

Criminal Profiling: Current Trends of Forensic Psychology

Medha Bagalkote, Shivanjali Shridhar Pillay, and S Lavanika

Students, Department of Psychology, Lovely Professional University, Punjab

Keywords

Criminal behavior, criminal profiling, forensic psychology, and legal.

Abstract

Forensic psychology is a crucial field that acts as a bridge between psychology and the legal and criminal justice systems. Its primary objective is to ensure fairness and efficacy within the legal process by applying psychological expertise to a wide range of legal issues. In the 21st century, forensic psychology has undergone significant transformations due to advancements in technology and research methodologies. This paper offers an in-depth examination of a key aspect of this field: criminal profiling. Criminal profiling is a prominent application within forensic psychology, but it is imperative to recognize that it lacks precision as a science. Its accuracy can vary significantly, and this review seeks to clarify the multifaceted nature of criminal profiling and its fundamental components. By delving into the intricacies of this domain, we underscore the significance of possessing a profound comprehension of psychology, criminology, and law enforcement procedures for effective criminal profiling.

This review casts a spotlight on the dynamic character of criminal profiling, addressing its strengths, limitations, and evolving methodologies. It emphasizes the necessity for ongoing research and collaboration among experts in psychology, criminology, and law enforcement to enhance the precision and dependability of criminal profiling techniques. Ultimately, this paper highlights the complex interplay between forensic psychology and the legal system, emphasizing the role of criminal profiling as both a valuable tool and a subject of continuous refinement in the pursuit of justice.

Introduction

Most of us are familiar with the concept of "criminal profiling." Its recent media appearances have undoubtedly enhanced criminal psychology's profile. The use of criminal profiling (CP) in criminal investigations has continued to increase despite scant empirical evidence that it is effective. Criminal Minds suggested that public interest in criminal profiling was growing. Even though it was around in the year 1888, which was Jack the Reaper's time, it wasn't formally acknowledged until the 1970s. (Asha Bolton, 2019) Unfortunately, the term "criminal profiling" has occasionally come to mean different things. Part of the misunderstanding stems from the various terms that are frequently used interchangeably, including "offender profiling," "criminal personality profiling," "investigative profiling," and "psychological. Those who comprehend the procedure and have had positive results with it support profiling. Many law enforcement experts, including criminologists and behavioral scientists, still lack a thorough knowledge of profiling as an investigative strategy. Criminal profiling can be a very helpful tool in the investigation of extremely violent crimes, according to a variety of authors, including forensic psychologists and FBI-trained profilers. According to some, the current state of criminal profiling is more art than science. "Most criminal profiling uses information drawn from forensic and behavioral science, but the scientific merit of profiling has not yet been demonstrated in a systematic fashion profiling (Cook and Hanman, 1999).

Literature review

Criminal profiling dates back to the blood-labeling of Jews in Rome. Over the last 200 years, criminal profiling has been practiced by specialists from a variety of disciplines, including investigators, behavioral scientists, social scientists, and forensic scientists. The field has evolved and is now based on the study of crime and criminal behavior, mental health and sickness, and physical evidence examination (Haksun, Li. (2023). Forensic practitioners' early investigations into the criminal mind laid the basis for the creation of a more organized and systematized approach to categorizing offenders and identifying their likely characteristics (Brent & Turvey, 2012). David Canter's work has evolved the early experiments into a thorough and complete technique that has been applied to a wide range of crimes and circumstances (Gareth, Norris. (2006). Profiling has also been applied to other aspects of the judicial system, including jury and racial profiling (Gareth, Norris. (2014). The history of profiling includes key milestones such as the Jack the Ripper investigation and the FBI's establishment of the Criminal Investigative Analysis (CIA) (Jinnan, Wu. (2023). Criminal profiling is used to aid in investigation strategy, comprehend reasons, identify prospective targets, and restrict the suspect pool.

