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Crime Scene Profiling

Her boyfriend found her body lying inside a large-diameter concrete sewer or drainage pipe along a roadway. . . . She was wearing a shirt, but no bra. Her shorts, with her underwear still inside them, were found on a nearby shrub. The assailant had brutally beaten [the victim] about her face and head, and her nose was broken. She had been killed by manual strangulation. The autopsy revealed rectal tearing and bite marks on [the victim's] left breast, left nipple, and the left side of her chin.

—New Jersey v. Fortin (2000)

Descriptions of crime scenes are sobering and often agonizing, but the crime scene like the one described above is atypical. Sexual murders are very rare, constituting from 1 to 3% of all homicides (Alison, West, & Goodwill, 2004), and homicides themselves are rare compared with other crimes. Nevertheless, we open with the above description from an actual case because it relates to concepts that will be discussed throughout the chapter. Steven Fortin was charged with the 1994 murder of Melissa Padilla. At the time of the charges, Fortin was serving a 20-year sentence for the aggravated sexual assault of a Maine state trooper, which occurred 8 months after the Padilla murder in New Jersey. Some of the details of the two crimes were similar. The Maine trooper—who survived the crime—was sexually assaulted and bitten, and her uniform pants were found with her underwear still inside them. Prosecutors in the New Jersey case wanted to introduce the expert testimony of a former special agent with the FBI, a well-known profiler, to testify on the similarities between the two cases—the process called **linkage analysis** that was mentioned in Chapter 1. We will return to that case and its subsequent developments in Chapter 9.

In the present chapter, you will learn more about the history of crime scene profiling, terminology associated with it, the research on its accuracy and usefulness, and the psychological concepts that are relevant to understanding why crime scene profilers sometimes miss their mark. However, it is important to emphasize that in light of the many critiques of this endeavor, a more scientific approach would bring more respectability to the field. The need for such a scientific approach is addressed in this and succeeding chapters.

Crime scene profiling was developed in the United States in the 1970s by the **Behavioral Science Unit (BSU)** of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to provide investigative assistance to law enforcement in cases of serial homicide or serial rape (Homant & Kennedy, 1998). In 1984, the **National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC)** was created (see Focus 2.1) and within it, the **Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU)** and the **Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)**. As noted in Focus 2.1, one division of the NCAVC is devoted to crimes against children, particularly those involving child abductions. In field offices across the United States, the FBI has **Child Abduction Rapid Deployment (CARD)** teams to provide expertise to state and local law enforcement, and these teams sometimes bring in profilers to assess who the perpetrator may be. In addition, many state police agencies have their own CARD-like teams, sometimes referred to as **Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs)**. We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5, but for the moment it is important to state that the number of *stranger* abductions in a given year is quite small—just over 100 nationwide—though even one such abduction is of great concern.

Today, most of the work in the area of crime scene profiling is under the auspices of the BAU, although the BSU remains as a separate unit that sponsors research and seminars and works closely with the various divisions of the NCAVC. According to the FBI website, the tasks that are commonly associated with profiling are performed by Supervisory Special Agents assigned to the NCAVC. Importantly, the website stresses that these agents

do not get vibes or experience psychic flashes while walking around fresh crime scenes. Rather, it is an exciting world of investigation and research—a world of inductive and deductive reasoning; crime-solving experience; and knowledge of criminal behavior, facts, and statistical probabilities. (<http://www.fbijobs.gov/611.asp>)

We begin the chapter with a historical overview, starting with the development of crime scene analysis in the BSU. Although we maintain the use of our term *crime scene profiling* for consistency—and although we often use the terms *profiler* and *behavioral profiler*—please remember that many professionals who engage in the practice today prefer to use other titles, such as investigative analysts, crime scene analysts, or behavioral crime analysts. There is no “profiler” job title in the BSU or BAU, although “profiler” is a term that appears frequently in its literature as well as in the research literature.

Early FBI Profiling Origins

The FBI itself began as a bureau of investigation within the Justice Department in 1908; J. Edgar Hoover became its director in 1924, and the agency was renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1934. Hoover had little use for psychology or behavioral or social sciences in general (J. E. Douglas & Olshaker, 1995)—at least publicly. During his strong control over the Bureau—over nearly 50 years—psychology and the “soft sciences” were something of a “back room” endeavor. Numerous books, scholarly articles, and documentaries have focused on the FBI, with some of the books having been written

by former agents. Moreover, in November 2011, a film about Hoover, *J. Edgar*, directed by Clint Eastwood and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, was released.

Although it could be said that Hoover himself used psychology to his advantage, he did not support the creation of a publicly recognized, psychologically oriented unit in the agency specifically geared toward helping in the investigation of crimes. Hoover's controversial reign over the FBI and his control over many political and other public figures are well documented (e.g., Jeffreys-Jones, 2007; Kessler, 2002). Under his direction, agents spied on student protestors, activists, writers, politicians, professors, actors, and numerous other citizens throughout much of Hoover's tenure, and particularly during the tumultuous period of the 1960s. He is also known to have kept extensive files on the private lives of many individuals, and he was able to maintain power and his own high-ranking position as a result of the incriminating information he had obtained.

THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE UNIT AND THE NCAVC

Following Hoover's death in early 1972, restrictions on the practice of psychology within the agency became more relaxed. A new FBI Academy was opened that year in Quantico, Virginia, and the Behavioral Science Unit was developed. The BSU's mission was to bring behavioral science into the training curriculum for federal law enforcement officers. Behavioral science was meant to be an umbrella term to encompass specific social science disciplines—criminology, psychology, and sociology—in the hope of understanding human behavior, particularly criminal behavior, along with the social factors that influence it. The BSU also evolved into a resource for various state and local law enforcement agencies interested in obtaining help in solving difficult cases.

As noted above, and illustrated in Focus 2.1, the NCAVC was created in 1984. Today, the NCAVC, BSU, BAU, and ViCAP engage in numerous activities (see www.fbi.gov/), not all of which receive much public attention. For example, they offer courses, such as on terrorism, conflict and crisis management, gangs, death investigation, applied criminology, and biopsychological aspects of criminal behavior. In many cases, participants receive college credit from the University of Virginia. With the help of the popular media, however, crime scene profiling has become one of the best-known contributions of the BAU. On many networks, fictional profilers lend their assistance to fictional detectives, and television shows like *Criminal Minds* focus directly on the work of the “real” professionals, often mentioning the agencies themselves by name.

Focus 2.1

National Center for Analysis of Violent Crimes (NCAVC)

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan announced the establishment of a center designed to provide behavioral-based operational support to federal, state, local, and international law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation of unusual or repetitive

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violent crimes, threats, and terrorism. The center, called the National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), had the primary mission to consolidate research, training, and operational support activities for the express purpose of providing expertise to any law enforcement agency confronted with unusual, bizarre, or particularly vicious or repetitive violent crimes. The NCAVC is under the auspices of the FBI and consists of four units:

- (1) Behavioral Analysis Unit 1 (counterterrorism threat assessment);
- (2) Behavioral Analysis Unit 2 (crimes against adults);
- (3) Behavioral Analysis Unit 3 (crimes against children); and
- (4) Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP).

Unit 1 focuses on matters involving terrorism, threats, arson, bombings, stalking, cyber-related violations, and anticipated or active crisis situations. Unit 2 focuses on serial, spree, mass, and other murders; sexual assaults, kidnappings, missing persons cases; and other violent crimes targeting adult victims. Unit 3 concentrates on crimes perpetrated against child victims, including abductions, mysterious disappearances of children, homicide, and sexual victimization.

The mission of ViCAP (Unit 4) is to facilitate cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies and to provide support to those agencies in any effort to apprehend and prosecute violent serial offenders, especially those who cross jurisdictional boundaries. ViCAP maintains a large investigative repository of major crime cases in the United States, including homicides, sexual assaults, missing persons, and other violent cases involving unidentified human remains.

The NCAVC is a prized assignment, and according to its website, positions there are so competitive that individuals selected usually possess 8 to 10 years of experience as an FBI special agent (with 3 years as the basic requirement). Other important qualifications include overall experience as an investigator specializing in violent crimes. NCAVC staff members are trained to conduct detailed analyses of crimes from behavioral, forensic, and investigative perspectives. The purpose of these analyses is to supply law enforcement agencies with a better understanding of the motivations and behaviors of offenders.

One of the pioneers of profiling at the FBI was Howard Teten, who taught Applied Criminology at the FBI Academy. In an effort to incorporate more practical and useful content in his course, Teten consulted with psychiatrist James A. Brussel, who had become well-known for his profiles of the Mad Bomber and, to a lesser extent, his consultation in the Boston Strangler case (both discussed in Chapter 1). Brussel agreed to teach the fundamentals of his profiling technique to Teten. After consulting with Brussel, Teten—along with Special Agent Patrick J. Mullany, who had a master's degree in counseling psychology—made profiling a more central theme of his Applied Criminology course. Eventually, Teten and Mullany changed the course's title to Applied Criminal Psychology.

Teten's experience with Brussel resulted in a breakthrough in Teten's approach to analyzing crime (J. E. Douglas & Olshaker, 1995). Although Teten did not agree with many of Brussel's Freudian interpretations, he came to the conclusion that one could learn about the motives and personalities of the offender by focusing on the evidence found at the crime scene. In fact, identification of the motivation of offenders in committing crime became the early hallmark of the FBI approach to crime scene profiling. It is a form of **deductive analysis**. The deductive approach to profiling is *case focused* and attempts to infer characteristics of an offender from an analysis of the evidence gathered from a particular crime or series of crimes (Alison et al., 2004). "Deduction involves drawing a conclusion from what we already know" (Carson, 2011, p. 83). In contrast, **inductive analysis** concentrates on statistical averages of the characteristics of the "typical" offender. "Induction involves making an inference from what we already know. With inductive reasoning, we are not certain about our premises and, therefore, we cannot be sure about our conclusions" (Carson, 2011, p. 84). Inductive analysis plays a central role in the profiling methods developed in the United Kingdom, to be covered in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, as we saw in the quote above from the FBI website, both deductive and inductive reasoning are essential components of the profiling endeavor in the United States as well.

Deductive reasoning also is more closely aligned with the clinical approach to profiling, while inductive reasoning is more closely aligned with the actuarial approach. We will review these approaches in more detail shortly. For now, it is important to stress that the FBI's deductive process—which was its main focus during the early years of the BSU—puts heavy emphasis on discovering the reasons a perpetrator committed the crime. The process assumes that the perpetrator's offense-related behavior reflects specific motivations, which in turn will be associated with specific personality characteristics of the offender. For example, if the profiler thinks the crime was motivated by desire for revenge, he or she might look for such traits as hot-headedness or reactive aggression. The FBI's approach also relies heavily on the reasoning, experience, insight, and intuition of the profiler, thus making it very clinical in orientation.

From these early origins, crime scene profiling in the United States developed rapidly. According to Anthony Pinizzotto (1984), in its earlier years, between 1971 and 1981, the BSU provided profiling assistance on 192 investigations. J. E. Douglas (2007) states that when he created a special criminal profiling unit within the BSU in 1981, the Unit received requests for assistance in 54 cases, and the caseload expanded every subsequent year. By the time Douglas retired in 1995, the agency was analyzing more than 1,000 cases a year.

