

Preface

The Evolution of Crime Action Profiling

As a forensic psychologist, most topics involving the interaction of the criminal justice system with the science of psychology interest me. It was not until the start of the 1990s, however, that I first learned of a fascinating and purportedly new technique whereby police investigators could develop a description of an offender based not on any witness report, but on behaviors evidently displayed during the commission of a crime. What captured my attention most about this technique was the context in which it was applied. Often, work and research in the domain of forensic psychology considers issues in a reactive context. Examples include psychological evaluations of an individual for the purpose of an insanity defense or a person's potential for recidivism in the context of a parole hearing. Here, however, was something that could be used in a proactive context, while a criminal investigation was still very much afoot. The disciplinary knowledge of psychology could in this sense be used to compile a description of the likely offender to assist with an on-going investigation. This remarkable concept or investigative tool as police referred to it was simply referred to as psychological profiling. I quickly learned, however, that although the underlying concept surrounding this technique was the same, the title assigned to it varied markedly depending on differing practitioners and their disciplinary backgrounds, which was often reflected in the nomenclature adopted by these practitioners. The terms criminal profiling, offender profiling, criminal investigative analysis, and criminal personality profiling all seemed to be used interchangeably to describe the practice. With this new awareness (of what I will for the sake of simplicity refer to here as "profiling"), I set about collecting, reading, and learning as much as I could about the technique. Initially, I was thoroughly captivated by the material. The prospect of being able to deduce the identity of a criminal and thereby assist in the investigation of violent crime was of great interest to me and, I considered, of enormous practical benefit to law enforcement agencies throughout the world. However, after about 6 months of exploring the available literature doubts began to creep into my mind as I contemplated the research on the topic.

First, I started to perceive similarities between supposedly original independent studies and their respective data pools. It appeared to me that some articles did not actually report a study in a holistic manner as it had been undertaken. Instead, a study frequently appeared divided into smaller components. This subdivision seemed to enhance the number of publications and exposure gained from what appeared to me to be essentially a single study. Although subdivision *per se* is not wrong, it should, in my view be more of a rarity than a common practice and should be clearly acknowledged so that the context and origin of the data are clearly made known.

Also of significance to me was the originality of the samples gathered for the purpose of a study and the publications generated from these samples. Cognizant of the comparatively low volume of serial violent crimes that form the basis of the bulk of profiling research, I assumed the collection of samples would be difficult to obtain and therefore scarce in number. In contrast to this assumption I was surprised by the number of available studies emanating from what I expected to be a very limited data pool from any given country. There is an expression known as double-dipping that serves to describe an inelegant practice of repetition or recycling. The term arose from the distasteful practice of a person contaminating a shared food receptacle by re-dipping a piece of bread, for example, that had already been dipped and gnawed on into a fondue bowl shared by others. In a somewhat analogous capacity, I could not help but wonder about some original studies and whether the same data was simply being re-analyzed or double-dipped by different researchers who held some common affiliation with the source of the data. The net effect of these observations with respect to the published literature was the realization that the published material could easily create the impression that a substantial corpus of research existed on the topic of profiling when perhaps only a smaller amount of truly original material existed.

The second issue that came to my attention involved the content and application of some of the published literature. A large proportion seemed to focus more on describing and discussing profiling and its potential uses rather than systematically explaining how a criminal profile was or should be constructed. Granted, some original empirical studies have been undertaken that offer interesting offender typologies that appear valid and relevant to profiling. The systematic interpretation and application of this information, however, remained something of a mystery. This gap in the literature served to highlight, to my mind, the divide between the “art” dimension of profiling and the “science” of profiling. Even today, there exists debate about whether the practice of profiling is in reality an art or a science. Indeed, in one sense

profiling can be viewed as both. The scientific aspect of profiling it seems is well catered for in a number of studies that have produced a range of taxonomies for different types of behaviors and offenders. This literature, however, is often silent on how such categories should be systematically interpreted and applied to any given circumstance for the purpose of formulating a profile. In the absence of such exposition the art dimension to profiling has evolved.

