

1

Introduction

In the late 20th century and into the 21st, criminal “profiling” became ubiquitous. Profilers, some but not all lacking professional credentials, appeared on media talk shows, wrote books, or offered their services to police to help identify and apprehend suspects. At times, the profilers were law enforcement agents or former agents; at other times, they were individuals with academic backgrounds in psychology, psychiatry, criminology, or even literature. Occasionally, the profilers held dubious degrees from questionable correspondence schools. This range of backgrounds—from the person who has extensive experience in criminal investigation or psychological research to the person with minimal credentials seeking the media spotlight—continues today.

In crime news, the media sometimes cover stories in which profilers help solve crimes, while other stories indicate they were not accurate in their predictions. Among the most notable in the latter category is the Beltway Sniper case in the fall of 2002, when 10 people were killed and 3 were critically wounded in shootings in Maryland and Virginia and the general Washington, D.C., area over a 3-week period. In that case, profilers told police the sniper probably was white, lived in the vicinity, and acted alone. Because white panel trucks were seen at the site of many of the shootings, attention was placed on these vehicles. The snipers were apprehended without resistance at a rest stop as they slept in their blue Chevrolet Caprice sedan with a shooting hole cut out of its trunk. They were identified as 41-year-old John Allen Muhammad and his 17-year-old companion, Lee Boyd Malvo. Both were African American, unemployed, with no permanent ties to the area. The car had attracted police attention at least 10 times, once when they were sleeping overnight in their car, but as D.C. Police Chief Charles Ramsey stated, based on the profile, police were on the lookout for a white van driven by a white male. When the case was solved, the profilers were widely derided for their inaccurate predictions. Muhammad has since been executed, and Malvo is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole.

In popular literature and the entertainment media, though, profilers are more often glorified than criticized. In 1991, the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, based on the book by Thomas Harris, introduced the public to the exciting role of the profiler in police work. A number of additional films of the genre followed, including *Slaughter of the*

Innocents, When the Bough Breaks, The Bone Collector, Kiss the Girls, Se7en, Copycat, Postmortem, Resurrection, The Watcher, Murder by Numbers, and television series such as *Prime Suspect, Criminal Minds, Cracker*, and *Profiler*. As noted by Canter, Alison, Alison, and Wentink (2004), information about profiling is most often disseminated in the form of popular books intended for a nontechnical and inexpert audience, rather than in peer-reviewed professional or scholarly journals. When loosely formulated and often unsubstantiated theories and methods are featured in movies and television shows, this is sometimes referred to as the “Hollywood effect” (Canter & Youngs, 2003). However, as one detective told researchers investigating the usefulness of profiling to law enforcement, “There is no Cracker” (Gekoski & Gray, 2011). In other words, the perfect profiler does not exist.

Nonetheless, crime shows and films typically extol the competence and worth of profilers. Their lives are often portrayed as charmed, frenetic, and/or controversial. They are witty and perceptive, occasionally gruff, and they sometimes skirt the law to gain access to information. Their cases are riveting, with no shortage of grisly detail, and these fictional profilers invariably solve them. “The resulting popular image of a profiler is a quasi-mythical being with special abilities and intuition that always help him to successfully target wanted criminals” (Bourque, LeBlanc, Utzschneider, & Wright, 2009, p. 15).

More controversial forms of profiling also have emerged. Specifically, law enforcement agents have sometimes used characteristics such as race, religion, or ethnicity to detain individuals who might fit the “profile” of a drug dealer or a terrorist. More recently, partly in response to criticisms about focusing on factors like race or ethnicity, law enforcement agents look for behavioral indicators. As just one illustration, some Transportation Safety Agents are now trained as “behavioral detection officers” who passively observe passengers in airports for signs of characteristics that deviate from those of the average passenger (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2008). We will discuss this again in Chapter 7. In addition, some criminologists maintain that they can identify a rapist profile, or a batterer profile, or a child sex abuser profile—and to some extent this is possible. That is—as we shall cover in later chapters—rapists, batterers, and child sex abusers often (but not always) have characteristics in common. In more recent years, a form of profiling called geographic profiling has been gaining attention in the research literature as well as among law enforcement agencies worldwide. These various forms of profiling will be addressed in this book.

Early Accounts of Profiling

Although profiling captured the public interest relatively recently, it actually has a long history, perhaps as far back as 500 years. According to Woodworth and Porter (1999), the documented history of profiling dates back to the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum (The Hammer of Witches)*, written during the late 1400s by two Dominican monks who were commissioned by the Catholic Church to produce a

document for the purpose of accurately identifying, interrogating, and eradicating witches. That text may represent the first systematic approach for “profiling” individuals who were supposedly guilty of horrific crimes, such as the killing of children and the torture of animals. The book, which was published in 28 editions between 1486 and 1600, became the handbook for witch hunters and inquisitors throughout medieval Europe. Witches were said to make diabolic compacts with evil, to be transported in the sky at night, to have sexual relations with the devil, and to stir up hailstorms, among other unusual and outrageous acts. To help identify witches, witch hunters were advised to look for persons who had visible marks (scars, moles, birthmarks) on their body, who chanted incantations over the sick, or used herbal remedies to alleviate suffering. The *Malleus Malificarum* also prescribed numerous methods of eliciting confessions, such as hanging suspected witches by their thumbs or placing them naked in cold cells with thumbscrews attached to their fingers.