TWO SEMINAL ARTICLES

In 1980, profiling was introduced to the broader law enforcement community in the United States by two articles in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, one written by BSU Special Agents Richard Ault and James Reese (1980) and the other by Special Agents Robert (Roy) Hazelwood and John Douglas (1980). These articles set the early stage for profiling as it is conducted in the United States today. The men would have long careers

with the FBI, and in some cases they continued their consulting activities beyond that time. For example, Hazelwood is the former agent who was ready to testify on linkage analysis in the *Fortin* case cited at the beginning of this chapter. He and other retired FBI agents have formed consulting groups that offer services to public agencies to this day. Douglas would go on to publish books and articles in this area, including such memoirs of his experiences as *Mind Hunter* (1995), *The Anatomy of Motive* (1999), and *The Cases That Haunt Us* (2000), all written with Mark Olshaker. Douglas would also be instrumental in developing the *Crime Classification Manual* (J. E. Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992, 2006), to be discussed later in the chapter. He also was consultant on the motion picture *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) and the apparent inspiration for Agent Jack Crawford in that film.

The first of the two important articles mentioned above, written by Ault and Reese in 1980, was titled "A Psychological Assessment of Crime Profiling." In it, the authors described a case involving a serial rapist who sexually assaulted at least seven women over a 2-year period in an East Coast city. Investigators had no suspects in the case and asked the BSU for help. After examining the evidence gathered by investigators, the BSU advised that the rapes were probably committed by the same person. They described the offender as a white male, 25 to 35 years of age, divorced or separated, marginally employed, with a high school education. The BSU also gave the opinion that the offender had a poor self-image, lived in the immediate area of the rapes, and probably engaged in voyeurism (was a Peeping Tom). Three days after receiving the profile, police investigators identified 40 suspects in the neighborhood who met the age criteria. Then, using additional information from the profile, they were able to narrow their investigation to one individual, who was arrested within a week.

The purpose of the Ault and Reese article was to familiarize the police community with the concept of profiling and to underscore the importance of considering the psychological aspects of any crime. The authors as well as others within the BSU believed that the personality of the perpetrator or perpetrators is especially important in the investigation of hard-to-solve crimes. According to Ault and Reese (1980), "A crime may reflect the personality characteristics of the perpetrator in much the same fashion as the way we keep and decorate our homes reflects something about our personality" (p. 24). They added that the profile may include the following information about the perpetrator:

- Race
- Sex
- Age range
- Marital status
- General employment
- Probable reactions to questioning by police
- Degree of sexual maturity
- Likelihood that the individual will strike again
- The possibility that he or she committed a similar offense in the past
- Possible police record

Ault and Reese concluded the article by noting that “profiles are not the result of magical incantations and are not always accurate” (p. 24). They added that it was important for profilers to have wide exposure to crime scenes and some exposure to criminals who had committed similar crimes. Officers or investigative teams seeking evaluations from a profiler were advised to send the profiler the following:

- Complete photographs of the crime scene, including photographs of the victim if it is a homicide;
- Complete autopsy, including any results of lab tests done on the victim;
- Complete report of the incident, including date and time of offense, location, weapon used (if known), investigators’ reconstruction of the sequence of events, and a detailed interview of any surviving victims or witnesses.

This very practical article in a widely read law enforcement publication likely encouraged police agencies to contact the BSU or seek individuals within their communities who were willing to offer help in this regard. Note, though, that Ault and Reese believed the profiler should have wide exposure to crime scenes, suggesting that law enforcement experience was crucial. To this date, there is debate in the literature as to the relative merits of the practitioner versus the scientist model of profiling (Carson, 2011).

The second seminal article, by Hazelwood and Douglas (1980), was titled “The Lust Murderer.” In the article, they described characteristics of individuals who commit heinous sexual offenses, even more heinous than those of other sadistic murderers. The lust murderer could be distinguished because he engaged in mutilation of the breast, rectum, or genitals. However, Hazelwood and Douglas also introduced, in this article, the **organized nonsocial offender** and the **disorganized asocial offender**, along with an accompanying crime scene dichotomy, the **organized** versus **disorganized (O/D)** crime scene. With very few exceptions, lust murderers could be placed into one of the above two categories, and lust murders fell into one of these two crime scenes.

The organized nonsocial offender was methodical and cunning, could be quite amiable, and usually carried out his crimes at a distance from his residence. By contrast, the disorganized asocial offender lacked cunning, had an aversion to society, and experienced difficulty maintaining relationships. He tended to commit his crimes closer to his residence, where he felt secure. The crime scenes left behind in the wake of these offenders’ actions—a deliberate, cold, systematic scene, or a chaotic and messy one—reflected their personalities.

Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) indicated that their conclusions were based on case reports of lust murders, interviews with investigative personnel, and a careful review of the literature. However, during the same time period, Douglas also was beginning field research with imprisoned sexual murderers, so it is likely that the information he derived from them had some effect on his conclusions. As Douglas continued his prison research, he and his colleagues also continued to develop the O/D dichotomy. (See Tables 2.1 and 2.2 for the FBI summaries of these concepts.) Because that research provided a backdrop for much of the scientific research on profiling that is conducted today, we give it more attention in the following section.

Table 2.1 Profile Characteristics of Organized vs. Disorganized Offenders as Classified by the FBI in 1985

<i>Organized</i>	<i>Disorganized</i>
Average to above-average intelligence	Below-average intelligence
Socially competent	Socially inadequate
Skilled work preferred	Unskilled work
High birth-order status	Low birth-order status
Father's work stable	Father's work unstable
Sexually competent	Sexually incompetent
Inconsistent childhood discipline	Harsh discipline as a child
Controlled mood during crime	Anxious mood during crime
Use of alcohol with crime	Minimal use of alcohol
Precipitating situational stress	Minimal situational stress
Living with partner	Living alone
Mobility (car in good condition)	Lives/works near crime scene
Follows crime in news media	Minimal interest in news media
May change job or leave town	Significant behavior change

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (1985), p. 19.

Table 2.2 Crime Scene Differences Between Organized and Disorganized Offenders as Classified by the FBI

<i>Organized</i>	<i>Disorganized</i>
Planned offense	Spontaneous offense
Victim a targeted stranger	Victim/location known
Personalizes victim	Depersonalizes victim
Controlled conversation	Minimal conversation
Crime scene reflects control	Crime scene random and sloppy
Demands submissive victim	Sudden violence to victim
Restraints used	Minimal use of restraints
Aggressive acts prior to death	Sexual acts after death
Body hidden	Body left in view
Weapon/evidence absent	Weapon/evidence often present
Transports victim or body	Body left at death scene

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (1985), p. 19.

It is important to emphasize that, like Ault and Reese, Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) acknowledged that there were limitations to profiling. They referred to the profile as a useful investigative tool, but one that “must not alter, suspend, or replace prescribed investigative procedures” (p. 133). They also wrote, “The process is an art and not a science” (p. 133). As we will see throughout this book, many profilers today would disagree with this appraisal, maintaining that profiling as practiced today is more scientific. However, both critics of profiling and supporters of more intuitive profiling would argue that Hazelwood and Douglas called it right back then, and that even today, profiling as it is often practiced is more art than science.

THE DOUGLAS AND RESSLER INTERVIEWS

Between 1979 and 1983, John Douglas and fellow agent Robert Ressler, while on the road providing training to various law enforcement agencies, conducted a series of informal interviews with convicted murderers, including sexual murderers. In 1977, Douglas had become one of the instructors of the Applied Criminal Psychology course at the FBI Academy that was first designed by Howard Teten, but he was not satisfied with the course content. In his book *Mind Hunter* (Douglas & Olshaker, 1995), Douglas complains that as popular and useful as the course was, it was based primarily on theories from the academic world and not from experiences and talents of the law enforcement world. In addition, much of the course included anecdotes or “war stories” told by instructors, some of whom had never been out on the street. Douglas’ prison visits, then, were undertaken to add some depth to the Applied Criminal Psychology course. He would later write, “The prison visits became a regular practice whenever Bob Ressler or I were on a road school and could get the time and cooperation” (Douglas & Olshaker, 1995, p. 111). He goes on to say,

By the time Bob and I had done ten to twelve prison interviews, it was clear to any reasonably intelligent observer that we were onto something. For the first time, we were able to correlate what was going on in an offender’s mind with the evidence he left at a crime scene. (p. 117)

Douglas also began to realize that although he and Ressler were learning about the “criminal mind,” the material they gathered at the prisons was not well organized or systematic.

In the early 1970s, Douglas had met Dr. Ann Burgess, a professor of psychiatric nursing at the University of Pennsylvania and a leading authority on rape and its psychological consequences. The two agreed to work together on a more systematic research project with felons convicted of sexual homicides, often more than one. Burgess obtained a grant from the National Institute of Justice to fund the project and developed a 57-page questionnaire for Douglas and Ressler to use while interviewing the inmates. The project was called the Patterns of Homicide Crime Scene Project (A. Burgess, Hartman, Ressler, Douglas, & McCormack, 1986).

The project was concluded after a total of 36 imprisoned sexual killers had been interviewed. They were asked questions regarding their backgrounds, their behavior at

the crime scene, and their post-offense behavior. In addition, the agents reviewed their criminal records. It should be mentioned that there were significant gaps in the information in the data set obtained by Douglas and Ressler, as some offenders refused to answer a number of the questions. As will be noted later in the chapter, contemporary researchers have focused on these and other limitations of the research. Regardless, the agents' goal was to establish a core basis for profiling crimes based on a psychological framework.

Burgess, Douglas, Ressler, and other colleagues began by looking for identifiable patterns in the killers' background, personality, and characteristics of their crimes. The pattern they believed they found was essentially the one described in the 1980 article Douglas had written with Roy Hazelwood: Some killers were well organized and self-controlled in their strategies and methods of selecting and killing victims, whereas others were disorganized and impulsive in their approach. Based on this interpretation, Douglas and Ressler were able to divide the killers into a distinct dichotomy, with 24 classified as organized (involving 97 victims) and 12 classified as disorganized (involving 21 victims). This "discovery"—which seemed to document the theory put forth in the 1980 article—became one of the core guiding elements in crime scene investigations.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE O/D DICHOTOMY

In 1986, Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, and D'Agostino, using the original Douglas-Ressler interview data, further elaborated on the organized/disorganized classification model, proposing that the crime scene itself would reflect these characteristics. Recall that the BSU believed the offenders' behavioral and personality characteristics can be determined from the evidence at a crime scene. "Like a fingerprint, the crime scene can be used to aid in identifying the murderer" (p. 291). That fingerprint could take one of two forms, either organized or disorganized.