In the 1960s, Howard Teten, an American police officer studying under internationally renowned criminalists, medical examiners, and psychiatrists Dr. Paul Kirk, Dr. Brey focal, and Dr. Douglas Kelly, was inspired, and developed a multidisciplinary understanding of these areas in his approach to criminal profiling (CP). As a special agent for the Federal

Bureau of Investigation (FBI), he taught a CP program in 1970 as a supplement to other investigative tactics, and he later taught abnormal psychology with Pat Mullany. The growth of CP began in 1974 and 1975, when Mullany's successful negotiation of significant hostage crises led to the teaching of tactics to all FBI negotiators. After assisting in the resolution of a few instances, its reputation grew, and the police department began to seek profiles on a regular basis. In 1972, the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) was formed.

Eventually, Special Agent John Dou The growth of CP began in 1974 and 1975, when Mullany's successful negotiation of significant hostage situations led to the teaching of tactics to all FBI negotiators. After assisting in the resolution of a few instances, its reputation grew, and the police department began to request profiles on a daily basis. The FBI's Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) was established in 1972. Special Agent John Douglas eventually took control. (Turvey, 2011).

After visiting and interviewing serial killers and mass murderers in 1956, FBI special agents John Douglas and Robert Ressler developed a systematic method to CP known as the criminal profile generation procedure. These profiles have since been employed as tools in situations such as the hunt for special homicides in the United States till a certain point. (White, Lester, Gentile, & Rosenbleeth, 2011).

Criminal profiling is a method to assess whether an individual is likely to commit a crime during an investigation, involving the analysis of psychological and behavioural characteristics. Criminal profiling is a comprehensive process that investigates crime scenes, identifies recurring patterns from previous crimes, and considers factors such as victim preferences, crime modes, settings, types, suspect communications, and the state of the crime scene. The construction of a criminal profile involves a problem-solving approach, drawing upon various branches of psychology knowledge. (Petherick W.et.al (2020)

Criminal Profiling (CP), also known as offender profiling or behavioural profiling, is utilized in law enforcement and legal contexts, integrating forensic psychology and the analysis of behavioural patterns. The term "criminal profiling" aligns with the language used in Malaysian law. (Fox & Farrington, 2018) Various alternative terms are used interchangeably, including "psychological profiling," "criminal investigative analysis," "crime scene analysis," "behavioural profiling," "personality profiling," "case linkage analysis," and "behavioural consistency analysis" (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

The development of criminal profiling draws significantly from three disciplines: psychiatry, forensics, and criminology (Lauren. Barrow, 2014). This interdisciplinary approach underscores the complexity and depth of understanding required in creating effective criminal profiles.(John E. Douglas and Alan E. Burgess, 1998)

The goal of criminal profiling is to create a psychological and behavioral profile of an unknown perpetrator based on evidence from the crime scene, witness statements, and other available information. John E. Douglas and Alan E. Burgess described criminal profiling as an investigating procedure that involves analyzing a person's crime to determine significant personalities and behavioural characteristics.Douglas and Burgess were special officers who

managed and constructed the Behavioral Investigation Unit at the FBI Academy were the earliest to call attention to criminal profiling globally.

As a result, the two men's definition of criminal profiling was widely acknowledged and utilized by other scholars and law enforcement in the beginning of the development phase for such literatures (John E. Douglas and Alan E. Burgess, 1998) However, several scholars at the time contended that the field of knowledge used was completely inappropriate for creating criminal profiles that can be used by law enforcement, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the profiles developed. The FBI's hypotheses were actually shown to be less accurate and in need of revision by a number of investigations.

The FBI describes criminal profiling as a way of finding the perpetrator of a violent crime by analyzing the offender's personality and behavioral attributes based on an assessment of the crime committed (Bull et al., 2006).

Criminal profiling is frequently applied to serious sorts of crime, such murder or rape, and to cases when the name of the criminal is unknown. The likelihood of profilers working on crime series, which are groups of crimes that are considered to have been perpetrated by the same criminal, is similarly high. (Alison, L. J. (2005)

It calls for the use of the scientific method, a working knowledge of the science of logic, and the capacity to recognize when someone is mistaken. It also needs some knowledge about prejudice. Due to the forensic community's connections to both law enforcement and the prosecution, an unsettling number of forensic experts have all but given up objectivity and have developed a total bias in favor of the prosecution's aims, ideologies, and objectives. The scientific observers are also inherently imperfect (Ainsworth, P. (2001)

