

Serial Murder Profiling: Our Contemporary Understanding

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Abstract

In this article we examine if, and to what extent, profiling can help to solve serial murder cases. We consider the unique characteristics of serial murder and their relationship to profiling, and examine the benefits and limitations of offender profiling. We conclude that using profiling as an investigative tool may help to capture serial murderers and prevent further murders. Notwithstanding, profiling does not guarantee, solving each serial murder case, due to both the limitations of profiling as an objective investigative tool and the distinct characteristics of serial murderers, making them difficult to profile.

Keywords: Serial Murder; Profiling; Crime Scene; Geo-Profiling; Modus Operandi; Signature

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Though serial murder is a relatively rare occurrence, it causes great concern among the general public. The fact that most serial murderers are classified as sane (possessing antisocial personality disorders) is even more worrisome [1].

Movies, books, and television series (such as Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) and Criminal Minds) have generated a certain degree of public conception that forensics and the ability to think like a murderer can solve every occurrence of serial murder. It is important to remember that profiling (criminal profiling or offender profiling), in its different forms and contexts such as crime scene analysis, personality analysis, spatial analysis is at most an important tool for police investigations. Advocates of profiling relate to it as a science while critics of profiling refer to it as an art form [2].

The effectiveness of profiling in general, and profiling of serial murder specifically, has not been widely studied. Hodges and Jacquin [3] argued that only two-thirds of murder cases in the United States have been solved, with the unsolved third of murders including at least some serial murders. They maintain that the efficiency and accuracy of criminal profiling has not been investigated sufficiently, although their findings suggest that law enforcement officials have a higher rate of accuracy using profiling than other investigative methods.

Other critiques include the fact that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) refuses to report on the efficiency of using profiling in solving cases of serial murder, which raises questions about the method [4]. Conversely, recently published books and articles attempt to identify the important tools that profiling uses, and their significance as investigative tools [5].

This article proposes that the use of profiling as an investigative tool for murder cases, specifically cases of serial murder, is marked by many inadequacies, stemming in part from problematic criminology typology, as well as human error. However, continued development of the theoretical tools, empirical testing, and improved training, can change profiling into a more reliable and

efficient investigative tool for solving murder cases in general, and cases of serial murder specifically.

Serial Murder

The exact definition of a “serial murderer” is a subject of discussion among researchers today. Whether the debate is academic or political (in order to allocate resources), it does not impede the ability to profile the phenomenon of serial murder. Serial murder can be defined as two or more instances of murder that are carried out by the same murderer (or group of murderers), with a period of at least three days, or even several years, separating the two instances of murder [6].

There are two primary problems encountered in investigating serial murders. The first is that the murderer and the victim are complete strangers. Whereas in a “typical” murder, the murderer is well known to the victim, in the majority of serial murder cases, there is no previous association between the two, which complicates locating the murderer. The second problem is that the majority of serial murderers are seemingly normal people; they have jobs, they are well-known neighbors, some even have families. Therefore, the likelihood that they would be suspected of criminal behavior is rather low. For example, Robert Yates, a serial murderer who operated in Washington in the 1990s, was a married father of five, worked in the United States Air Force, and murdered 13 prostitutes; Gary Ridgeway, the “Green River Killer,” was married three times, including at the time of his arrest. He was employed as a truck painter for 32 years, visited church frequently, and read the Bible at home and at work. He admitted to murdering 48 women over the span of 20 years in Seattle; Dennis Rader was a married father of two, he was a leader in the Boy Scouts, served in the United States Air Force, and was the president of his local church. He murdered 10 victims in Kansas [7].

Serial murder is one of the most severe crimes, and also one of the most publicized crimes, which has implications on the public sense of security. The severity of the crime and the widespread media reports about it establish “moral panic,” and puts great pressure on the police department to solve the crime. The problem is that the odds of catching the killer are quite low, given the nature of the crime: an absence of previous association between the murderer and the victim; the absence of a missing person report, largely due to the fact that most victims do not have family ties because of their job, their status, or other circumstances; the murderer’s double life as a person who works, learns, functions in a community versus his concealed criminal actions, makes it extremely difficult for him to be perceived as a suspect and arrested. For these reasons, profiling would be helpful in investigating serial murder crimes [8].