One of the primary objectives of the above study was to bring more scientific respectability to the Douglas-Ressler data by subjecting it to statistical analysis. As the authors wrote,

In meeting the study's first objective, we demonstrated that there are in fact consistencies and patterns in crime scenes that are objectively quantifiable and that distinguish organized from disorganized sexual murderers. The labels "organized" and "disorganized" are not only convenient because of their visual connotations to the crime scene but also have an objectivity to them. (Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, et al., 1986, pp. 293, 297)

Using the same interview data, Ressler, Burgess, Hartman, Douglas, and McCormack (1986) examined to what extent these sexual murderers had been subjected to sexual abuse as children and adolescents. The study was prompted by frequent law enforcement requests for help in solving "motiveless" homicides. Preliminary investigations by the FBI had revealed that most of these motiveless murders clearly had a sexual component. The prevailing theory at the time was that sexual offenders assaulted others because they had been sexually assaulted themselves (e.g., Groth, 1979b). As hypothesized, the researchers

discovered that when the sexual killers were questioned about prior sexual abuse, 43% of them said they had been sexually abused as children (age 1–12), and 32% reported being abused in adolescence (age 13–18). The investigators concluded that, for those men who commit sexual murder, their cognitive processes appear to sustain and perpetuate fantasies of sexually violent actions. In other words, murder that appears to be motiveless is largely driven by sexual gratification propelled by fantasies.

The researchers discovered that murderers who had been sexually abused began to fantasize about rape at a significantly earlier age than murderers who had not been sexually abused. Moreover, sexually abused murderers were more likely to mutilate victims than non-sexually abused murderers. Mutilation was defined as the deliberate cutting—usually after death—of the sexual areas of the body, such as breasts and genitals. Ressler, Burgess, Hartman, et al. (1986) found that the sexually abused murderers' life paths were characterized by a high level of aggression toward children, peers, and adults. The authors speculated that “undisclosed and unresolved early sexual abuse may be a contributing factor in the stimulation of bizarre, sexual, sadistic behavior” (p. 282).

Today, the organized/disorganized distinction is one of the most widely cited classification systems of violent, serial offenders (Canter et al., 2004), but as we will note later in the chapter, it is not without its critics. John Douglas and his colleagues (Douglas, Ressler, Burgess, & Hartman, 1986) eventually introduced a third category to the typology, which they called the mixed offender. The **mixed crime scene**—left behind by the mixed offender—has characteristics of both organized and disorganized behavior. For example, a crime may have begun as carefully planned, but deteriorated into a disorganized crime when things did not go as planned. The O/D classification has also been extended to other crimes, including burglary and arson (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992).

In summary, an organized crime scene indicates planning and premeditation on the part of the offender. The crime scene suggests indicators that the offender maintained control of himself or herself as well as the victim. It is expected that he or she is socially and interpersonally skillful in handling potential victims. The offender probably relies on a verbal approach in obtaining victims. In addition, the organized killer or assaulter usually selects victims according to some personal criteria. The notorious serial killer Ted Bundy, for example, selected young, attractive women who were similar in appearance. He was also successful in the abduction of these women from highly visible areas, such as beaches, college campuses, and ski lodges, indicating considerable planning and premeditation (J. E. Douglas et al., 1986).

In contrast, a disorganized crime scene shows that the offender very probably committed the crime without premeditation or planning. He or she probably lives close to the location in which the crime was committed. The crime scene reveals that the offender acted on impulse or in a rage, or in a state of extreme excitement. The disorganized perpetrator obtains victims by chance, often without specific criteria in mind. For example, Herbert Mullin of Santa Cruz, California, killed 14 people of varying types (e.g., an elderly man, a young girl, and a priest) over a 4-month period (J. E. Douglas et al., 1986). It is also assumed that the disorganized offender is socially inadequate and unable to maintain interpersonal relationships. Most often, the victim's body is found at the scene of the crime.

The Crime Classification Manual

The above studies, along with others conducted during the 1980s on crimes like murder, rape, child abduction, and arson, provided important information on the distinguishing characteristics of these crimes (J. E. Douglas et al., 1992). These characteristics formed the basis for the profiling techniques used by FBI investigators at that time.

Much of the commentary and research on profiling carried out by the FBI during that time was summarized in the *Crime Classification Manual (CCM)*, first published in 1992 (J. E. Douglas et al.) and reissued in 2006. Its subtitle is *A Standard System for Investigating and Classifying Violent Crimes*. The manual is a compilation of offender profiling applications and crime scene characteristics related to a wide variety of violent crimes. The defining characteristics of each crime are outlined, and each is accompanied by a case study that includes background information about the crime, characteristics of the victim, crime scene indicators, and forensic findings. The second edition of the *CCM* (2006) adds computer crimes, religious-extremist murder, and elder female sexual homicide. The second edition also contains new information on stalking and child abductions. (See Focus 2.2 for a summary of cult murder, according to the *CCM*.)

Focus 2.2

Cult Murder

The following is an illustration of the type of information contained in the *Crime Classification Manual (CCM)*. The material is adapted from J. E. Douglas et al., 1992, pp. 144–146.

The *CCM* defines a cult as “a body of adherents with excessive devotion or dedication to ideas, objects, or persons, regarded as unorthodox or spurious and whose primary objectives of sex, power, and/or money are unknown to the general membership” (p. 145). In other words, the cult’s leader is aware of what he or she is doing, but most of the followers are not. When two or more members of the cult commit murder, it is classified as a cult murder.

Victims: Random victims are occasionally preyed upon, but generally victims are members of the cult or someone on the fringes of membership. Typically, more than one individual is killed.

Crime Scene Indicators Frequently Noted: The *CCM* notes that the crime scene may contain symbolic items (e.g., artifacts or images), and the status of the body is dependent on the purpose of the killing. If the killing is intended as a widespread message, there will be little attempt to conceal the bodies; if intended to intimidate a small circle within the cult, bodies may be concealed through burial.

Staging: Not usually present.

Common Forensic Findings: Wounds from firearms, blunt-force trauma, sharp pointed objects. Mutilation of the body is possible.

Investigative Considerations: The *CCM* notes that the general membership of the cult may be told the crime was committed as part of the group’s belief. However, the leader’s motivation “will be a controlling factor: a macho way to justify the homicide,

tighten his control of the group, and/or eliminate troublemakers or less devoted followers who threaten his authority" (p. 146).

Case Study: To illustrate cult murder, *CCM* authors used the 1990 investigation in Cleveland of the murder of five members of a family, the Averys, who had joined a radical splinter group of a church led by Jeffrey Lundgren. The family did not wholeheartedly endorse Lundgren's philosophy and were subsequently isolated from the group. They were possibly trying to separate from it at the time of their deaths. Lundgren had persuaded his followers that the family should be killed as a cleansing sacrifice. He was ultimately convicted, sentenced to death, and executed in October 2006. His wife and son are serving sentences of 150 years to life and 120 years to life, respectively.

Note that the *CCM* includes victim characteristics. According to the FBI, in answering the question, "Why was this particular person targeted for a violent crime?" investigators will often be led to the motive. Even if the crime *seemed* to be a random one—for example, the victim was just in the wrong place at the wrong time—the motive of the offender could be gleaned. The victim might share characteristics with other victims of similar crimes. In addition, the *CCM* attempts to standardize the language, terminology, and definitions of these crimes for investigators and criminal justice personnel. Concluding chapters on crime scene analysis in the *CCM* define many of the concepts we will discuss below.

Crime Scene Profiling Today

Although we focused above on the work of investigators in the United States, it is important to stress that crime scene profiling or criminal profiling also has grown dramatically in popularity across the world during the past 40 years (Snook, Eastwood, Gendreau, Goggin, & Cullen, 2007). In Chapter 3, we will discuss in greater detail the work done in other countries, particularly the United Kingdom. Although crime scene profiling has many similarities, there are also discernible differences in the methods used by the analysts. For example, the United Kingdom and Canada have taken a more actuarial or statistical approach to profiling, while the United States has taken a more clinical approach. Nevertheless, there is increasing "cross-fertilization" of training across the globe, so both clinical and actuarial approaches are in evidence.

As we described in Chapter 1, crime scene profiling is the process of identifying cognitive tendencies, behavioral patterns, motivation, emotional dispositions, and demographic variables of an unknown offender based on characteristics and evidence gathered at the scene of the crime. Based on crime scene information and the predicted characteristics and habits of the offender derived from the scene, the analyst or profiler tries to describe general characteristics of the offender or offenders and possibly predict where and how the next crime may occur. In serial murder cases, for example, a profiler may find clues indicating that the span of time between offenses is

lessening. In some cases, a possible suspect has been identified and police want to know whether this individual has personality characteristics that are consistent with the crime scene.

Crime scene profiling is used most often when investigators have few clues that could help solve the case, and they are making little headway as to who may have committed the crime. In some situations, however, the behavioral consultant is brought in at the very beginning of a case. This is most likely to occur if the case is a particularly heinous one or if law enforcement officers have a working relationship with the behavioral expert. Crime scene profiling also is often used in rape and homicide investigations, particularly when a crime appears to be committed by a serial offender, or in child abduction cases, where the first few hours after a child's disappearance are crucial. Each of these crimes will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

It should be emphasized that crime scene profiling—even in its most sophisticated form—rarely can point directly to *the* person who committed the crime. Instead, the process helps develop a manageable set of hypotheses for identifying who *may* have been responsible for the crime. The development of the profile is a probabilistic process that requires a considerable amount of information about the offense. For example, police reports, detailed crime scene photographs, witness statements, forensic laboratory reports, and—if the case is a homicide—autopsy reports are important (O'Toole, 1999). If at all possible, the profiler should visit the crime scene. Detailed information about the victim's lifestyle, background, and physical characteristics is also paramount.

If done competently, a profile will provide some statistical probabilities of the demographics, geographic patterns, and psychological features of the offender. (Note, though, that geographic profiling is its own category, one to be covered in Chapter 4.) According to Mary Ellen O'Toole (1999)—an FBI special agent for 28 years who is now associated with a private company that trains criminal justice officials—a profile may suggest the offender's lifestyle, race, gender, emotional age as well as chronological age, marital status, level of formal education or training, occupation, and work history. It may also contain information about the offender's ability to relate and communicate with others, the likelihood of prior criminal behavior, the presence of dementia or other mental deterioration, feelings of guilt concerning the crime, the likelihood of committing the crime again, and motivation for the offense. In addition, the profile report should—if possible—include how the crime most likely occurred and the interaction between the offender and the victim. Profiles also may be able to indicate what type of victim is at risk. Finally, a profile should eliminate substantial segments of the population from further investigation.

Basically, crime scene profiling is usually done in three stages. First, police officers and detectives collect crime scene data, such as forensic photographs, autopsy results, and all relevant physical evidence. Second, this information is then turned over to a profiler or team who analyzes the data and offers an “educated hypothesis” about important characteristics of the offender. Recall from the first chapter that Brussel reviewed information provided by police and produced a preliminary profile within a few hours, while detectives awaited his conclusions. Likewise, the “profilers” in the popular, fictionalized accounts (TV shows such as *Criminal Minds*, *Bones*, *Numb3rs*) waste little time in providing their input. Responsible, professional analysts in the real

world are more guarded and cautious. Third, the profile report, including predictions, is then communicated to the police investigating the case. In some cases, profilers do not have the luxury of thoughtful, deliberative assessment of the evidence. In child abduction cases, for example, time is of the essence—making information both crucial and, unfortunately, more subject to error.