This is because tiny types of bias, whether conscious or unconscious, may readily corrupt their otherwise objective endeavors. Observer effects occur when the outcomes of a forensic examination are skewed by the examiner's surroundings and mental state, including the examiner's subconscious expectations and aspirations. (Wayne et. al, (2012)

The scientific method must be strictly followed and fully embraced as the first step in a sequence of actions that can mitigate the impact of even the most ubiquitous types of prejudice.(Wayne et. al, (2012)

Types of Criminal Profiling

Criminal profiling is the technique of inferring characteristics of suspected offenders based on indirect behavioral evidence. There are several varieties of criminal profiling, each with its own set of processes, ideas, and logic. Others are concrete, particular, and situationally descriptive, whilst some are abstract, generic, and trait predictive. These approaches include Criminal Investigative Analysis (CIA) (Jinnan, Wu, 2023), (Khudaykulova, Djamilakhan, Alimovna. 2023), Diagnostic Evaluations (DE), Investigation Psychology (IP) and Phantom approaches (Haksun, Li, 2023, Wayne et al. 2012).

Nomothetic profiling is a group-based strategy to studying the characteristics of groups of offenders that encompasses CIA, DE, IP, and geographic profiling. Other terminology for criminal profiling includes behavioral profiling, crime scene profiling, criminal personality profiling, offender profiling, psychological profiling, and investigative psychology (Gilberto, et al, 2018).

Nomothetic offender profiling involves the study of different offender subpopulations and results in traits used to create profiles. There are four basic types of nomothetic profiling: Criminal Investigative Analysis (CIA), Diagnostic Evaluation (DE), Investigative Psychology (IP), and Geographic Profiling. The FBI utilizes CIA, and diagnostic tests, investigative psychology, and geographic profiling cover various psychological aspects relevant to criminal and civil investigations (Wayne A et al., 2012).

Geographic profiling, in particular, focuses on determining the likely location of an offender's residence based on crime scenes. It operates on theories developed from group studies that may not universally apply to specific cases. Nomothetic profiling methods, including CIA, involve diverse tasks such as creating profiles, advising police on suspect questioning, and spatially profiling offender residences (Ainsworth, 2001).

Criminal profilers use a range of resources to create profiles, with victim and witness reports being crucial sources. In cases where a victim's account is unavailable, profilers may rely on post-mortem findings, crime scene sketches, and testimonies from others. Regardless of the information used, profilers face the challenge of evaluating a substantial amount of data when developing offender profiles (Bull et al., 2006).

Methodology

Objective

To examine and summarize current research on forensic psychology's use of criminal profiling, with an emphasis on current developments. This study aims to provide insights into the evolving methodologies, technological advancements, and theoretical frameworks influencing contemporary practices in criminal profiling.

Research Design

Employs a methodical approach to literature research in order to thoroughly examine current developments and trends in criminal profiling in the field of forensic psychology. Review data were gathered from research publications and articles. Search engines like Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Pubmed, and the National Institute of Health (gov) were employed. research publications containing the terms "criminal profiling," To guarantee that there is a focus on current advancements, the inclusion criteria will be limited to peer-reviewed books, papers, and seminal works that have been published in the last ten years. Keywords such as "criminal profiling," "forensic psychology," "offender profiling," as well as "contemporary trends."

Results and Discussion

The process of inferring characteristics of suspected offenders based on behavioral data is known as criminal profiling. It is utilized to aid in investigation strategy, comprehend reasons, identify potential targets, and restrict the suspect pool. It is also utilized in court to answer legal inquiries about criminological research. There are several approaches of criminal profiling that differ in their soundness and precision. (Richard, et al. 2016). As criminal profiling has evolved as a technique, it has been attempted to be used as expert witness testimony in court procedures. The validity of criminal profiling research accords with legal concepts, implying its probable admissibility. However, the abilities and credentials of those delivering expert evidence must be considered. Criminal profiling misuse has been noted as a serious issue, notably in the United States, with severe consequences for minority groups. Criminal profiling has the potential to be used in industrial security, particularly in the prevention and reduction of industrial espionage (Patrick, et al 2012).