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of active serial murderers that have not been caught, but different estimates indicate that the number of serial murderers that roam free in the United States at any given time ranges from tens to a few hundred [9,10]. In the same way, it is not possible to estimate the annual number of victims of serial murder, because many of their

bodies have been intentionally hidden by the killer. For example, the aforementioned, Ridgeway, admitted to murdering 48 women victims. Hunter, who was nicknamed the "Happy Face Killer," was convicted of murdering eight women, but admitted to murdering 60. It is important to note that a conviction can be made only with the evidence of a body, and not solely based on admission. Therefore, it is unclear whether serial murderers boast of a high victim count or if the number is indeed correct [8].

Typology of Serial Murderers

Researchers generally seek to identify a number of shared characteristics of a certain phenomenon or problem in order to generate an expansive database that would be useful in profiling. In cases of serial murder, though, this is not possible. The primary reason is that serial murderers differ greatly from one another, in personality (psychotic versus psychopathic), in motivation for murder (power seeking, material gain), and whether they operate independently or as contract killers. For this reason and in order to improve our understanding of serial killers, many researchers have attempted classifying and typologizing murderers and serial murderers [2,6,11].

Typology enables the classification of different serial murderers according to a variety of characteristics such as motivation, the existence of a fantasy, the manner in which the serial murder was conducted, the killer's psychological characteristics, as shown at the crime scene, the killer's mobility, the geographic span within which the killer commits his crime, and so on. Bartol CR, et al [8], define typology as "a particular system for classifying personality or other behavioral patterns. The typology is used to classify a wide assortment of behaviors into a more manageable set of descriptions, which can be useful".

The classic problems that typology presents, and those that specifically relate to serial murder are: overlap between categories; a case that fits several categories; a case that does not fit into any of the proposed categories; and lack of consensus as to the criterion or variable that will determine classification (motive, operating patterns, victim type). When profiling a serial murderer, most experts depend on the motivational and psychopathological aspects deduced from information found at the crime scene [12].

Classifying Serial Murderers as "Organized" and "Disorganized"

The FBI was the first law enforcement agency to adopt a system of typology where killers are classified according to their degree of organization: organized or disorganized. Though this typology is the earliest in terms of chronology, it is still the most widely used and accepted practice, at least within the FBI for their work, and was even presented by two FBI employees [13]. According to this typology, there are essential differences between these two personality types that are expressed both in behavior patterns prior to the murder, such as choosing a victim and choosing a venue, as well as behavior patterns after the murder. As the subject matter is beyond the scope of this article, we present these two classifications in brief.

The organized serial murderer

The organized serial murderer plans his actions in advance. His normal social skills enable him to lure potential victims, who exhibit common features (e.g., gender, employment, socio-economic status). The organized murderer brings his weapons with him to the crime scene, and will take care to hide them or remove them after the crime, as well as clean the crime scene from all forensic evidence. The killer is well organized, in full control of his faculties

and his actions throughout the entire process, and tends to tie up his victims in order to prevent them from hindering him in carrying out his fantasy [8].

Jeffrey Dahmer serves as an example of an organized serial murderer. This serial murderer would lure his victims into pubs and, after they were intoxicated, invite them up to his apartment for a "final drink," literally. This killer prepared a sedative for the victim's drink, as well as tools such as drills and surgical equipment, in order to drill open the victims' heads, dissect their bodies, and preserve some of their organs in jars of formaldehyde. These facts indicate that he was an organized murderer, who planned his steps ahead to achieve the outcomes that motivated him to perform the crimes. This killer was a serial murderer and a cannibal, and suffered from a combination of homosexual and murderous urges. He described each murder coherently, kept body parts in his home, acted in a relaxed manner; the crimes were deliberate and premeditated. A personality analysis determined that he suffered from repressed hostility, constant fear of social rejection, and severe isolation. All of these things caused him, in a symbolic manner, "to preserve" his victims. Sexual sadism and his need for control were the basis of his desire to have his victims in a submissive position while he abused them sexually. With that being said, the fact that he preserved his victims' organs in an unsuitable manner caused his neighbors to complain of a strong stench stemming from his apartment [14]. Another well-known example of an organized murderer is the infamous serial killer Ted Bundy.