PROFILING TERMINOLOGY

A review of the literature on crime scene profiling will uncover certain terms that occur with some consistency. For example, in crime scene investigations as outlined by John Douglas and his colleagues in the *CCM* (1992), investigators are advised to look for such clues in the crime scene as the modus operandi; personation or a signature; and whether or not there is any staging, souvenir or trophy taking, or psychological undoing.

The **modus operandi**, or MO, refers to the actions and procedures an offender uses to commit a crime successfully. It is a behavioral pattern that the offender learns as he or she gains experience in committing the offense. However, the MO is subject to change. Repeat offenders may change their MO in an attempt to develop a method that is most effective. For example, serial burglars find new tools or different methods of overriding an alarm system, and serial killers often become more daring and risky in their selection of victims or in the clues they leave for police. Consequently, although the MO cannot be ignored, investigators may make a serious error if they place too much significance on this aspect when linking crimes.

Personation refers to any behavior that goes beyond what is necessary to commit the crime. When such behaviors are demonstrated by a *serial* offender, it is called the **signature**. For example, a serial offender may leave at the crime scene evidence of a repetitive, almost ritualistic behavior from crime to crime. The signature may involve certain items that are left behind or removed from the scene, or other symbolic patterns such as writings or drawings on the wall. Some burglars tailor their styles (or their signature) to convey messages to victims and investigators, hoping to induce some strong emotional reactions from the victims, such as fear or anger. The burglar may leave a frightening or threatening note or “violate” some personal item, such as intimate clothing, a photograph, or a diary. Consequently, the emotional reactions of burglarized victims often run the gamut from anger and depression to fear and anxiety (Brown & Harris, 1989). If there are murder victims, personation or a signature may involve body positioning, mutilation, or other symbolic gestures on the body that are primarily significant only to the offender.

The signature is thought to be related to the cognitive processes of the offender and, because it is relatively consistent in its characteristics, it may be more informative to an investigator and more useful in the profiling process than the MO. In many cases, the signature reveals the motivations of the crime, as it is assumed that it points to the underlying psychological and emotional needs of the offender (Turvey, 2008). For example, an adult victim's body may be positioned in a particularly demeaning fashion, a flower may be left on a child's body, or a burglar may write crude messages on walls implying control over his victims.

According to FBI profiling approaches, the signature is often believed to be a sign of psychopathology. Experienced profilers have argued for many years that profiling serial violent offenders is most successful when the offender exhibits some form of psychopathology at the scene of the crime, such as sadistic torture, evisceration, postmortem slashings and cuttings, and other mutilations (Pinizzotto, 1984). The reasoning behind this assertion is that mentally disordered persons, ironically, demonstrate greater consistency in behavior from situation to situation than persons not so disordered. The assumption here is that anyone who commits these outrageous offenses must be mentally disordered, an assumption not necessarily borne out in the research. However—even if we concede the mental disorder—it is open to debate whether persons with mental disorders are more consistent in their behavioral patterns than stable individuals. Systematic empirical research on the topic is lacking.

Staging is another behavioral pattern sometimes found at a crime scene, a suspected suicide, or an accidental death. It is the intentional alteration of the scene prior to the arrival of the police. Staging is believed to be done for one of two reasons: either to redirect the investigation away from the most logical suspect or to protect the victim or the victim's family from public embarrassment (J. E. Douglas & Munn, 1992a). Thus, staging may be done by the perpetrator (e.g., staging a crime scene to make a domestic murder look like a home invasion killing) or by someone who discovers the victim or evidence of a crime. In the case of a death, staging is frequently done by someone who has a close association or relationship with the victim. For example, the victim may have become an accidental death victim by practicing autoerotic asphyxia, obtaining sexual excitement from hypoxia (lack of oxygen), usually through near strangulation.

Trophy taking and souvenir taking are other behavioral patterns sometimes encountered in crime scene analysis, particular with reference to violent crimes. A **trophy** is an item taken from the scene or from the victim that symbolize the offender's triumph over the victim, and it typically represents the force used against the victim or the victim's subjugation (Turvey, 2008). The infamous serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer took body parts as trophies and preserved them in formaldehyde; other examples are torn garments or photographs or videotapes taken at the scene. A **souvenir** is a meaningful item taken by the offender to remember the incident, reminding the offender of the pleasure gained from the crime (Turvey, 2008), such as jewelry taken from the victim. Although the souvenir may seem more innocuous than a trophy, both types of items may also represent an attempt to psychologically control the victim after the crime, if the victim survives, or to taunt loved ones if the victim does not. Some profilers believe, though, that making the distinction between a trophy and a souvenir is important, because each infers something slightly different about the personality or the motives of the offender.

Another concept sometimes encountered in crime scene profiling or analysis is **undoing**. This is a behavioral pattern evident at the scene in which the offender tries to psychologically "undo" the crime. For example, a distraught or emotionally upset offender, who kills the victim, may try to undo his or her actions by placing the body in bed, perhaps even resting the head on a pillow, and covering the body with blankets. The perpetrator also may place the victim upright in a chair, trying desperately to return the victim to a natural-looking state. Very often, such an offender had a close relationship

with the victim. In other cases, an offender may try to dehumanize the victim by engaging in actions that obscure the victim's identity, such as excessive facial battery. Other offenders may objectify their victims by placing them face down. Undoing is similar to staging, but it is less directed at steering police away from the facts of the incident and more directed at making the offender feel better about the offense.

CASE LINKAGE

Case linkage is another important profiling concept, but it is also a process that is gaining increasingly more research attention (Tonkin, Woodhams, Bull, Bond, & Palmer, 2011). Sometimes called linkage analysis, it is a method of identifying crimes that are likely to have been committed by the same offender because of behavioral similarity across the crimes (Woodhams, Bull, & Hollin, 2010). Recall the illustration from the *Fortin* case at the beginning of the chapter. In that case, the profiler focused on several similarities between the two sexual assaults, but critics have also pointed out that there were many differences in these two cases as well (Ebisike, 2008). Case linkage is most often used with crimes such as stranger rape and murder, but may also be used for burglary, arson, and robbery. In fact, there is some evidence that different types of crimes (e.g., a violent crime and a property offense) may be linked to the same offender (Tonkin et al., 2011). The correct linking of cases is likely to be a valuable contribution to police investigation and ultimately reduces the number of suspects (Grubin, Kelly, & Brunson, 2001); on the other hand, an incorrect linking of cases can result in a wrongful conviction. In the extensive commentary on the *Fortin* case, no one suggested that Fortin, the person convicted of the crime, was not the perpetrator of both offenses; rather, critics were concerned about the scientific status of linkage analysis (Risinger & Loop, 2002).

The profiler may link crimes in one of two ways: He or she may search for similar crimes among a database of crimes, without a preconceived notion of who the offender might be; the discovery of other crimes with similar characteristics of victims, MOs, or offender signatures will *suggest* that the same individual could have committed them. Or, the profiler may search for other crimes that are highly similar to the crime committed by someone who has already been identified. For example, police may have arrested and charged an individual with a crime and may want to know whether he is likely to be responsible for other unsolved offenses. Victim accounts of the crime are important in the process—provided of course that the victim survived the crime.

Once the profiler has collected all the relevant information, he or she composes a list of the behaviors demonstrated by the offender. According to Woodhams et al. (2010), "Some behaviors might be more spontaneous, whereas others may be produced as a reaction to the victim or witnesses" (p. 120). In addition, the profiler may classify the offender behaviors as modus operandi or ritualistic or signature behaviors (Hazelwood & Warren, 2003). Alison, Goodwill, and Alison (2005) posit that MO behaviors are functionally significant and depend on the context of the crime; they are necessary to commit the crime—such as a belt around the victim's neck. The signature, on the other hand, is psychologically significant, or ritualistic, and is not dependent on the context.

Determining these distinctions generally requires a subjective judgment on the part of the profiler. Discovery of a signature, however, is extremely helpful, if not essential, in linkage analysis.

In order for case linkage to work, the offender must demonstrate consistent but distinct behavior in each crime. In other words, the behavior must be distinguishable from other offender behavioral patterns but consistent across crimes for the offender in question. For instance, the signature may be unique for the offender, and he consistently exhibits it across crimes. This task is not as easy as it sounds, as the profile must be distinctive and unique enough to reveal something about motive, intent, or signature of a particular offender (Santtila et al., 2008). Santtila et al. examined 116 Italian homicides committed by 23 offenders. The researchers found that the offender's crime scene behavior was consistent across serial murders as well as different from that of other offenders. This finding lends support to the serial killer model concerning consistency and variability in behavior; that is, serial killers tend to be more consistent than not, although there is also variability as their crimes progress. For example, their crimes may become more or less brutal, and their choices of victims may broaden. In general, however, research indicates that there is consistency in the behavioral patterns of these offenders (Alison, Goodwill, Almond, van den Heuvel, & Winter, 2011; Canter & Youngs, 2009). However, the consistency is not always found in the offender's MO, as this may change according to the situation and the effectiveness of the MO in prior offending. In fact, a majority of research in criminal behavior finds only a moderate level of consistency associated with the MO (Bennell, Snook, MacDonald, House, & Taylor, 2012). In a recent study of serial rapes, however, researchers found sufficient similarity in MO to conclude that the assumption of behavioral consistency underlying case linkage was justified (Woodhams & Labuschagne, 2012). In addition, research also finds consistency in the manner in which the offender treats and relates to the victims, a distinctive pattern we will cover in the next chapter.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON CRIME SCENE PROFILING

Research in the area of crime scene profiling has largely been preoccupied with the development of offender typologies that are assumed to be useful for profiling violent crimes (Kocsis, 2010). In contemporary psychology, the term **typology** refers to a system for classifying personality or other behavioral patterns. At least 16 typologies have been applied to profiling (Bourque et al., 2009). However, a vast majority of them lack a solid theoretical basis and empirical validation. One of the most heavily researched typologies is the organized/disorganized dichotomy proposed by John Douglas and his colleagues, which was discussed earlier in the chapter and is illustrated in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Although the Douglas group originally saw all crime scenes as either organized or disorganized, they eventually modified their view to some extent. First, they proposed a "mixed crime scene," one which had elements of both organized and disorganized scenes. Then, in the *CCM*, Douglas and his colleagues (1992) introduced a continuum as being more realistic. They wrote,

It should be emphasized that the *crime scene rarely will be completely organized or disorganized*. It is more likely to be somewhere on a continuum between the two extremes of the orderly, neat crime scene and the disarrayed, sloppy one. (p. 9)

The organized/disorganized (O/D) typology has been endorsed by many (e.g., Hickey, 1997; S. T. Holmes & Holmes, 2002), while others have serious concerns about its validity or usefulness. As John Douglas seems to have recognized from the quotation above, crime scenes are rarely as neat as portrayed in a typology or classification system. Nevertheless, the O/D typology has been and continues to be appealing to many investigators.

Although the organized/disorganized typology seems intuitively logical and appealing, recent research indicates it may have very limited usefulness as an investigative tool (Canter et al., 2004; Kocsis, Cooksey, & Irwin, 2002). In fact, a recent review on the issue finds that, at this point, there is no convincing evidence to support the classification (Snook, Cullen, Bennell, Taylor, & Gendreau, 2008).