A third issue of concern to me was determining what was the likely accuracy of profiling in correctly predicting the characteristics of an unknown offender. Despite this being a seemingly fundamental issue, I was surprised by the scarcity of what I would regard as robust evidence. At the time, the predominant source of material describing the accuracy of profiles and their utility were anecdotal accounts from profilers themselves. While the analogous use of clinical vignettes are common in the consideration of mental disorders and their treatment within the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology such vignettes exist alongside an equal if not greater number of carefully crafted studies within such disciplines that empirically and impartially seek to evaluate the effectiveness of such treatments. Despite the ever-growing popularity and apparent optimism surrounding the use of profiling that appears to characterize much of the literature, equivalent scientifically grounded trials of profiling were to my mind, remarkably conspicuous by their absence.

The defining moment for me, however, perhaps arrived when I was consulted about a high-profile serial murder case. The police investigators had, in respect of another serial murder case, consulted expert profilers from an internationally renowned law enforcement agency only a few years earlier. The procured profile did not seem to logically accord with Australia's population demographics. Consequently, on this investigation different tactics were employed and police consulted numerous sources (including myself) to see what assistance could be provided. With an artificial sense of confidence derived from my knowledge of the literature, I set about carefully examining and considering the circumstances of the case and the questions that were posed to me. From the outset, I found that the details surrounding the murders seldom comfortably or neatly matched the evident categories and patterns described in the published literature. For example, although one tantalizing similarity was clearly apparent between the case under consideration and the research literature, the matching features were derived from the research developed in the context of rapists, not serial murderers. Although behaviors at times were evident that matched one distinct offender category, matching behaviors inherent to another dichotomously opposite category were also simi-

larly evident. Before long, I found myself mixing the research literature with my own clinical knowledge wherever I perceived some relevance. I was duly thanked for my efforts, but despite this I couldn't help but wonder how useful my ideas had truly been or whether they genuinely offered anything more than what could have been deduced through common sense. It was these doubts about the research literature at the time, combined with my own experience in constructing a profile, that led me to contemplate the full extent of the deficit that existed between the reputation and the capabilities of profiling. It was from this time I realized that far more work and research was required into criminal profiling.

Today, with the luxury of hindsight, the development of profiling can be seen as akin to the field of personality theory. Within the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry, there exists an accepted consensus in the existence of a conceptual construct known as the mind. Although there is common agreement in the concept of the mind, there are numerous rival approaches or theories that attempt to explain the nature and operation of the mind. A few examples of these differing approaches or "personality theories" include the psychoanalytic, behaviorist, and biological theories. The work and research into profiling can be viewed in an analogous fashion. There appears to be a general consensus that profiling is a concept whereby crime behaviors can be interpreted for the purpose of making predictions concerning the probable offender's characteristics. Akin to the varying personality theories, differing approaches have evolved over time that propose how crime behaviors are interpreted or profiled. In drawing this analogy with respect to the development of profiling, it is important to appreciate what roughly constitutes or equates with an approach to the profiling of certain crimes. In this context an approach can be loosely conceived as a coherent body of work or research composed of a number of original studies that commonly share some distinctive theoretical or methodological basis concerning the profiling of a variety of crimes.*

Arguably, the first and oldest approach to profiling emerged when individual mental health professionals were consulted to assist in criminal investigations involving often bizarre and seemingly unsolvable crimes. Historical examples of such consultations span back many decades and include now infamous consultations such as Dr. Thomas Bond in 1888 in the investigation of the Whitechappel murders (also known as Jack the Ripper) and Dr. James

*It should be noted that although not meeting my adopted definition of an approach, scholars including Bruce Arrigo, Steven Egger, Eric Hickey, Jack Levin, and Louis Schlesinger (to name only a few) have each made valuable contributions to the topic of profiling and/or serial violent crime.