The disorganized serial murderer

This type of serial killer is diametrically opposed to an organized serial killer. He suffers from a lack of social skills, which makes it difficult for him to lure victims. The murder is committed without advance planning, and the disorganized personality of the killer will improvise a weapon with which to commit his crime at the location (for example, strangling the victim with their own clothing). The weapon will be left at the scene of the crime, as will a variety of other pieces of forensic evidence. At the murder scene, the killer operates on impulse, or in a rage, and is not in control of his faculties. His attack on his victim is instantaneous, an onslaught, not the fulfillment of a set fantasy, and therefore he is not likely to tie up his victim. The disorganized serial killer lacks clear criteria in selecting his victims, aside from their vulnerability and lifestyle [8,15].

Herbert William Mullin serves as an example of a disorganized serial murderer. This killer operated without any advanced planning and without any attempt to cover his tracks. As an example, his first murder was committed when he traveled aimlessly on a rural road. When he spotted an elderly man, he requested assistance to fix a problem with his engine, and then beat him to death, leaving the body at the side of the road. Approximately ten days later, he picked up a hitchhiker, stabbed her in her heart, and threw her body to the side of the road. All of these things indicate the lack of advance planning, the lack of a specific process in selecting a victim, and the absence of any attempt to conceal the murder [16]. Commenting on these two proposed categories, Newton [16], points out that the dichotomy is not clear or simple given that some organized serial killers turn into disorganized killers with time. They begin to leave evidence, which facilitates in their capture.

Canter DV in 2004, examined the typology empirically. They assessed 100 scenes of murder that were committed by 100 serial killers in the United States. They concluded that there was no correlation between the different characteristics of the crime that could point to the classification of the serial killer as an organized serial killer or a disorganized serial killer. In their conclusion, they

argue that their findings have implications for serial killer profiling; where profiling may incorrectly classify a killer as an organized killer or a disorganized killer at the beginning of an investigation, the mistaken classification can lead to a faulty investigation, wasting valuable resources of time and money.

Aside from the two categories discussed above, researchers that examined the characteristics of different serial killers found that there is a third category that should be used in classification, the "mixed" serial killer, who exhibits characteristics of both an organized serial killer and a disorganized serial killer. Accordingly, the dominant typology was subject to sharp criticism, though its advocates tried to argue that there may be cases where the murderer begins to operate as an organized murderer, and changes with time to the stereotype of a disorganized murderer [6,17,18].

The simplicity of this typology was received enthusiastically by many researchers in academia, in the police sector, and in the field of profiling [15,19,20]. Conversely though, there was intense criticism of this typology and its capacity to serve as an investigative tool [18,21]. Additional criticism took it one step further and argued that there is no evidence to support the proposed typology [4]. More complicated typologies were suggested by researchers attempting to discriminate between murder motives: physical as opposed to psychological; related to sexuality or unrelated; psychopathic as opposed to psychotic; and more [1,22,23].

While the criticism of the earlier typology of a killer as an organized killer/disorganized killer was that the classification was too broad and general, the critiques of the later typologies were that they attempted to include all different types of serial killers, which led to the development of overly detailed typology, overlapping categories, and more. In other words, in their attempt to devise a typology that was clear and unambiguous, they developed a dichotomy that was at times problematic when classifying human beings. An example of this is the typology developed by researchers Holmes, et al. [1].

In this typology, the researchers classified serial killers according to five main groupings: visionary; mission-oriented; hedonistic (passion and lust), and power/control. This typology was tested empirically by Canter and his team of researchers [20]. They hypothesized that if this typology reflected reality, then all of the characteristics of each type of serial murderer would be noted among the characteristics of each killer classified in this category of serial murderer, and not be found among serial killers that are classified differently. Examination of the crime scenes did not produce empirical proof to support the proposed differentiation between serial killers or other murderers. With this, these typologies did facilitate an understanding of the broad range of types of serial killers, distinguishing between the psychotic and the psychopathic killer, and distinguishing between physical motives and psychological motives and, as such, contributed to important developments in understanding serial murder and in profiling.