Recall that, although the O/D dichotomy was discussed in the Hazelwood and Douglas (1980) article on lust murder, that article was conceptual rather than empirical. While the authors mentioned case reports, interviews with investigators, and a review of the literature, they were not describing systematic research. As Devery (2010) has noted, “In terms of its structure and content, the 1980 article by Hazelwood and Douglas on lust murders falls far short of what would be considered an acceptable social scientific exposition of a concept” (p. 397).

Shortly thereafter, in the early 1980s, Douglas and his colleagues began to publish their research collected on the basis of interviews with 36 inmates, most of whom were responsible for more than one sexual homicide. As admitted by Douglas himself (Douglas & Olshaker, 1995), and discussed earlier in this chapter, the interviews in their early phases were often informal and largely subjective.

Furthermore, as observed by Devery (2010),

It is highly unlikely . . . that the sample of serial killers was representative even of serial killers of their time, as the sample was one of convenience—only available killers who agreed to speak with Douglas and Ressler and their collaborators were included in the study. . . . Research based on such small and unrepresentative samples may identify certain behavioral characteristics of the serial killers, but without a control sample of nonserial killers, the identified characteristics can’t tell us much about how common such characteristics are in the general community. (p. 395)

It should be noted that Devery refers to the 36 imprisoned offenders as “serial killers,” but it is more accurate to refer to them as sexual murderers, and typically repeat sexual murderers. The numbers reported by Douglas and Ressler indicate that some of their interviewees may have been responsible for only one sexual murder (see, e.g., numbers of disorganized offenders [12] compared to number of victims [21]), and some were probably responsible for just two. As we will note in Chapter 5, serial killing has traditionally been defined as requiring more than two offenses committed by the same person separated by a time interval, although a recent FBI-sponsored symposium on the issue recommended that two offenses separated by time could qualify as serial

murders (Morton & Hiltz, 2005). These distinctions aside, it appears that the 36 men interviewed by Douglas and Ressler were clearly *sexual* murderers, but not necessarily serial or even repeat murderers, although they are often referred to that way in the criminology literature, as we see in this and later chapters. For our purposes, though, we are most concerned about the validity of the O/D dichotomy.

David Canter and his colleagues (2004) also had concerns about how the Douglas-Ressler interviews were conducted, especially pertaining to their reliability, validity, and the manner in which conclusions about the offenders were drawn. Canter et al. point out that the agents did not select a random, or even large, sample of the offenders. They simply selected those who agreed to talk to them. Therefore, “the widespread citation of this typology is based on an informal exploratory study of 36 offenders put forward as exemplars, rather than a specific test of a representative sample of a general population of serial murderers” (p. 296).

It may be more realistic to assume that crime scenes as well as offenders fall along a continuum, with the organized description at one pole and the disorganized description at the other pole, as the CCM seems to acknowledge. Even so, Canter et al. (2004) point out that if most crime scenes are actually mixed, the dichotomy is little more than a theoretical proposal of no real utility.

However, the most troubling aspect of the organized/disorganized typology is the temptation to assume that the offender can be characterized as either a disorganized or organized individual, demonstrating the traits and behavioral patterns associated with each classification. An analyst—particularly an amateur profiler—will thus include these likely traits and behaviors in his or her report. Recognizing the enormous popularity of the O/D system among law enforcement agencies in many parts of the world, David Canter, Laurence Alison, and their associates decided to test this well-cited and heavily relied-on model. The research group point out that the organized/disorganized typology proposes that specific characteristics only happen together (co-occur) with certain other characteristics. If the offender was organized, then it may be assumed that most—if not all—of the behavioral characteristics listed under organized offenders (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2) will be evident. A similar assumption is proposed for disorganized offenders.

The selection of the data and the criteria adopted in the Canter et al. (2004) study were matched to those adopted by the FBI model in the *Crime Classification Manual*. The data for the study were gathered from published accounts of serial killers taken from the Christopher Missen archive of serial killer data. According to Canter et al., “This material consisted of secondary sources of nationally and internationally known U.S. newspapers, periodicals, journals, true crime magazines, biographies, trial transcripts, and case history narratives” (pp. 302–303). The researchers were able to gather 39 aspects of serial killings derived from the murders committed by 100 U.S. serial killers (e.g., facial disfigurement, burns on victim, restraints, body covered post mortem, bite marks).

Interestingly, the actions used by the serial killers varied considerably, with certain aspects being displayed in a high percentage of cases (e.g., victim alive during sex) and others displayed in a very small percentage (e.g., dismemberment). “Such variation alone raises questions about the validity and reliability of the classification dichotomy

because such variations indicate that there will be many situations in which very few criteria will be present” (Canter et al., 2004, p. 302). In fact, the researchers found very little co-occurrence of variables in either the crime scenes that would be classified as organized or those that would be classified as disorganized. For example, in 70% of organized cases, the body was concealed and there were also multiple crime scenes. This is a statistically respectable co-occurrence, but it was one of only two situations in which co-occurrences were that high (the other one being sexual activity with a live victim and a body posed in 75% of the cases). Disorganized crime scenes found even less co-occurrence.

The Canter et al. (2004) study is far more detailed than we can present here. Essentially, however, *the researchers did not find any support for the FBI’s O/D typology*. “The taxonomy proposed by the CCM . . . as a naturally occurring distinction between serial sexual murderers or their crime scenes does not garner even the weakest support from the data examined here” (p. 313). In each crime, there is almost always a mixture of perhaps two organized traits and a random array of disorganized traits. In other words, serial killer behavior is much more complex than the O/D typology suggests. In addition, given the frequency of certain core organized variables in the crime scenes examined by Canter et al., “being organized is typical of serial killers as a whole” (p. 312).

In the United Kingdom, Canter, Alison, and their associates have conducted extensive additional research on profiling in recent years, much of which will be discussed in Chapter 3. In contrast, crime scene profiling in the United States has continued to be more an art than a science, particularly as it relates to the approach taken by the FBI. As we saw earlier in the chapter, however, in recent years investigators in the United States have tried to promote a perspective that welcomes both clinical and statistical approaches.

This may be less true of those not recently trained by the FBI or through the **International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship (ICIAF)**, the program that has taken over the training of behavioral analysts (to be discussed shortly). It may also be less true of those former agents who have continued consulting with investigators on an independent basis. Reporting on an interview with John Douglas on National Public Radio, Gladwell (2009) revealed that he thought that Douglas would have a well-thought-out response to the Canter, Alison, et al. research. “But it quickly became apparent that he had no idea who Alison or any of the other academic critics of profiling were” (p. 356, footnote). This would seem like a harsh appraisal, particularly because Douglas was long retired from his FBI work. However, he continues to attract public attention by consulting and providing media interviews, so as such is “fair game” for critical comments.

Typologies and Profiling

As noted above, typology refers to a particular system for classifying personality or other behavioral patterns, and there have been at least 16 different typologies developed for profiling purposes. They include typologies of murderers, rapists, child

molesters, burglars, arsonists, and terrorists. When a profiler mentions the sadistic murderer profile or the child abuser profile, and so forth, he or she is referring to characteristics associated with these typologies, some of which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Usually, the typology is used to classify a wide assortment of behaviors into a more manageable set of brief descriptions, which can be useful but should be employed guardedly. So, by classifying crime scenes and placing the possible perpetrators into categories (organized or disorganized), the FBI is taking a typological approach.

When we place people (in this case, people responsible for a crime scene) into behavioral categories, we assume that behavior is consistent across time and place. Crime scene typologies are constructed on the premise that human behavior (e.g., of the offender) is largely the same from situation to situation—but this is not necessarily the case. For example, typologies assume that the way a person acts at home is pretty much the same way he or she acts in the classroom, with friends, at work, or in public. However, the validity of this assumption is very much open to debate. Some researchers (e.g., Mischel, 1968; Mischel & Peake, 1982) cogently argue that human behavior across different situations is inconsistent, and that notions of stable behavioral dispositions or personality traits are largely unsupported. On the other hand, consistency across time, called *temporal consistency*, is acknowledged. As long as situations are highly similar, people will like respond that same way over their life spans. But when the situations change, behavior is likely to change. Walter Mischel and Philip Peake conclude, on the basis of their research findings, that behavior is highly dependent on the nature of the situation or social environment, and that humans discriminate between situations and react accordingly. Essentially, cross-situational consistency is a critical issue in the formation of any classification system or typology. That is, if behavior is not consistent across situations, we must be very guarded in drawing conclusions from clues left at the scene. As mentioned earlier, behavioral consistency is a very current topic in the research literature, particularly as it relates to case linkage.

Robert Keppel and William Birnes (2003) assert that although typologies have descriptive value, “they have consistently failed to provide investigators with the elements necessary for crime scene assessment” (p. 132). They identify the Holmes and Holmes typology of serial murderers (first proposed by Holmes and De Burger and later expanded upon by Holmes and Holmes) as one prime example. Not only is it of limited value in crime scene investigations, they say, but it is also unsupported by empirical study. In addition, Keppel finds in his more than 30 years of experience of homicide investigations that very few police investigators use the typologies found in the *CCM* published by Douglas et al. in 1992.

In fact, the major homicide tracking systems such as the FBI’s Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP); the Homicide Investigation Tracking System (HITS) in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s (RCMP) Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS), which are centralized databases for homicide information, do not use either typology to classify murderers . . . because the characteristics of killers and crime scenes by the Crime Classification Manual and Holmes and Holmes are not rich in detail. (Keppel & Birnes, 2003, p. 132)

They conclude by stating that, in general, homicide investigators have found that typologies and other crime classification systems have provided little assistance in solving a particular murder.

Clinical Versus Actuarial Profiling

In large measure, the profiling enterprise supported by the FBI is clinical in orientation, although in recent years there is indication of a move toward more actuarial approaches. The clinical approach is based on experience, expert knowledge, and training, often interspersed with intuition and subjectivity. It is the preferred strategy for most profilers. Unfortunately, it is also most often fraught with an extensive range of cognitive biases and inaccuracies (Grove & Meehl, 1996), the most common of which will be discussed shortly.

The **actuarial method of profiling**—to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3—is based on how groups of individuals with similar characteristics have acted in the past. It refers to the use of data about prior instances in order to estimate the probability of a particular outcome. The fundamental statistic employed in actuarial prediction is the **base rate**, which is defined as the statistical prevalence of a particular behavior in a given group over a set period of time, usually one year. Insurance companies have compiled extensive statistics on who has traffic accidents. These statistics may show, for example, that 20-year-old male college students who have a mediocre academic record and who drive a specific type of car (say, a new sports car) have a very high probability of being involved in a traffic accident within a 1-year period of time. The base rate for this group may be 40%. If the student falls within this group, he will pay a much higher insurance premium than a 20-year-old female with an outstanding academic record and a 10-year-old Camry.

Although the actuarial method has been extensively used by the insurance industry, it also permeates the field of criminal law and its enforcement.

