Criminal Profiling: A Comparison-Contrast Paper

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Abstract

Criminal profiling is a subject of great interest to the public and the theme of many television crime shows; however, true profiling requires a great deal more work than is portrayed. As the media continue to battle for market share by projecting subjective hyperbole on the evening news, citizens must be reminded of the rights of the accused provided by the Constitution. The time has come to remember that the burden of proof is on the State and that a cloak of innocence must be cast over the accused until proven otherwise. By comparing and contrasting two different approaches to the field of profiling, this paper offers the reader an overview of the education and experience necessary to do this type of investigative work.

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Unfortunately, many in the public, both formally educated and otherwise, are attracted to media hype and as a result forget about the actual evidence necessary to convict a suspect of a crime. The average citizen receives education in criminal profiling from the media (i.e., TV, newspapers, and magazines). A great deal more is involved in investigation than the speculation of those in the media whose motive is nothing more than market share. As responsible citizens, the public has a duty to focus on the truth and to recognize the education and experience necessary to construct a criminal profile from actual evidence gathered at the scene of a crime. The public must avoid being misled by those in the media who profit from the controversy they project. What follows is a side by side look at two styles of criminal profiling.

Creating a profile of a criminal is not new to investigation. Lombroso (1835-1909), thought of as one of the first criminologists, describes several common physical features of the criminal type in his book *The Criminal Man*:

1. Deviation in head size
2. Asymmetry of the face
3. Ears of unusual size
4. Nose twisted, upturned, or flattened

In all, 18 different features are listed in Lombroso’s book, and although we realize today how absurd these ideas are, they were the beginning of forensic profiling (as cited in Turvey, 2009). Like any scientific theory, it stood until found false by peer review and new knowledge.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the FBI invited a select group of law enforcement officers to attend the National Academy, where they were introduced to new ideas and techniques of investigation developed by FBI instructors. Education was enhanced through the study of scientific investigative techniques as well as the study of abnormal psychology. New findings in
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In general, use Arabic numerals for numbers 10 and above and spell out numbers below 10 (APA, 2010, p. 111).

For ease of reading, space mathematical copy just as you would space words (APA, 2010, p. 118).

Note the use of the ampersand (&) rather than and.
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destruction to rape and homicide. Information gathered from the unit is also applied in hostage negotiation situations (Napier & Baker, 2009). It must be made clear that the FBI approach to profiling uses inductive reasoning and as such relies on inference and generalization.

There is more than one opinion on the profiling process, and although this is an area of disagreement among practitioners, it would appear that all involved have the victims’ best interest at heart. We look now at an alternative approach presented by the Academy of Forensic Profiling (AFP) and founded in 1999 by Turvey. Behavioral Evidence Analysis (BEA) is an Ideo-Deductive method of criminal profiling. That is to say, profiling is ideographic, specific to the individual and deductive. As such, the conclusion can only be derived from premises, assuming that these premises are not flawed. For example: 1. All men are mortal. 2. Socrates is a man. 3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. In this example, the conclusion, Socrates is mortal, is derived from the premises that all men are mortal and that Socrates is a man.

The point that this group of investigators wishes to make is that if a profile is to be had, it must be based on the behavioral evidence at the scene of the crime. This evidence can be physical, documentary, or testimonial as long as it helps to establish whether, when, and how an action has taken place (Turvey, 2009). Turvey (2009) has explained that BEA involves the examination and interpretation of physical evidence, victimology, and crime scene characteristics, the results of which can be analyzed for patterns and clusters that provide suspect characteristics of investigative and forensic value. BEA analysis should not render a conclusion unless the evidence exists to support it. Instead of using offender statistics, BEA analysts conduct a detailed examination of each scene. This approach requires a great deal more work, study and humility than alternative methods but is considered more accurate by Turvey and associates of the AFP.

A signal phrase provides the author’s name and year of publication. Note: Use a present-perfect or past tense verb in a signal phrase (APA, 2010, p. 78).
According to Turvey (2009), the BEA profile is based on forensic analysis, victimology and crime scene analysis. Forensic analysis refers to the testing and interpretation of any physical evidence found at the scene to establish corresponding behavioral evidence. Both victim and offender behavior need to be established by applying scientific methodology with respect to evidence at hand, e.g. blood stain pattern analysis, wound recognition, travel path of projectiles, etc. (Turvey 2009).

Victimology is the process of establishing and evaluating victims’ traits and history: Who they were, where and how they spent their time, and how they lived their lives are all important factors. Offenders’ victim choices can lend themselves to inferences about offenders’ fantasies, motives, *modus operandi*, knowledge and skill. Through exposure assessment, the investigator may determine the amount of exposure the offender was willing to allow in order to gain access to the victim. This information can be valuable in forming ideas about offender behavior and choices prior to, during, or after the crime (Turvey & Petherick, 2009).

Crime scene analysis is the process of investigating, establishing, and evaluating behavior evidence about each particular incident in order to put it into sequence and to reconstruct the crime. Information of this nature may be applied in serial cases. Areas of importance are method of approach, method of attack, method of control, location, nature and sequence of sexual acts, materials used, and any conversation and precautionary acts (e.g., condom usage). Crime scene characteristics are determined individually and may be compared if they appear to evolve or fail to evolve over time (Turvey & Petherick, 2009). *Turvey (2009) emphasized that “analysis or criminal profile in the absence of scientific method, analytical logic and critical thinking is called a GUESS”* (p. 152).
As a scientist with an investigative background, I am able to analyze and see value in each method of criminal profiling: the Criminal Investigative Analysis (CIA) and the Behavioral Evidence Analysis (BEA). Through science, investigators learn to use inductive reasoning: questioning, observing, thinking critically and then forming a hypothesis. Until a hypothesis fails, investigators are allowed to make inferences and to generalize based on results. The FBI and CIA techniques were developed along these lines. Data was gathered from a sample, albeit a small but not random one, and the data was compared and inferences were made (e.g., one third of all serial killers are white males between 30 and 45 years old, intelligent, who drive full-sized sedans and who were abused as children). This information has been applied in investigations of several crimes and has been somewhat successful, though never entirely accurate. Nevertheless, FBI investigators who have taken the initiative to create and continue this study are to be commended for their effort.

In conclusion, when comparing the deductive approach used in BEA to the CIA approach, investigators find that deductive reasoning, where the conclusion is derived from the premises, assuming the premises are not flawed, works best. As a scientist, I cannot find fault with this approach. The Academy of Forensic Profiling provides a solid argument in defense of its methodology. Having been in law enforcement for 20 years, I know how easy it is for investigators to accept statistics as evidence, and this blind acceptance can bias investigators’ opinions, causing them to lose sight of the actual behavioral evidence. Perhaps a combination of both methodologies should be applied. The CIA methodology might be more useful in narrowing the field of suspects, while the BEA methodology can often bring the investigation to fruition.
References


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