The most current theoretical typology [6], seeks to prevent a dichotomy between the absence of and the presence of distinguishing criteria. Learning from critiques of earlier typologies, this typology assesses the characteristics of a killer and of the serial murder on a continuum, in accordance with statistically prominent features of one type of murder. In this way, an investigator or profiler can locate the characteristics of the murder and the killer on a continuum that includes: motivations; sexual relationships; power/control; degree of acquaintance with the victim; additional crime record; focus on the action, and the process. Another advantage of this typology is that it is relevant to different types of serial murder, and includes six different genres: serial murder related to romantic involvement;

terror; organized crime; women who murder for profit; professional contract killers, and killers who murder for sexual and sadistic reasons [6]. With this said, it is important to note that given that the research is relatively new, it has not yet been tested empirically to determine if the typology is in fact correct.

As mentioned, typology refers to a specific method for classifying personalities or other behavior patterns. Over time, the two main criticisms of the typologies in general, and of typologies that deal with serial murder specifically, are that although they have a lot of theoretical importance, they fail to provide researchers with the necessary elements for analyzing a crime scene. Even more problematic, typologies lack the empirical research to ratify the proposed classifications [24]. Alternatively, later research indicates that the empirical value of typologies and their practical application in profiling is low or non-existent [25,26].

The debate among researchers regarding typologies in general, and typologies of serial killers specifically is not over. Some, primarily law enforcement officials, prefer the minimalist typologies while others, primarily academics, prefer those that are maximalist [6]. It should be noted that typology was largely intended to classify the phenomenon from a theoretical perspective. Only afterwards can it be tested empirically. From the moment an analysis is made, it represents the reality that the investigators and profilers encounter. With this, the great challenge is that there are few serial killers but many different motivations, modi operandi, and signatures. It is possible that profiling a serial killer does not need to make use of a far reaching investigative tool such as typology but rather the "fingerprint" (signature) or the DNA of a specific criminal repeatedly found.

Profiling

Holmes, et al [28], defined profiling as "an educated attempt to provide research agencies with specific information regarding the type of individual who commits certain crimes. In their estimation, profiling is a critical investigative tool to be used at crime scenes that enables profilers to gain insight from the physical evidence and the pathology at the crime scene.

Snook, et al [4], explain that "criminal profiling (CP) is the practice of predicting a criminal's personality, behavioral, and demographic characteristics based on crime scene evidence". In their opinion, Holmes, et al [28], determine that profiling has three primary components: one, sociological and psychological evaluation of offenders, for example, race, age, employment, religion, personal status and education, which will aid the police in reducing the range of suspects and conducting searches for relevant suspects; two, psychological evaluation of the objects in the suspect's possession, for example, possession of objects that could link the suspect to the crime that was committed such as a gun or pictures from the crime scene; three, suggestions for methods of interrogating the suspect, such as *via* interview or investigation, in accordance with the personality identified by the profiler.

An additional methodology of profiling emphasizes the importance of the typology of the offenders. According to this approach, the type of crime committed is correlated with the background of the offender, and therefore it is even possible to predict who will commit certain types of crimes [27]. Profiling is conducted in several stages. Initially, a police officer collects evidence from the crime scene, which is then passed along to the profiler, who makes predictions regarding the offender's character, behavior and demographic characteristics. These predictions are then reported to investigators [4].

Canter DV, et al [27] and Bartol CR, et al [8], described profiling

as a way of thinking through inferences from the crime scene or other characteristics, and the offender, who has yet to be found. Deductive reasoning in profiling is used when the police have a large number of suspects, or if the police have no idea who to search for and where to search for a crime suspect. This thinking pattern was developed in the FBI and inspired by the detective Sherlock Holmes and his deductive technique. As deductive reasoning, profiler attempts to build a criminal profile based on the different findings that were identified and analyzed, including sociological and psychological characteristics of the alleged killer.