Brussel in the 1940–1950s investigation of the Mad Bomber of New York. Although admittedly lacking an original body of research on the specific topic of profiling, there is nonetheless some clear commonality among these individuals, which is perhaps founded in the disciplinary knowledge and training they share. Namely, their efforts in relating their knowledge of psychiatry/psychology/criminology and clinical experience to the profiling of a crime. This example of profiling has come to be known as Diagnostic Evaluation (DE) and in many respects it arguably still represents the most common and readily accessible approach to profiling violent crimes (1). These historical antecedents serve to dispel myths concerning the comparatively recent invention of profiling by any individual or law enforcement organization. They indicate that the concept of criminal profiling in predicting the probable characteristics of a perpetrator of a violent crime is neither new nor revolutionary.

Such DEs served to inspire the development of another approach to profiling now commonly referred to as Criminal Investigative Analysis (CIA). This approach comprises the collective works of the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit (2). Although the research underpinning CIA does not support the invention of profiling by the FBI, it does nonetheless represent the first cogent body of research to specifically and systematically consider the profiling of violent crimes. Additionally, the efforts of the FBI through CIA can be credited for popularizing the concept of profiling among law enforcement agencies throughout the world. This popularization in itself is a significant accomplishment that should not be underestimated or devalued as without these efforts it is debatable to what extent, if at all, the practice of profiling would have evolved beyond the classical circumstance of DE.

Perceived inadequacies with the various approaches to profiling provided the impetus for the development of other approaches. In this respect, the underlying ideology behind CIA was no exception. Although inspired by the DE efforts of clinicians such as Dr. Brussel (2), researchers in the FBI Behavioral Science Unit were dissatisfied with the clinical/treatment perspectives of DE. Accordingly, CIA set about developing a method of profiling that specifically catered to the needs of law enforcement personnel in the investigation of violent crime. In particular, CIA attempted to develop a pragmatic method for the profiling of crimes that would be readily accessible and comprehensible to police personnel. The pursuit of this objective led to research that considered the profiling of violent crimes as a technique informed by various investigative concepts or maxims. These maxims were derived from various offender typologies developed by the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit through their own original studies of incarcerated offenders. Possibly

the most renowned of these typologies being the organized–disorganized dichotomy with its underlying maxim of the interpretation of crimes by the level of behavioral sophistication exhibited at a crime scene.

Perceived dissatisfaction with the typologies and concomitant investigative maxims inherent to CIA in part led to the development of another approach—Investigative Psychology (IP). IP sought to approach the concept of profiling from a stronger methodological basis indicative of research practices common to the social sciences. Once again, a number of original studies were undertaken of various offender groups typically via the use of archival data sources such as closed police cases. Results from these studies were interpreted more in terms of ideographic themes that were argued to be indicative of the offenders who committed the examined crimes. Thus, the commission of a murder, for example, was argued to be interpretable dependent on the presence or absence of semi-dichotomous themes of whether there was an instrumental or expressive purpose inherent to the commission of the crime. Possibly the most distinctive ideological feature of the research conducted under the banner of IP was its conceptualization of profiling as a psychological subdiscipline seemingly distinct from mainstream forensic psychology. This disciplinary splinter appears manifest in the nomenclature adopted to describe the research undertaken and the availability of tertiary qualifications in the field of IP.

Another recent body of thought which can be viewed as an approach to profiling is that of Behavior Evidence Analysis (BEA). There are, however, some significant limitations in describing BEA as a distinct approach to profiling as it does not appear to be informed by a discrete substantive body of original empirical research. Instead, what BEA offers in some respects is a fusion of previous criminological literature on various forms of violent crime, the forensic sciences and philosophical concepts related to modes of reasoning, most notably, inductive vs deductive reasoning. BEA seems to hypothesize that a method of analysis is possible, whereby crimes may be interpreted for the purpose of profiling by adopting deductive reasoning processes as opposed to inductive ones. Given our current understanding of how the human mind functions and cognitively processes information in a heterogeneous fashion, some inherent difficulties exist with such a hypothesis (3).