From the use of the IRS Discriminant Index Function to predict potential tax evasion and identify which tax returns to audit, to the use of drug-courier and racial profiles to identify suspects to search at airports, on the highways and on city streets, to the risk assessment instruments to determine pre-trial detention, length of criminal sentence, prison classification and parole eligibility, prediction instruments increasingly determine individual outcomes in our policing, law enforcement, and punishment practices. (Harcourt, 2007, p. 2)

One profiling approach that seems very similar to that used by the FBI is that of Gary Copson and his colleagues (Copson, Badcock, Boon, & Britton, 1997), who call theirs the clinical method of profiling. (Copson was superintendent and eventually commander of the Metropolitan Police for London's communities.) According to Copson, clinical profilers try to identify a wider and more sophisticated range of subliminal behavioral signals than are used in other profiling approaches, such as the FBI's. We do not agree that this is necessarily the case. Profilers—or behavioral analysts—associated with the

U.S. government have always favored more clinically based than actuarial approaches to combating major crimes. The clinical method simply refers to heavy reliance on experience and training, and it often encourages intuition and subjectivity. For example, as recently as May 2011, the BAU-2 of the NCAVC (see Focus 2.1) initiated another behavioral interview program to understand the minds of violent offenders. The press release states, "The insights from these consensual interviews are used for research and training, and they also have the potential to help investigators in the field" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011a). The interview process involves asking questions about every aspect of the inmate's life—from his earliest childhood experiences to the abduction, sexual assault, and/or murder for which the inmate was convicted.

The difference appears to be that Copson and his colleagues have been more forthcoming in revealing their methods. For example, they have identified three common features in their practice. One of the key features of the clinical model is to ask the following three basic questions: (1) What happened? (incorporating where and when); (2) How did it happen? and (3) To whom did it happen? Another key feature is a crime scene visit, which is indispensable for understanding the crime. Scene photographs, autopsy photographs and report, maps, and witness statements are also important. Similar to the FBI model of profiling, the centerpiece—and the third important feature—of the clinical model is the inference of motive. Determining motive helps identify the starting point for the development of significant characteristics of the offender. While clinical profilers consider the signature, staging, and the O/D pattern, they go beyond these considerations. According to Copson et al. (1997), "When they pore over case material they are searching for signs of cognition and affect—emotions, moods and desires; for themes of anger, power and control—overt and implicit; for obsessionality; and for any other underlying psychological influences" (p. 15). Another important feature of clinical profiling is the exchange of ideas between the profiler and the police investigators before the report is finalized. The formulation of a good profile can only come after such an exchange. "It is the discussion part of this process which many officers value above all" (p. 16). Copson is critical of the actuarial approach taken by Canter and his associates, an approach to be covered in the next chapter. "It seems to have been assumed by some academic observers that Canter's is the only valid systematic approach to profiling in use in Britain, not least because he says so" (p. 13).

Several other principles of clinical profiling include the recommendation that the profile be custom made. That is, the report should not be based on a boilerplate or generic stereotype of violent offenders. The report should also be directed at the level of sophistication of the police investigators for understanding psychological principles. Moreover, the profiler should be comfortable in viewing the profile as an evolving, reflexive process, subject to change as more information becomes available. The report should include a list of inferred characteristics of the unknown offender, and some profilers will provide a range of observations, predictions, and recommendations. Clinical profilers will often offer advice on personality characteristics, demeanor, and predictions of future behavior. In addition, police investigators will sometimes ask for interview strategies, crimes series linking, and witness evaluation (Gudjonsson & Copson, 1997). It should be noted, though, that some investigators are very cautious about profilers providing interview strategies, particularly if they are not themselves

law enforcement officers. In one study, detectives indicated that profilers they had worked with actually provided advice that conflicted with the law on interviewing and interrogation (Gekoski & Gray, 2011). Another concern is that psychologists or psychiatrists acting in a profiling capacity will be viewed as arms of law enforcement rather than as independent professionals.

Copson et al. (1997) emphasize that profiling involves a “a leap of logic, and observing or predicting something which goes beyond what is known at that point” (p. 14). At this stage in the evolution of profiling, they argue, profiling must be practiced this way, as it is far from a science in its current development. This aspect of profiling is one reason why it is so popular and more interesting than the pallid, dry actuarial (statistical) approach, which is more research based and less susceptible to cognitive biases and arbitrary decisions.

Training and Characteristics of Profilers

The training of profilers in North America was initially under the responsibility of the FBI Police Fellowship Program. Between 1966 and 1991, the 10-month program trained 32 police officers from around the world to be profilers. However, in 1992, the FBI terminated the program, although the Bureau continues to train its own agents. It does not formally call them “profilers”—there is no such job title—but informal references to profilers abound in its publications. As emphasized in Chapter 1, we use the term throughout the book with the caveat that alternative terms are often preferred (behavioral analyst, criminal investigative analyst, etc.). Furthermore, we must stress that many self-described profilers today are not psychologists, psychiatrists, or researchers, although others are.

The FBI-sponsored training program, particularly as it relates to the profiling of serial offenders, is so widely known that it is often referenced in the entertainment media and in popular novels. For example, in the 2010 novel by Jo Nesbo, *The Snowman*, the main law enforcement character, a Norwegian detective, was the only one in his agency trained in profiling serial killers by the FBI in the United States. He returns to Norway and successfully captures a serial killer and is hot on the trail of a second using the techniques he learned during his training.

Beginning in 1992, the ICIAF began the training and accreditation for the certification of criminal investigative analysis, and—according to its website—it remains the only organization in the world that trains and certifies profilers. Participants in the training must be police officers with at least 3 years of experience in violent crime investigation, among other requirements. The ICIAF comprises two divisions: the criminal profiling division and the geographic profiling division. It consists of 110 members representing the United States, Canada, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Behavioural Trace Investigations, 2009).

While it is important to have accreditation and certification of properly trained profilers, there is no evidence that the ICIAF members do better at predicting or estimating criminal behavior than an educated, knowledgeable investigator who did not undergo

the training provided by the ICIAF. However, and as asserted by Bourque et al. (2009), “the ICIAF selection and training program should be able to keep the practice of profiling safe from charlatans” (p. 44). Of course, some will argue that the exclusiveness of the ICIAF certification serves as a form of protectionism, allowing police agencies to box out competitors. Bourque et al. further conclude,

We are, however, of the opinion that profiling methods should be formalized, performance criteria should be developed, and empirical research should be undertaken to measure the true effectiveness of criminal profiling in Canada. (p. 44)

As it now stands, though, “profiling” is not yet a regulated profession in the United States and many other countries, so anyone could legally call themselves a profiler. In most instances—unless a certified individual such as one trained by the ICIAF is available—the police either approach a person they know or have had experience with in the past. In contrast, Britain, Canada, and Australia have some regulations for those who engage in profiling (Rainbow, 2011).

As noted by Gudjonsson and Copson (1997),

Profiling is not associated with the expertise of any one profession and the police have no way of recognizing the validity of profilers’ claims of relevant expertise. Typically, any expert status is difficult to challenge or check. (p. 68)

We will see many illustrations of this problem in Chapter 9, when we consider the issue of profilers providing expert testimony in criminal and civil courts.

In sum, although the practice of profiling can vary significantly from one country to another, much of the profiling is conducted by unaccredited experts. Interestingly, Hazelwood, Ressler, Depue, and Douglas (1995) believed that only individuals with considerable police and investigative experience should be allowed to call themselves profilers. John Douglas (2007) states, “When I train profilers I tell them they must walk in the shoes of both the subject and the victim. You have to experience the feelings and emotions of both” (p. 10). Mary Ellen O’Toole, the long-time FBI agent mentioned earlier in the chapter and considered a leading expert on profiling, offers this portrayal:

An experienced and well-trained profiler is intuitive, has a great deal of common sense, and is able to think and evaluate information in a concise and logical manner. A successful profiler also is able to suppress their personal feelings about the crime by viewing the scene and the offender-victim interaction from an analytical point of view. Most important, a successful profiler is able to view the crime from the offender’s perspective rather than his or her own.

In addition, the successful profiler possesses an in-depth understanding of human behavior, human sexuality, crime scene investigation and forensics, and has extensive training and experience in studying violent crimes and providing interpretations of his or her insights and observations to investigators. (p. 45)

On the other hand, Canter and Alison (2000) assert it is a misconception that there are some special sets of skills and knowledge for profiling available only to those who have worked with criminals or those who have considerable experience in police

investigations. Researchers and thoughtful practitioners can also make significant advances and discoveries in criminal profiling. We might add that a successful profiler—regardless of his or her experiential background—should understand basic concepts of research and statistical methods and be up-to-date on the current research in the field. Profilers also should be fully aware of the many cognitive biases and distortions that are inherent in the profiling process.

Accuracy and Usefulness of Crime Scene Profiles

It is undisputed that the practice of profiling is utilized to some extent by police agencies across the world (Snook et al., 2008). Many police investigators and detectives indicate they find criminal profiling useful in their investigations of certain crimes, particularly violent ones and those committed by serial offenders. In one survey reported by Snook et al., 8 out of 10 police officers in the United Kingdom found criminal profiling helpful in their investigations and would seek profiling help again. In an exploratory Internet survey of forensic psychologists and psychiatrists, Torres, Boccaccini, and Miller (2006) found that 40% of these professionals thought that criminal profiling was scientifically reliable and valid.

In a recent article, Gekoski and Gray (2011) distinguish between accuracy and usefulness. They note that even a profile that is reasonably accurate—as indicated by the number of correct predictive factors once a suspect has been identified, tried, and convicted—may not be *useful* (or cost-effective) to law enforcement. In other words, the law enforcement officers may have arrived at the same conclusions on their own, using routine investigative methods. In addition, the profile may have provided much peripheral information that could have cast suspicion on a much wider range of individuals or led investigators to focus on the wrong suspect.

To investigate these and other possibilities, Gekoski and Gray (2011) conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 detectives in the United Kingdom who had an average of 26 years in police service. Together, these officers had experience with 34 profiles that could be discussed with the researchers. Although as a group they expressed some positive support for the help offered by the profilers, they were also generally dissatisfied. A small number were cynics and dismissed profilers' advice, but others admitted to overestimating the worth of the profiles, which they believe in some cases contributed to damaged investigations. Most of the detectives indicated that the information they had gained from the profilers could have easily been (or in some cases, had been) obtained on their own or from other law enforcement officers. In other words, the profilers did not tell them anything they did not already know. Gekoski and Gray acknowledged, however, that with better and more recent training of behavioral investigative analysts (BIAs), as they are called in the UK, some of the above concerns could be alleviated. On the other hand, they also pointed out that police today have access to technological advances in investigative techniques, such as DNA (see Focus 2.3). "With developments such as these, it is possible that there is simply no longer as much need or enthusiasm for profiling as there was in times gone by when detectives were more limited in the investigative tools available to them" (p. 114).

The research on profile *accuracy* is sparse and limited. Profilers are very reluctant to participate in research involving profiler accuracy (Snook et al., 2007). Kocsis, Irwin, Hayes, and Nunn (2000), for example, asked 40 active profilers in several countries to participate in their study, but only 5 agreed. In order to participate in the study, the only criterion was that they had to have been “consulted by a law enforcement agency for the purpose of constructing a psychological profile in the course of a criminal investigation” (p. 316).