Profiling has been subject to harsh criticism over the years in that it is not based on science and theory. Similarly, it has been charged that the FBI reports on its successes in solving crimes but does not provide information regarding cases where profiling failed to identify the offender. In the following sections, we examine the effectiveness of different profiling methods in cases of serial murder.

Crime scene profiling in cases of serial murder

The assumption of investigators is that the crime scene reflects the killer's mental pathology, and therefore profiling based on the pathological physical evidence found at the scene can provide insight. For example, the position of the body may point to the humiliation of the victim in a symbolic manner, taking physical memorabilia may indicate a form of psychological profit for the offender, use of duct tape may point to a murderer who served in the army or was interned in a prison, or these behaviors may be part of the killer's fantasy [28].

Motive

As mentioned, serial murder derives from many different motives. However, for the most part, serial killers are inclined to victimize population sectors they deem unworthy of living, largely because of abuse they experienced in childhood. Therefore, analyzing the victims at the crime scene can give the profiler a foundation for understanding the motive [29].

Fantasy

Fulfilling a fantasy can include the killer's behavior preceding the murder and in its aftermath, dismemberment of the body and taking "memorabilia" from the body. Such that in terms of evidence, it can be expected that in the murderer's home there may be photographs and videos, or body parts discovered in the freezer [6]. An important characteristic in serial murder, primarily in murders that are sexual, is the existence of a fantasy that precedes the act of murder. The fantasy comprises a script that dictates to the murderer behavior rituals and other rituals expressed that begin with luring the victim and end in his murder, or at times, even afterward (necrophilia).

Modus operandi (MO)

Serial killers are likely to escalate their behavior with time, to take memorabilia from the body and/or to act in a different manner so as to confuse the police. Therefore, even though one cannot ignore the killer's modus operandi, it is possible there might be severe mistakes made in the profile if the modus operandi is given too much prominence in trying to connect different cases of murder to the same murderer [8].

Signature

Serial murderers each have their own unique signature. This is their "business card," because it is important to them that they be identified with the act and thereby recognized, publicized, and made famous. For example, a killer will leave at the crime scene

evidence of a repetitive behavior, even ritualistic, a sketch or writing on the walls and/or on the body, and in that way it will be possible to connect this behavior to a certain personality among those who have been arrested for interrogation. The signature is an important medium in profiling a serial murderer, primarily when it is necessary to choose a dominant suspect among several suspects and establish a case against him [30].

With this, researchers have not found proof that serial killers operate in a consistent fashion over time, which casts doubt on the concept of "signature," and the ability to use it to connect different cases of murder [4].

Staging of the crime scene

In a case of serial murder, as compared to other crimes, the setup of the crime scene is not meant to mislead profilers. In most cases, the staging of the scene of the crime scene derives from the symbolic motive of the killer, and the way in which he wants to portray his victim. For example, a female victim might be found with her legs apart and without her undergarments, even if there was no sexual offense committed, for the sole purpose of further humiliating her after her death. The staging of the crime scene has the ability to help in profiling a serial murderer, when the assumption is that primary elements of the setup will present themselves repeatedly.

Psychological profiling of serial murderers

The preeminent assumption of profiling is that serial murderers develop severe personality disorders in their youth, primarily antisocial personality disorders, and that these disorders were evident in their youth and adolescence, and come to their full expression in their adulthood through serial murder [31]. For example, investigators found a difference in operation pattern and crime scenes between sexual serial murderers who were childhood victims of abuse, and those who were not [32].

Psychological profiling assumes that it is possible to build a profile of a serial killer in accordance with his personality as it is expressed in his behavior patterns, such as rage expressed in "surplus killing," the degree of organization of a killer, or leaving the scene of a crime disorganized. Similarly, the evidence of sexual relations with the victim, or specifically recoiling from any physical contact with the victim and the use of an object to sexually penetrate the body, can also help build a psychological profile.

Psychological profiling of a serial murder assumes that if we understand the motive, the modus operandi, the signature, and the staging of the crime scene, we can locate the killer and/or identify him from among a variety of possible suspects.