Law enforcement has benefited from CP by reducing the scope of investigations, recommending proactive methods during investigation and trial, correlating crimes and crime scenes, and assisting with geographical profiling and the interrogation process. (Alison et. al., 2010; Cook & Hinman, 1999). This demonstrates that CP has further applications in various domains of psychology, requiring a multidisciplinary approach for an accurate portrayal of a person or circumstance. It contributes to more effective criminal arrests by providing more insight into forensic psychology. The increased research prospects provide more job options for researchers, who in turn provide more supporting evidence to law enforcement for crime prevention, demonstrating a mutually beneficial cycle. However, from the FBI's standpoint, the future of CP is unclear. (Turvey, 2011) The accuracy with which criminal profiling can forecast the traits of an unknown perpetrator is directly connected to its validity. According to the American Psychological Association, validity is defined as the 'degree to which empirical data and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of judgments drawn from some form of assessment.' (American Psychological Association, 2018)

Aspects of Criminal Profiling

There can be many aspects to Criminal Profiling such as Understanding the Offender. Criminal profilers aim to gain insight into the offender's motivations, thought processes, and behavioral patterns. They seek to answer questions such as why the crime was committed, how it was carried out, and what the offender might do next (Woodworth et. al., 2000).

Data Collection

Profilers collect and analyze various types of information, including crime scene details, victimology (information about the victim), witness statements, forensic evidence, and any other relevant data (Patrick, et al 2012).

Psychological Factors

Profilers consider psychological factors such as the offender's personality, cognitive style, emotional state, and any psychopathological traits that might be relevant to the case. (Muller, 1995)

Typologies

Profilers may use offender typologies to categorize criminals into different groups or classifications based on common behavioral characteristics. These typologies help guide the investigative process (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

Modus Operandi (MO) and Signature

Profilers distinguish between an offender's MO (the specific method used to commit the crime) and their signature (unique behaviors or actions that are not necessary to complete the crime but are a personal expression). Understanding these elements can provide insights into the offender's mindset (Muller 2000).

Interviews and Consultation

Profilers often work closely with law enforcement agencies, providing guidance and suggestions on investigative strategies, suspect interviews, and suspect prioritization (Pinizzotto, et al 1990).

Conclusion

Criminal profiling has piqued the curiosity of both the general public and criminal psychology students. Contrary to common belief, it is a discipline in its infancy that still requires significant growth, particularly in terms of developing a sound theoretical foundation and measuring its performance in a methodologically rigorous manner. The effectiveness of a criminal profile is incorrect or even to some extent may inadequately mislead police, allowing the criminal to escape detection for a little while longer and an innocent person may be dead as a result. However, this does not imply that profiles should be ignored or should never be used by police again, but that profiling should be approached with caution. Criminal profiling should not be blindly accepted or should not be relied on because it may be something that may not have any criminal profiling involves a thorough investigation of the crime scene and the identification of recurring trends from earlier crimes. It aids in determining the victims' preferences, the crime's mode, setting, and types, as well as the suspect's communications and the state of the crime scene. The age, race, mental state, and other features of a suspect are among the many other considerations that are taken into account (Dean 2007). Criminal profilers are ultimately able to paint a picture of the likely and trustworthy causes of the crime. Criminal profilers should not be mistaken for a tool that aids in locating the precise culprit connected to a crime, nevertheless. Instead, it aids in drawing judgments about the person most likely to have committed (Cooley 2012).

