclosure statements—to use to mitigate risk.

Notes

1. Quote of National Counterintelligence Executive, Mr. Robert Bryant, http://www.ncix.gov/issues/ithreat/index.html (accessed February 9, 2012). According to Mr. Bryant, "An insider threat arises when a person with authorized access to U.S. Government resources, to include personnel, facilities, information, equipment, networks, and systems, uses that access to harm the security of the United States. Malicious insiders can inflict incalculable damage. They enable the enemy to plant boots behind our lines and can compromise our nation's most important endeavors."
2. Michael J. Apter, *Personality Dynamics: Key Concepts in Reversal Theory* (Loughborough, UK: Apter International Ltd., 2005), 2.
3. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 2.
4. Quote from email from Apter to the author dated January 17, 2012.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

7. Donald A. Petkus, "Ethics of Human Intelligence Operations: Of MICE and Men," *International Journal of Intelligence Ethics* 1(1) (Spring 2010): 99.

8. Michael J. Apter, *Eight Ways of Being* (Loughborough, UK: Apter International Ltd., 2003), 3.

9. Michael J. Apter, *Motivational Styles in Everyday Life: A Guide to Reversal Theory* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), 310.

10. Michael J. Apter, "On a Certain Blindness in Modern Psychology," *The Psychologist* 16(9) (September 2003): 474–75, 474, http://www.reversaltheory.org/about-2/on-a-certain-blindness/ (accessed December 28, 2011).

11. Ibid.

12. Garst (1989), 49, cited in course materials used in the Foreign Denial and Deception Committee's Denial and Deception Advanced Analytic Studies Program.

13. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 29–30.

14. Apter, *Motivational Styles in Everyday Life*, 310.

15. Apter, "On a Certain Blindness in Modern Psychology," 474.

16. Ibid.

17. Apter, *Motivational Styles in Everyday Life*, 310.

18. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, frontpiece page.

19. Ibid., 5–6.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Apter, *Eight Ways of Being*, 45.

23. Ibid., 6–7.

24. Ibid., 8–9.

25. Ibid., 10–11.

26. See http://tuckertalk.net/blog2/welcome/reversal-theory/ (accessed December 30, 2011). Special thanks to Dr. Jenny Tucker for her permission to use this graphic.

27. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 5.

28. Apter, *Eight Ways of Being*, 3.

29. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 13.

30. Apter, "On a Certain Blindness in Modern Psychology," 475.

31. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 34.

32. Apter, "On a Certain Blindness in Modern Psychology," 474.

33. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 61.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Katherine L. Herbig and Martin F. Wiskoff, Defense Personnel Security Research Center, *Espionage against the United States by American Citizens 1947–2001*, Technical Report 02-5 (July 2002)(hereafter, PERSEREC

2002), ix, http://www.dhra.mil/perserec/reports.html#TR0205 (accessed December 28, 2011).

37. *Open Source Information* is "[a] generic term describing information of potential intelligence value (i.e., intelligence information) which is available to the general public." Joint Military Intelligence College, 1993.

38. PERSEREC 2002, Executive Summary, ix–xiv.

39. Ibid., 40.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Katherine L. Herbig, Defense Personnel Security Research Center, *Changes in Espionage by Americans: 1947–2007*, Technical Report 08-05 (March 2008) (hereafter, PERSEREC 2008), ix, http://www.dhra.mil/perserec/reports.html#TR0205 (accessed December 28, 2011).

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., 32–37.

45. Pete Earley, *Confessions of a Spy: The Real Story of Aldrich Ames* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1997).

46. Ibid., 147.

47. Pete Earley, *Family of Spies: Inside the John Walker Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988).

48. David Wise, *Spy: The Inside Story of How the FBI's Robert Hanssen Betrayed America* (New York: Random House, 2002).

49. Ibid., 10.

50. Nicholas J. Ciccarello and Terence J. Thompson, *Money, the Fear of Failure, and Espionage: Report of an Interview with Robert Philip Hanssen* (Langley, VA: The Personnel Security Managers' Research Program), 9.

51. Ronald J. Olive, *Capturing Jonathan Pollard: How One of the Most Notorious Spies in American History Was Brought to Justice* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006).

52. *60 Minutes* interview with Anne Pollard referenced in Wikipedia in article on Jonathan Pollard, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Pollard#cite_note-Black-27 (accessed December 28, 2011).

53. Olive, *Capturing Jonathan Pollard*, 20.

54. Ibid., 214.

55. Ibid.

56. Scott W. Carmichael, *True Believer: Inside the Investigation and Capture of Ana Montes, Cuba's Master Spy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007).

57. Apter, *Personality Dynamics*, 32.

58. Ibid., 64.

59. Ibid.

60. Carmichael, 149.

61. Ibid., 148.

62. Ibid.

63. Earley, *Confessions of a Spy*, 145.
64. Michael J. Apter, *The Dangerous Edge: The Psychology of Excitement* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 26.
65. Apter email of January 17, 2012.
66. Earley, *Confessions of a Spy*, photographs between pages 180–81.
67. PERSEREC (2008), Highlights.
68. Ibid., 42.
69. Ibid.
70. Earley, *Family of Spies*, 16.
71. Ibid., 12.
72. PERSEREC (2008), 37.
73. Ibid., 38.
74. Ibid., Highlights.
75. Ibid., 39.

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