One of the harshest critiques leveled against psychological profiling is that of Ritter [27], who researched serial killers beginning in the 1970s. She asserts that as in all forms of profiling, profilers make certain incorrect psychological assumptions with regard to the emergence of the serial killer and his modus operandi. They then take care to adapt their perceptions to the reality, even if they are different.

Case linkage in profiling serial murder

One of the chief tools in all serial murder investigations is case linkage. In order for the case being investigated to be examined as a murder among a group of serial murders, it is necessary to correlate other murders to the same murderer, or to a murderer who has been arrested. This is done in accordance with the degree of similarity of the killer's behavior in different murder cases. For example, the killer's signature is unique and appears in each of the crime scenes. This immediately helps to reduce the number

of suspects (because it is not a single murder, which is much more common). On the other hand, incorrect linking of different murders to a specific murderer can lead to a mistaken conviction [8].

A profiler can link cases in one of two ways: the profiler can search a database of murders that have similar characteristics in terms of victims, signature and primarily by comparing DNA findings, even prior to locating and arresting the suspect; or the profiler will search murder cases committed by an apprehended killer that bear similarities to the current case [7,33,34].

This objective is not simple, because a profile needs to be distinct and unique enough to reveal something about the motive, intent, or signature of a specific offender [35]. These researchers examined 116 murders committed by 23 murderers in Italy. The stipulation was that each killer had committed at least two murders. They found 155 unique pairs of murderers and victims (case linkage). After encoding variables according to the degree of control of the killer, motive and modus operandi, they found that it was possible to use the independent variables to predict who the murderer was in 62% of the cases.

More researchers support this finding, and emphasize that the fact that the killer's *modus operandi* is not always consistent and can change in accordance with its efficiency in previous murders. The modus operandi can change from one murder to the next [12,30,36]. An additional criticism is that the more murders that a murderer commits, the more likely it is that his modus operandi will not only escalate, but also change in order to mislead the law enforcement officials, as we stated earlier.

Another assumption that derives from this critique is that when a serial murder is in control of the situation, it can be assumed that he will operate according to the behavior pattern that is familiar to him. This can be correlated with the model of the organized murderer and the disorganized murderer. However, the greater the degree in which the killer is not in control at the crime scene, and did not plan out his actions, the greater the differences between each murder case. This makes it more difficult, if at all possible, to attribute several murders to the same killer.

The great danger of profiling in this context is twofold. It might lead to mistakenly attributing incidents of murder to a specific offender who did not actually commit the crime, or failing to attribute different incidents of murder to a specific offender, even though he committed the crime. This difficulty intensifies when the serial killer tries to mislead the police by changing his signature, or when a serial killer copycats and mimics the modus operandi and the signature of a different serial killer. In light of these critiques and others, and following the emergence of computers and technology in the field of profiling, the implementation of geo-profiling has been applied to serial murder.

Geo-Profiling: Geographic profiling and mapping in serial murder

In line with the principle of "the smallest effort" of spatial profiling, and in correlation with the theory of rational choice, the serial killer will consistently choose the shortest and most accessible route from his home to his victim [37,38]. For example, the offender will choose the shortest route from his home to a place where street prostitutes, homeless youth, or others, are concentrated. With this, since a serial killer selects the most vulnerable victim within the category to which he is drawn, this principle is not necessarily correct in all instances. The killer might determine his route by tracking a specific victim, and not from an objective and rational decision of expending minimal effort.

According to centrality and spatial theories serial murderers

commit their crimes close to home and do not travel long distances. They prefer to operate in a "safe" zone, or in an area that is comfortable to them, primarily for psychological reasons. This also stems from the motive. The greater the degree of an emotional or sexual arousal (expressive) motive, the shorter the distance between his home and the site of the murder [39]. The researchers found that the murder site is limited to a relatively small radius, with the killer's home being in the center. One argument is that this radius becomes smaller as the number of victims rises, and eventually is reduced to a radius of about three kilometers [40]. These researchers noted that this phenomenon, "home dump site," characterized some of the better known serial murderers such as Gacy and Dahmer.

Other researchers noted different findings, but still support this theory, with the meeting between killer and victim ranging between 14 to 22 kilometers from the killer's home, and the dumping of the body ranging from 24 to 40 kilometers [38].