Focus 2.3

Will New Advances Make Profiling Obsolete?

Over the past three decades, criminal investigators have had access to numerous innovations for the collection, identification, and processing of evidence found at crime scenes. Among the most widely recognized is deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis, with some scholars even suggesting that increasingly more sophisticated methods of collecting DNA could make crime scene profiling obsolete (e.g., Gekoski & Gray, 2011). DNA testing now allows much smaller samples of biological material to be analyzed, and the results tend to be more discriminating. DNA testing of forensic crime scene samples can now be compared against a database of known offenders and other unsolved crimes—and the databases themselves are enormous. Forensic laboratories also have developed advanced analytical techniques through the use of computer technology with systems such as the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), various Automated Fingerprint Identifications Systems (AFIS), and the National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (NIBIN). It is plausible that in the future, DNA analysis will provide the physical characteristics of the offender, including hair and eye color.

With such increasingly sophisticated techniques made available to investigators, will behavioral profiling continue to be used? Psychology is the science of probabilities, never certainties; DNA and similar analyses, though always subject to some error, are far less tentative. Richard Mark Evonitz was linked to three homicide victims and a fourth who survived an attack when fibers from his former home, his car, and items from the victims' homes were found to match his DNA. The testing of DNA, when possible, is now routine in many criminal investigations, and investigators also are seeking to reopen cold cases in hopes of obtaining such evidence. However, the demand for DNA testing outstrips the capacity of crime laboratories to process these cases (National Institute of Justice, 2011). Moreover, such testing is not without controversy. Legislation that permits DNA testing on a broader range of suspects, arrestees, and offenders has been accompanied by civil liberties issues. On the other hand, many prisoners are also requesting that their cases be reopened because new DNA evidence has been obtained. In addition, numerous convicted offenders have been cleared by DNA testing, when it has been discovered that DNA found at the scene did not match with their own.

In summary, there are numerous issues involved with DNA analysis and other contemporary tools of forensic investigation, including methods that employ the social and behavioral sciences. As noted by the National Institute of Justice (2011, p. 5), DNA backlog requests “are not a onetime event. They are dynamic and subject to the law of supply and demand. They may go down, but they may go up.” The same could be said of demands for the services offered by crime scene profilers.

In a classic and informative study, Pinizzotto and Finkel (1990) tried to assess the accuracy of profiling. Participants, 28 in all, included 4 profiling experts who trained police at the FBI Academy, 6 police detectives across the United States who had been trained at the FBI in personality profiling, 6 experienced detectives without training, 6 clinical psychologists naive about criminal investigation and criminal profiling, and 6 untrained undergraduate students. The participants were given a variety of materials from either a homicide case or a sex offense case, including photographs, victimology information, autopsy and toxicology reports, and crime scene reports. Both cases had been closed, with offenders arrested and convicted. The participants were asked to write a profile of who they thought committed the crime, and were then asked to rank order five individuals from most likely to least likely to have committed the crime, based on brief descriptions.

The results, in general, were not strongly supportive of profile accuracy. Trained experts were somewhat more accurate in profiling the sexual offender, but were not much better than the untrained groups in profiling the homicide offender. The researchers also tried to identify any qualitative differences in the way experts and nonexperts processed the information provided. Overall, the results showed that experts did not process the material any differently from the nonexperts. This finding suggests that the cognitive methods and strategies used by expert profilers are not discernibly different from the way nonexperts process the available information about the crime. The artificiality of the experiment and the quality of information given the groups may have been influential factors in this observation, however. What the researchers did find is that some trained profilers were more interested and skillful in certain areas than other profilers. Some, for example, were good at gaining information from the medical reports, whereas others were better at discerning clues from the crime scene photos. This finding indicates that group profiling by a team of trained experts may be more effective than utilizing one single profiler. We should note that behavioral analysts today typically work in teams rather than singly. Pinizzotto and Finkel (1990) conclude from their research that criminal profiling requires a complex number of tasks that involve a “multilevel series of attributions, correlations, and predictions” (p. 230).

One of the most well-cited studies directly related to the accuracy of profiling is a survey done by Gary Copson (1995) of the Metropolitan Police Service of London. Recall that Copson has described in some detail his clinical method of profiling, discussed above. Copson’s study involved 48 of 56 police forces in 184 profiling cases. A total of 29 profilers were identified in the study, including 4 forensic psychiatrists, 4 clinical psychologists, 6 forensic psychologists, 5 academic psychologists, and 4 British police officers. Twelve of the 29 were only used on one occasion. The profiling work was dominated by the work of two individuals, an academic psychologist and a clinical psychologist, who between them were involved in 88 of the 184 cases. The crimes for which profiling was requested were homicides (113), rapes (40), extortion (12), other sex crimes (10), arson (4), abductions (3), and threats (2). The services most often requested were profiling (116 cases) and assistance with understanding the motives for the crime (112 cases). Copson found that the profiler’s predictions helped solve a crime in only 14.1% of the cases. However, he also discovered that 82.6% of the police detectives thought that profiling helped to some extent in their overall investigations. More specifically, police investigators stated that profiling led to the identification of

the offender in only 2.7% of the cases, but did allow for a better understanding of the crime or offender in about 61% of the cases. The investigators also reported that the profile helped structure the interrogation in 5.4% of the cases. Commenting on this research, Bourque et al. (2009) noted that the police detectives felt the profile was *totally* useless only about 17% of the time. Furthermore, few investigators acted *directly* on the advice of profilers. Bourque et al. posit that the main variable affecting investigators' perception of the usefulness of profiling was who the profiler was. Apparently, the reputation of the profiler largely determined the amount of credibility the investigators gave the profile.

Brent Snook et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of empirical research on the accuracy and effectiveness of profilers. It should be noted that Snook and his colleagues have been critical of profiling endeavors, particularly because profilers do not reveal their methods, and therefore they are not subjected to empirical validation (Snook et al., 2008). In their 2007 meta-analysis, the researchers concluded that criminal profilers do not decisively outperform other groups in predicting the cognitive processes, physical attributes, offense behaviors, or social habits and history of offenders. They further concluded that criminal profiling "will persist as a pseudoscientific technique until such time as empirical and reproducible studies are conducted on the abilities of large groups of active profilers to predict, with more precision and greater magnitude, the characteristics of offenders" (p. 448).

It is worth repeating that profiling very rarely provides the specific identity of the offender, nor is it intended to. Criminal profiling basically tries to narrow the field of investigation to a manageable number of potential suspects (J. E. Douglas et al., 1986). Broadly, criminal profiling suggests the kind of person who might have committed the crime under investigation, but it is highly unlikely to pinpoint an individual's exact identity, as we emphasized earlier. Moreover, while it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of profiling, its real value may be the introduction of new thoughts in difficult-to-solve cases.

The Psychological and Cognitive Pitfalls of Crime Scene Profiling

Almost all profile reports are replete with inferences and descriptions that are simply not verifiable. Gudjonsson and Copson (1997) note that in one study of 50 solved cases, nearly 50% of the inferences made by profilers were not verifiable. Recall from our discussion in Chapter 1, as well, that profiles contain observations that could apply to numerous individuals (e.g., an unmarried male in a low-income occupation who frequents bars, lives alone, and is conservative in his views toward women).

Robert Keppel and William Birnes (2003) write,

The profilers simply continue to get it wrong, and yet the police and media rely on them as if they are predictions from the oracle at Delphi. . . . There are dates, places, and times that have more factual merit to the investigative process than the behavioral characteristics identified by FBI, psychological, and psychiatric profilers. (p. 140)

Profilers continue to take it on the chin for their inaccuracies. Why do they miss the mark so often, and what might explain this apparently low hit rate?

The profiler does not approach his or her task with an empty mind. Herbert Simon (1957) developed the concept of *bounded or limited rationality*. By this he meant that humans have a limited mental capacity to make sense of the enormous complexity of the world. Each of us constructs a simplified mental model of the world and then works with this model (Heuer, 1999). According to Richards J. Heuer Jr., “We behave rationally within the confines of our mental model, but this model is not always well adapted to the requirements of the real world” (p. 3). Similarly, George A. Kelly (1963) summarized that humans construct a simplified mental model of reality and then perceive and react to the enormous complexity and chaos of the world using this model. Without this model, we would have very little to anchor down our senses, perceptions, beliefs, and thoughts. In this respect, we all have our own versions of the world. There are some similarities to other versions, of course, but there are also many unique differences. The total composite, however, results in a version different from any other. In other words, no two people think alike.

Nelson Goodman (1978) explained human thought and judgment in a similar fashion when he referred to “world making.” Each person constructs his or her unique version of the world on the basis of experience and distinctive mental structure. As much as many profilers believe that one must put oneself into the mind of the serial killer to identify motivations and personality, it is extremely difficult—if not impossible—to do so. Keppel and Birnes (2003) point out that the profile is often mistakenly built on what the analyst believes is the killer’s or violent offender’s own projection of reality. No matter how hard profilers try to enter the mind of the offender, they will ultimately be strongly influenced by their own mental model, biases, and version of reality. As noted by Richards Heuer (1999), who worked for the CIA for nearly 45 years as a staff officer, a substantial body of psychological research on perception, memory, attention span, and reasoning capacity documents the limitations of the mental capacity and “world making” of intelligence officers as well as profilers. This limitation of mental capacity leads predictably to biases and faulty judgments and decision making in the evaluation of evidence. We will now cover in more detail some of the memory and cognitive biases that are likely to explain some of the many inaccuracies and problems in profiling.

MEMORY AND COGNITIVE BIASES

“What is commonly called memory is not a single, simple function. It is an extraordinarily complex system of diverse components and processes” (Heuer, 1999, p. 17). As pointed out by Kocsis (2010), a number of authors (e.g., Copson et al., 1997; P. E. Dietz, 1985; Korem, 1997; Rossi, 1982) have developed models for how a profile should be done. Kocsis finds that these models lack an empirical foundation and are based largely on the authors’ anecdotal experiences and observations, which are generally referred to in the literature as the FBI or clinical methods of profiling discussed earlier. However, Kocsis notes that the models all have one thing in common: “All models appear to assume that the mental assimilation of case information, presumably via memory, is an

integral component of the mental processes involved in the accurate construction of a criminal profile” (p. 58). Kocsis believes the better the memory of the profiler, the more accurate the profile. A profiler’s memory consists of his or her experiences, training, knowledge, and values. When profilers construct a profile, they examine the new information of the case and compare it with their own experiences, usually including previous cases. This is referred to as “working memory.” The working memory is continually being reconstructed as new information is gained and old information is partially forgotten. The less experience a profiler has, the more reconstruction of working memory he or she will have to do.