References

- Ainsworth, P. (2001). *Offender Profiling and Crime Analysis*. London: Willan Publishing.
- Alison, L. J. (2005). *The forensic psychologist's casebook: psychological profiling and criminal investigation*.
- Cullompton, UK: Willan Alison, L. J., Bennell, C., Mokros, A. and Ormerod, D. (2002). The Personality Paradox in Offender Profiling: A Theoretical Review of the Process Involved in Derived Background Characteristics from Crime Scene Actions. *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*, 8, 115-135
- Ault, R. L., Hazelwood, R. R. and Reboussin, R. (1994). Epistemological status of equivocal death analysis. *American Psychologist*, 49, 72-73
- Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press Grubin, D., Kelly, P. and Brunsdon, C. (2001). *Linking Serious Sexual Assaults through behaviour*. London: Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Brent, E., Turvey. (2012). *A History of Criminal Profiling*. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-385243-4.00001-0
- Canter, D. (2000). *Offender Profiling and Criminal Differentiation*. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 5, 23-46
- Canter, D. and Alison, L. J. (1999). *Profiling in Policy and Practice*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Cook, P. E. and Hinman, D. L. (1999). *Criminal Profiling: Science Art*. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 15, 230-234
- Copson, G. (1995). *Coals to Newcastle? Police use of offender profiling*. *Police Research Group Special Interest Paper* 7.
- Douglas, J. and Burgess, A. W. (1986). *Criminal profiling: A viable investigative tool against violent crime*. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 55, 9-13.
- Fox, Bryanna & Farrington, David. (2018). What have we learned from offender profiling? A systematic review and meta-analysis of 40 years of research. *Psychological bulletin*. 144. 1247-1274. 10.1037/bul0000170.
- Gareth, Norris. (2006). *Criminal Profiling: A Continuing History*. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-12-374998-7.00001-0
- Gareth, Norris. (2014). *The Evolution of Criminal Profiling: From Whitechapel to Quantico and Beyond*. doi: 10.1016/B978-1-4557-3174-9.00001-X
- Gilberto, Palma, Ramírez., María, Luisa, Arambula, Díaz, de, León., Lizbeth, Hernández, Rosalio. (2018). *Técnica de Perfilación Criminal: Desarrollo, aplicación y fiabilidad*. doi: 10.29057/ICSA.V7I13.3481

- Geberth, V. G. (1996). *Practical homicide investigation: Tactics, procedures, and forensic techniques* (3rd Ed.).
- Haksun, Li., PhD. (2023). *A History of Criminal Profiling*. doi: 10.1016/b978-0-12-815583-7.00001-0
- Jackson, J., Van Hoppen, P. J. and Herbrink, J. (1993). *Does the service meet the needs?* Netherland Institute for the Study of Criminality mimeographed Report.
- Jackson, J. L. and Bekerian, D. A. (1997). *Offender Profiling: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley and Sons.
- Jinnan, Wu. (2023). *Criminal Profiling*. doi: 10.1016/b978-0-12-823677-2.00228-2 Jung, Se-Jong. (2014). *A Study on the Effectiveness of Criminal Profiling*. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*. 14. 686-694. 10.5392/JKCA.2014.14.11.686.
- Khudaykulova, Djamilakhan, Alimovna. (2023). *Alternative Methods of Criminal Profiling: Revised and Expanded*. doi: 10.1016/b978-0-12-815583-7.00003-4
- London: Home Office Davies, A. (1994). *Editorial: Offender Profiling*. *Medicine, Science, and Law*, 34, 185-186.
- Muller, D. A. (2000). *Criminal profiling: Real science or just wishful thinking?* *Homicides Studies*, 4, 234-241.
- Patrick, Ibe., Charles, Ochie., Evaristus, Obiyan. (2012). *Racial Misuse of "Criminal Profiling" by Law Enforcement: Intentions and Implications*. *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*,
- Pinizzotto, A. J. and Finkel, N. J. (1990). *Criminal Personality Profiling: An Outcome and Process Study*. *Law and Human Behaviour*, 14, 215-233
- Richard, N., Kocsis., George, B., Palermo. (2016). *Criminal profiling as expert witness evidence: The implications of the profiler validity research..* *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, doi: 10.1016/J.IJLP.2016.05.011
- Rossi, D. (1982). *Crime scene behavioral analysis: Another tool for the law enforcement investigator*. *Police Chief*, 18(4), 152–155.
- Tyler, T.R. and Wakslak, C.J. (2004). *Profiling and police legitimacy: Procedural justice attributions of motive, and acceptance of police authority*. *Criminology*, 42(2), 253–281.
- Vorpagel, R.E. (1982). *Painting psychological profiles: Charlatanism, coincidence, charisma or new science*. *Police Chief*, 3(8), 156–159. Wayne A. Petherick, Brent E. Turvey, *Criminal Profiling: Science, Logic, and Cognition*, 2012, Pages 41-65, ISBN 9780123852434, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-385243-4.00002-2>.