Geo-profilers assert that the simple way to determine the diameter of a serial killer's circle of activity is to identify the distance between the two murders that took place farthest from one another, and place the killer's home in the center of the circle that can be sketched between these points. This method was tested and found to be correct in 89% of cases of serial murder [38,39,41-43]. The researchers concluded that in cases of serial murder, this method can be used with a certain degree of security. With that, it should be taken into account that some serial murderers are mobile and likely to travel long distances in order to commit their crimes, at times traveling among many states in order to hide their tracks [44].

While the circle theory examined the location where bodies were found, a more sophisticated method posited that it is possible for the serial killer to begin in one location, commit the murder at a second location, and dispose of the body in a third location, making it difficult to profile [12]. For example, a murderer who is acting out a fantasy will murder and dismember the body at the crime scene. Conversely, other genres of serial killers might bury the body in their home, or alternatively, hide it in a cave, drown it in a river, abandon it in a mountainous area to be prey for wild animals, etc. The existing geo-profiling method will still relate to the place where the body was found, and in these instances, the chances of the profiling being helpful in finding the killer are lower.

With this, theories of geographic profiling assume that the greater the distance between the home of the serial killer and the specific location, the lesser the chance that he will commit another murder at the same location [45,46]. The most prominent example for our purposes is the killer's rational choice regarding disposing of the body. When the murderer distances himself from the area that is familiar to him, the dangers and stakes (arrest) are much higher. Therefore, some serial killers prefer to hide the bodies in their homes, in a storage area, in the freezer, or buried in the ground [12]. It is interesting that the importance of the geographic theory is precisely in cases where it is disturbed. In instances where the killer specifically concentrates his murders in only one area, the geographic profile loses its effectiveness [47,48].

A General Critique of Profiling and a Specific Critique of Serial Murder Profiling

In this article, many different critiques of profiling in general are presented, and specifically in the context of its application to cases of serial murder. Yet, many articles and books publicized reviews of profiling and its efficiency in solving criminal offenses that were unsolved [5,8]. Alongside the attempt to present profiling as having a strong scientific basis, in the fields of psychology and sociology as

well as other disciplines, there is a lot of criticism on the inherent professionalism of profiling as a field, specifically a field of proven scientific theory, with reviews of its methods of work in the criminal realm in general, and specifically with regard to serial murder.

The title of the article by Snook and his research partners [4] does not leave much room for doubt regarding their opinion on profiling, "The Criminal Profiling Illusion: What's Behind the Smoke and Mirrors?" Books that describe profiling work also critique practices and failures in different domains, such as case linkage, ignoring certain facts that "ruin" the picture that has emerged of the person profiled, etc. It is important to remember that in serial murder, as in all serial crimes, case linkage is the cornerstone of the process of building a profile [28].

Additional significant criticism of offender profiling that is relevant to serial murder is connected to inferences that the profiler makes. Inference demands logical thinking, critical thinking etc., which are not taught as part of profiling training programs [5]. Turvey raised another critique in that profilers do not disconnect themselves emotionally from the crimes that they are investigating. This is especially correct with regard to cases of murder and serial murder. He ascertained that this can influence a profiler's objectivity, as well as his ability to produce a correct profile [5]. Turvey also determined that even after computer software was introduced to minimize human error, it is specifically human beings, who do not always correctly evaluate the information from a crime scene, who need to input the data into the computer system.

Beyond these critiques, the most significant criticism leveled against profiling, notably serial murder profiling, was the absence of credible statistical evidence as to the effectiveness of profiling in solving cases of serial murder, and/or other cases. Snook and others claimed [4] that the FBI refuses to publicize its success rate in using profiling to solve cases of serial murder, and even refuses to allow researchers access to the databases that they used. Additionally, the fact that there are many unsolved cases of serial murder in the United States raises questions about the reliability and effectiveness of the method.

The murder committed in 2009 in Bar Noar, the gay and lesbian Tel Aviv club, though it relates to mass murder as opposed to serial murder, still serves as a local Israeli example of the problematic nature of profiling. The police allocated many resources to solving this murder, which remains unsolved even today. I estimate that this derives in part from mistakes and failures in the profiling work that was done.