Nonetheless, BEA is noteworthy for one reason in particular. The invention of BEA arose from perceived dissatisfaction, albeit perhaps mistakenly at times, with other profiling approaches which seemed preoccupied with the statistical generation of aggregated profiles. BEA identifies and warns of the very real dangers of criminal profiles that adopt a colloquial “one-size-fits-all”

approach in relying on conceptualizations of the typical offender instead of adequately considering the circumstances of each crime and the potential uniqueness of its perpetrator. Thus, BEA highlights the need for profiling methods to be, wherever possible, flexible in their capacity to account for various combinations of individual factors concerning a particular crime and advocates the generation of criminal profiles specifically based on such unique factors.

It is against this backdrop that I have written this book more than a decade and a half later. Much has transpired since I first learned of profiling and immersed myself in the literature on the topic. Indeed, I have conducted many of my own studies in the area. Akin to all of the other approaches to profiling the impetus for my own research efforts has been my dissatisfaction with the available literature and the methods advocated. The volume, scope, and methodology employed in the studies that I have undertaken over the years have developed to such an extent that I view them as forming a distinct approach to profiling in itself which I refer to as Crime Action Profiling (CAP).

CAP adopts the view that profiling essentially represents a psychological technique that has its foundations in the disciplinary knowledge of forensic psychology. As can be seen by the historical development of profiling from its DE origins, profiling was a task within the repertoire of functions traditionally performed by psychiatrists or psychologists who were consulted by police investigators to assist in bizarre and seemingly unsolvable crimes. Over time, the growth in the popularity of profiling led to its practice by a range of other professionals such as police officers, criminologists and social scientists. In this respect the ideology inherent to CAP deviates from that of both CIA and IP. That is, CAP adopts the view that profiling is simply a technique that originates from the discipline of forensic psychology.* As a consequence, this conception of profiling assumes knowledge of human behavior and psychology such as personality dynamics and human psychopathologies.[#] This differs from CIA, which posits profiling as an investigative technique more within the corpus of knowledge and domain of law enforcement, and IP, which postures

*In defining this conceptualization of profiling, it should be noted that although CAP views profiling as a technique within the disciplinary boundaries of forensic psychology, this conception relates to the corpus of scientific knowledge associated with forensic psychology. It is not meant to imply that the construction of profiles should be restricted to forensic psychologists *per se*, but rather, the body of scientific knowledge that comprises profiling should be viewed as traditionally within the topic domain of forensic psychology.

[#]In this regard, knowledge of human behavior and psychology is conceived as a distinct body of knowledge which, it is argued, is a closely related prerequisite to profiling. Akin to disciplinary knowledge of the forensic sciences the reader is assumed to possess this knowledge for the purpose of this book.

that profiling has evolved to such an extent that its conceptualization is worthy of forming a discrete psychological discipline unto itself.

How CAP conceives and characterizes profiling as a technique within the existing disciplinary boundaries of forensic psychology is important for another reason. In addition to the study of mental disease, the discipline of psychology also expends considerable effort on the study and development of practical skills related to the clinical practice or application of psychology. Examples of these include clinical interviewing techniques, assessment of clients and conventions for writing various forms of diagnostic reports. In an analogous manner the research strands of CAP have studied both the behavioral patterns inherent to violent crimes (akin to psychology's study of mental disease) as well as the structure, processes, accuracy and skills related to constructing profiles (akin to the clinical practice of psychology). This is a distinguishing feature of CAP as other approaches to profiling have predominantly focused solely on the study of offender typologies and have, for the most part, largely ignored such issues related to the practical concept of constructing a profile.