More often than not, experienced profilers have devoted many years to developing a craft and mind-set that has served them well, and they see no need to change it (Heuer, 1999). They are convinced the information embedded in their memory from years of experience allows them to perceive patterns in crimes and make inferences that are beyond the reach of other individuals and investigators. In many instances, they believe this mind-set enables them to achieve whatever success they enjoy in making profiling inferences. This phenomenon is known as **belief persistence** or perseverance, and once formed, it is remarkably resistant to change (Marshall & Alison, 2007; R. Ross & Anderson, 1982). Individuals may continue to cling to beliefs even when the evidential basis for these beliefs is discredited or completely refuted (Nestler, 2010). This point can be well demonstrated by the rigidity with which some experts continue to hold to the O/D typology, formulated by Douglas and Ressler 30 years ago. Based on their past experiences, professional training, and cultural and professional norms, the special agents thought they saw a pattern in the material found in their interviews of violent inmates. As Malcom Gladwell (2009) noted, John Douglas appeared to be unaware of the research that put serious doubts on the reliability and validity of the typology. Moreover, based on Douglas’s own website at www.johndouglasmindhunter.com, he still holds to the value of the O/D typology for profiling serial offenders.

The clinical models of profiling are especially subject to all the “distortions, biases, and shortcomings associated with the frailties of human decision making” (Alison & Canter, 1999a, p. 29). These shortcomings are associated with the tendency to use simplifying cognitive templates and constructs when making complex judgments (Marshall & Alison, 2007). Heavy reliance on simple cognitive templates can be potentially damaging to criminal investigations.

CONFIRMATION BIAS

Some studies in the last 10 years—including meta-analyses—indicate that a large proportion of the conclusions and predictions contained within profiles are both ambiguous and unverifiable (Alison, Smith, Eastman, & Rainbow, 2003; Alison, Smith, & Morgan, 2003; Snook et al., 2007). Many of the statements are so vague that they are open to a wide range of interpretations. Compounding the problem is the tendency for police investigators to interpret the ambiguous information contained within the profile report to fit their own biases and hunches about the case or the suspect. They select those aspects of the report that they see as fitting their own cognitive sketch of the suspect while ignoring the conclusions and predictions in the report that do not fit. This powerful tendency is known

in psychology as **confirmation bias**. It is the tendency to gather evidence that confirms preexisting expectations or beliefs while failing to acknowledge contradictory evidence or information. “When it operates, it places us in a kind of closed cognitive system in which only evidence that confirms our existing views and beliefs gets inside; other information is noticed but is quickly rejected as false” (Baron & Byrne, 2000, p. 8). In essence, confirmation bias is the tendency to notice and remember information that lends support to our views on something, such as our opinions about a suspect. It is a powerful tendency that might be prevalent not only in the subjective interpretations of a profile, but also in its creation. It is entirely likely that experienced profilers who hold firmly to their working memory and a cognitive template based on many years of experience, selectively search, recollect, or assimilate information in a way that lends spurious support to their traditional way of seeing things.

Investigators and profilers are guided in their search for and evaluation of evidence by their preliminary theories or hypotheses regarding how and by whom a crime was committed. In addition, such working hypotheses are not always based on solid facts surrounding a case, but sometimes on the expectations, preconceptions, and ultimately the cognitive biases of the investigators. As noted by Marshall and Alison (2007), Copson’s 1995 report “stated that over 50% of offender profiles were considered ‘operationally useful’ because they *reinforced* the officer’s own belief” (p. 288). That is, there is a tendency for police investigators to creatively interpret the ambiguous information contained within profiles to fit their own biases about the case or the suspect. Does this imply—from the officer’s perspective—that the profile was accurate? One common observation about police requests for profiling advice is that they normally occur late in the investigation process, which suggests that police investigative processes and media coverage have already run some—if not most—of the course, with a number of the hypotheses and potential biases already in place.

Ask and Granhag (2005) identify three conditions during criminal investigations that are likely to promote confirmation bias. First, law enforcement agents usually work under substantial time pressures to solve the crime. The workload is not only heavy, but there are often deadlines for strategic decisions, such as whether to retain a suspect in custody. Second, the police culture is characterized by norms that encourage decisiveness. According to Ask and Granhag, these norms are often influenced by significant individuals in the organization who expect results in a timely manner. Time is especially critical if there is a serial killer or rapist on the loose. Third, many pivotal decisions, such as an arrest, entail a specific commitment on behalf of the responsible investigator. “Thus, the loss of prestige that would follow from admitting erroneous decisions may motivate investigators to confirm the adequacy and disregard deficiencies of prior judgments” (p. 47). All three conditions also influence the report and accompanying recommendations of the profilers.

SELF-SERVING BIAS

Self-serving bias is the strong tendency to interpret events in a way that assigns credit to oneself for any success but denies any responsibility for any failure. The self-serving bias is regarded as a form of self-deception designed to maintain high

self-esteem. It is the tendency for a person to take more credit for a successful task and less credit for an unsuccessful outcome than he or she actually deserves. Recall the discussion about James Brussel in Chapter 1; Brussel's memoirs offer great detail about his assistance to investigators and even indicate that they did not listen to him when the wrong man was arrested and convicted. Brussel also admitted to making just one mistake in one of his profiles, suggesting that a perpetrator was unmarried when he was in fact married and had been for many years. Self-serving bias is similar to self-centered bias, which is taking more credit than one deserves for a task that also involved others. Essentially, self-serving bias accompanies high self-esteem and confidence—or at least the image of confidence and self-esteem one wishes to project to the world.

FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

Fundamental attribution error or bias is a common and powerful tendency to explain another person's behavior in terms of dispositional or personality (internal) factors rather than situational or environmental (external) factors. In other words, there is a tendency to believe that people act in a way that reflects the kind of people they are, not the situation or circumstances in which they find themselves. This tendency is especially strong when we do not know the other person well, a common situation in crime scene profiling. The traditional FBI profiling approach is especially susceptible to this bias, because it often assumes a consistent relationship between offending behavior and personality traits. More specifically, it is assumed that personality traits can be inferred from crime scene behavior, and then used to predict other behavior. Although the clinical approach to profiling often emphasizes victim as an important component in the process, there still may be the tendency to neglect the external influences in the long run. Examples of external factors that might be critical in the profiling process include the victim's reaction, the degree of opportunity in the offense, weapons or self-defense strategies of the victim, and the physical layout of the attack site.

It certainly is not wrong for profilers to lean toward the internal side of the attribution process, because behavioral prediction relies heavily on this aspect. However, it is the *overestimation* that can present problems and lead to misleading conclusions. It can be especially problematic when the profiler assumes a consistent and invariant relationship between offending behavior and certain personality traits or behavioral patterns. For example, J. E. Douglas and Olshaker (1995) refer to the "homicidal triad" as being characterized by bed-wetting, cruelty to animals, and firesetting (p. 139). Research evidence does not support the triad, although one of its components—cruelty to animals—has emerged as a correlate of violent behavior toward people (Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Loeber, & Masten, 2004). Douglas and Olshaker also write with certitude that lust murderers have "trouble dealing with authority" and are "anxious to exert control over others whenever [they] can" (J. E. Douglas & Olshaker, 2000, p. 29). Although this may be intuitively appealing, it is an assumption—a fundamental attribution error—that has not been documented in the criminology research.

Together, the above principles from social psychology help us understand why some crime scene profilers tend to miss the mark in the assertions they make.

Clinical profiling is particularly susceptible to cognitive biases, but other forms of profiling are susceptible as well. In addition, as we will note in later chapters, other forms of profiling have their own unique shortcomings.

Summary and Conclusions

Crime scene profiling is the act of closely examining a crime scene for clues about the cognitive, behavioral, and demographic characteristics of a possible perpetrator or perpetrators. It is, in many aspects, what law enforcement investigators have always done. In the hands of trained profilers, however, the scene is examined with the hope that psychological insights will fine-tune this process and provide additional assistance to police.

We reviewed the early history of profiling in the United States, focusing on the work of those associated with the Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) of the FBI, under the leadership of Howard Teten, John Douglas, and their associates. Some agents began to publish accounts of their work in law enforcement publications, which introduced investigators nationwide to the idea of profiling. The interviews conducted by Douglas and his colleague, Robert Ressler, laid the groundwork for the formulation of the organized/disorganized dichotomy, which was central to FBI investigations for many years and continues to be prominent to this day. Though Douglas himself amended the dichotomy to indicate that many if not most crime scenes were mixed, critics have argued that whether it is a dichotomy or a continuum, the approach has questionable validity. Likewise, the FBI's *Crime Classification Manual* has been challenged for its lack of relevance to much crime scene investigation. The *CCM* reflects the FBI's clinical as opposed to actuarial approach to profiling, and it is vulnerable to criticism by academics and more research-oriented practitioners.

Many profilers today have been trained by the FBI as special agents or have received certificates from FBI-sponsored programs. Others have received training from the ICIAF, an international group dedicated to improving training and honing skills of profilers. Unfortunately, however, there is no formal system for regulating profiling; police in some communities simply seek assistance from a self-described profiler who may or may not have the knowledge and skills that are available in this rapidly changing enterprise. As we will note in the next chapter, in which a model report is discussed, professional profiling requires extensive knowledge and familiarity with both theory and research in criminology, together with awareness of investigative procedures.

Concepts encountered in the profiling literature were introduced in this chapter, including the modus operandi, the signature, personation, staging, and trophy taking. We also discussed the process of case linkage or linkage analysis, which is gaining more attention in the research literature as well as in profiling practice. Linkage analysis involves finding similarities among various crimes and attempting to link them to one perpetrator; in addition, it may involve mining a database of crimes in an attempt to determine whether a particular offender might be responsible for more crimes than those for which he or she has been identified. An underlying assumption of case linkage

is behavioral consistency; that is, it is assumed that humans are consistent in their behavior over time and from situation to situation. Therefore, an offender's modus operandi should be recognizable, thereby allowing investigators to link multiple crimes to the same offender. As noted in the chapter, researchers have arrived at varying conclusions with respect to behavioral consistency. Absent additional supportive data, it is premature to conclude that such consistency either does or does not exist.

We ended the chapter with a discussion of additional concepts from social psychology that help explain why crime scene profilers often miss the mark in their attempts to help identify what type of individual may be responsible for a crime, particularly a series of violent crimes, such as sexual assaults or murders. Like all human beings, profilers are subject to a variety of cognitive biases. These include confirmation bias, where they emphasize clues that may support their preconceived notions; self-serving bias, where they point out clues that may highlight their specific expertise or make them look good; and fundamental attribution bias, whereby they overemphasize the role of personality to the neglect of situational variables. Nonetheless, with these caveats in mind, crime scene profiling—carefully done—can be an extremely useful investigative tool for law enforcement.

KEY CONCEPTS

Actuarial method of profiling	Deductive analysis	Organized crime scene
Base rate	Disorganized asocial offender	Organized nonsocial offender
Behavioral Analysis Unit (BAU)	Disorganized crime scene	Personation
Behavioral Science Unit (BSU)	Fundamental attribution error or bias	Self-serving bias
Belief persistence	Inductive analysis	Signature
Case linkage	International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship (ICIAF)	Souvenir
Child Abduction Rapid Deployment (CARD)	Linkage analysis	Staging
Child Abduction Response Teams (CARTs)	Mixed crime scene	Trophy
Clinical method of profiling	Modus operandi	Typology
Confirmation bias	National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC)	Undoing
		Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)