Summary and Conclusions

Profiling works backward in time, and attempts to understand and explain events and characteristics of events that happened in the past. In practice, it involves a team that reconstructs a mosaic or puzzle of behaviors, characteristics, and motives of the killer. The team's work extends from the murderer's childhood until the most recent act of murder committed. This process includes a variety of methods: analysis of the crime scene and the interaction between the murderer and the victim; the crime scene dynamic; the fantasy that guided the offender in selecting his victim and in the way that he related to him; a victim profile; the manner in which the murder was committed; and the disposal of the body. The profile also relates to the time period after the murder and includes components such as the killer's attendance at the funeral, the killer offering condolences to the family in mourning, contact with the police and media outlets, keeping body parts and more [49].

These points demand analysis and reconstruction of the crime scene, of the geographic-spatial dimension, interviews with

relatives, criminal biography and general biography of the murderer, and so on. To complicate matters, in cases of serial murder there is not high empirical confirmation for connecting different murder cases to one killer, as the murderer's modus operandi is likely to change with the duration of time. All of this makes profiling work difficult.

One of the important conclusions of this article is that building a profile of a serial murderer necessitates a variety of profiling methods, and it is not possible to make do with only one method. Seeing the offender, the victim and the crime scene as one holistic form is quite important in building a good profile that will prove useful in the investigation.

The fact that each serial killer is different than other killers compromises our ability to generalize the information. Another significant challenge is that serial murder is a relatively rare phenomenon (one percent of all murder cases). This makes it difficult to generate statistics and find mutual characteristics of serial killers, and to employ deductive reasoning. Even worse, when generalizations are indeed made in terms of age, gender and race, they can actually move the investigation in the wrong direction [49,50].

Beyond this, we saw that significant criticism has been expressed regarding the actual field of profiling and its work methods, in that it is influenced by subjective causes, and the investigator is not aware of the influence of this subjectivity on the profile that he builds. This critique is even more relevant when dealing with inductive reasoning, in which the pitfalls may be severe.

Profiling is often based upon typologies from the field of criminology. In addition to the claim that typologies are not properly formulated, that they contain too much or too little information and that their categories are not mutually exclusive or exhaustive, experimental study of the existing typologies has not found any empirical evidence of their accuracy. Consequently, they do not serve as a strong base for profiling.

Nonetheless, one cannot ignore the positive aspects of profiling. Despite their limitations, criminological typologies of serial murder aid in developing an understanding of the basic characteristics of serial murderers, even if there are different types of murderers. The typologies aid in understanding whether a serial killer is relatively stationary or mobile, if his motives are psychological (sexual) or material, whether or not he is psychotic, among other factors.

All these can aid the profiling, even if this does not mean 100% success. If we remember and properly understand that criminal profiling is just an additional tool among the various tools that can be used by investigators in order to solve cases of serial murder, we can see that it can make an important contribution to the investigation. For example, a consistent signature of the murderer, the motives that cause him to carry out the murders, use of certain items that are known only to some people, methods of murder or dismembering the body that require knowledge common only to certain occupations, and more. At the same time, other aspects of profiling, such as geographical-spatial profiling, can significantly aid the investigation with regard to location.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that profiling is not a substitute for a thorough investigation. Additionally, the profile is not able to identify a specific suspect for arrest, and it cannot remove a suspect from a list of suspects simply because he does not fit the profile. With this said, though, a profile can aid in identifying a suspect who was arrested through other methods of investigation [28,51].

There is a lot of room for the scientific development of this important field, for example: empirical examination of typologies,

which will necessarily bring about their improvement; ongoing and deep familiarity with the serial killers who have been captured; examining the depth and length of the killers' resolve in leaving a "signature"; training profilers by learning from mistaken profiles; educating profilers in logical and critical thinking; and developing computer programs that will overcome human error in the profiling process. All of these things can be employed in order to advance the understanding and the information and thereby prevent wrongful convictions of innocent people, and vice versa.

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