It is this ideological conception of profiling as a technique within the disciplinary domain of forensic psychology that also accounts for its nomenclature "Crime Action Profiling." The term CAP is used to help differentiate it from other tasks psychologists regularly perform. The discipline of psychology operates by applying a body of information concerning mental disorders to clients who present for a variety of reasons, the most frequent of which is psychological assessment. Within this context a discrete area of psychology known as psychometrics exists which often makes use of tools such as personality and psychological profiles. In the context of this book however, the term profiling does not refer to the evaluation of a patient, but instead the interpretation of an offender's actions that are evidenced in a crime scene and from which predictions about that offender's characteristics can be made. In this respect, the term Crime Action Profiling is used to describe and signify this process relating to the consideration of crime actions and the prediction, or profiling, of offender characteristics from those actions.

The studies canvassed throughout this book represent my own original, empirically based work on the topic of criminal profiling. Over the past decade and a half this work has been published in a range of scholarly peer-reviewed journals. Their publication in this format, however, has only served to provide a disjointed method of communicating their aggregated meaning to primarily only those who read academic journals. Consequently, in the pages of this book I have, for the first time, attempted to draw together in a systematic fashion the research I have undertaken to provide a comprehen-

sive compendium of the research endeavors that characterize the CAP approach to the profiling of violent crimes.

Additionally, in recognition of the application of profiling in criminal investigations and the need for this material to be comprehensible to a wider audience, I have attempted to explain the many concepts in a manner that does not require the reader to possess advanced qualifications in subjects such as statistics, psychiatry, or psychology. In this regard, I have endeavored to write this book in a manner that renders it, in some respects, accessible to the intelligent lay person as well as personnel engaged in the legal, law enforcement, and criminal justice fields.

In an effort to maximize the accessibility of the CAP research contained in this book I have adopted a deliberate structure. The initial four chapters are intended to explain the implications of the body of work I have undertaken which examines the skills, accuracy, components and processes surrounding the construction of a criminal profile. As previously mentioned systematic consideration of such issues have, in my view, been gravely neglected. In Chapter 5, the focus shifts to the CAP research and methods developed for the profiling of violent crimes. The objective of Chapter 5 is to define and identify the forms of violent crime that, in my view, are most applicable to profiling. Chapter 5 also examines the types of crimes for which CAP models have been generated and which are the subject of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6 is perhaps the most pivotal in that I have for the first time attempted to articulate a generic procedure by which the various CAP models canvassed later in Chapters 7–9 may be utilized for the practical development of a criminal profile. The primary focus of Chapter 6 is to describe a systematic method for the interpretation and use of the CAP models. Thus, Chapter 6 aims to instruct the lay person, and in particular readers who lack an appreciation of advanced statistics and/or social science methodologies on how to use the various CAP models to profile a particular crime without necessarily needing to comprehend how each model was originally built.

The subsequent three chapters (i.e., Chapters 7–9) then canvass the respective CAP studies undertaken into crimes of serial rape, serial/sexual murder and serial arson and explain how each of the models were developed. It is crucial to appreciate that the statistical and methodological expositions contained in each of these chapters are provided for readers who are primarily interested in understanding the theoretical and methodological principles incumbent to the development of each of the CAP models. In this respect, a detailed understanding of this material is not essential for readers who wish

to use the models for the purpose of aiding them in the construction of a criminal profile.

The final two chapters of the book return to the objective of providing the reader with a greater understanding of the CAP research and its pragmatic application. Specifically, Chapter 10 outlines procedures for the analysis of offense spatial locations, while Chapter 11 discusses procedurally how to develop a written criminal profile.

The work of CAP that is discussed throughout this book is cognizant of the purpose of profiling in assisting criminal investigations and is therefore predominantly focused on crimes that, in my view, will most directly and frequently benefit from the input of a criminal profile. CAP firmly advocates the scientific development of profiling and incorporates social science principles into its methods. The CAP principles recognize the dangers in being heavily reliant on standardized templates of offenders and instead advocates for malleable mechanisms in accounting for the individual circumstances of a given crime wherever possible.

I have embarked on many objectives in writing this book, but if the reader considers my combined efforts to have increased his or her understanding of criminal profiling and how it works, I will be content.

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