Profilers today obviously do not take such drastic and primitive approaches. Quite possibly, the idea for *modern* profiling emerged from early literary works, including detective novels (Bourque et al., 2009). Bourque and his colleagues suggest that the first “profiler” may have appeared in Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, published in 1841. Poe created the fictional detective C. Auguste Dupin, a somewhat eccentric French police officer who pieced together clues based on newspaper reports and a single visit to the crime scene. Eventually, he solved the crime through the process of “ratiocination,” meaning he was able to put himself into the mind of the criminal through rational thought and a vivid imagination. The character Dupin solved more crime mysteries in Poe’s next two detective novels, *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842) and *The Purloined Letter* (1844). In addition, the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, consistently employed a form of criminal profiling in his intriguing search for the offender. Since then, the main characters in many detective or mystery novels engage in criminal profiling or seek profiling assistance.

In real life, and closer in time to the present, profiling can be traced back to Jack the Ripper, the serial killer who brutally murdered five prostitutes in separate incidents in London’s East End in 1888. Although the case was never solved, the chief forensic pathologist, Dr. George Baxter Phillips, tried to help police investigators by inferring personality characteristics based on the nature of the wounds inflicted on the victims (Turvey, 2012). Phillips reconstructed various crime scenes and described the wounds of victims to gain a greater insight into the offender’s psychological makeup. Phillips believed that an examination of the wound patterns of murder victims could provide clues about both the behavior and personality of the offender. That is, he noticed that the wounds were inflicted with considerable skill and knowledge, suggesting that the killer had a sophisticated understanding of human anatomy. “In particular, he was referring to the postmortem removal of . . . organs, and what he felt was the cleanliness and preciseness of the incisions involved” (Turvey, 2002, p. 10).

The profiling of *known* individuals—and not necessarily those suspected of crimes—is also not a new undertaking. For example, during World War II, an intelligence officer in the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) named William Langer

created a profile of Adolf Hitler, based upon all material about Hitler he could assemble from various reports (Ault & Reese, 1980). This form of profiling will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Origins of Modern Profiling

In the United States, profiling in its modern form was publicly acknowledged during a police manhunt in New York during the 1940s and 1950s, a hunt that ended with the arrest of George Metesky, called the “Mad Bomber.” Metesky apparently planted about 47 homemade bombs during a 16-year reign of terror. Police at one point contacted Dr. James Brussel, a psychiatrist who offered clues to the possible identity of the bomber. There is debate over the extent to which Brussel’s profile was actually helpful—one police officer indicated that the profile could fit most men within a certain age range—but there is no debate that Brussel brought profiling to the forefront. As a result, he is often considered the “father of profiling” in the United States. Brussel also served as a consultant to the Behavioral Science Unit (BSU) of the FBI when it established its profiling unit in 1972. We discuss the history of the BSU in Chapter 2. In the present chapter, we cover the **Mad Bomber case** in some detail because of its historical significance, and also because Brussel’s work illustrates both the benefits and the costs of crime scene profiling.

In England, interest in profiling soared in the mid-1980s, in two different directions. First, some psychologists, such as Paul Britton, began offering advice to police that was similar to that provided by James Brussel in the United States. Britton’s star began to fade after he was involved in a very controversial undercover operation to persuade a suspect to confess to a brutal murder, which it was later learned the suspect did not commit. A judge freed the suspect, noted that profiling was far too unscientific to be admitted into criminal trials, and even questioned its use by police in investigating a crime. The case (*Regina v. Stagg, 1994*), along with the specific comments made by the judge, will be discussed in Chapter 9. In the other direction British profiling took, psychologist David Canter contributed to the investigation leading to the arrest of the railway rapists, John Duffy and David Mulcahy (Hicks & Sales, 2006). Canter’s approach to profiling was more statistically oriented, and he eventually established the first university program in investigative psychology at the University of Liverpool in 1994—a center that continues today and is highlighted in Chapter 3.

As you will see throughout this book, profiling can be regarded as both an art and a science. Some see it as a sham; others are guarded and cautious, but are willing to acknowledge its potential; still others are avidly supportive of its use. In recent years, particularly because profiling evidence is sometimes introduced in criminal and civil courts, there are more calls for careful research on profiling techniques. As we will note, the courts have set criteria for allowing the testimony of experts in court hearings and trials; profilers who want to testify—particularly if they are not law enforcement agents—must justify the scientific basis of their approach. However, many professional profilers are not prepared to reveal their methods, for fear of being criticized or copied

(Hicks & Sales, 2006). James Brussel called his “method” his own private blend of science, intuition, and hope (Ramsland, 2009), and did not tell how he arrived at this blend. We turn now to a discussion of the case that brought Brussel considerable fame.

THE MAD BOMBER CASE

“Con Edison Crooks. This is for you.”

So read the note attached to a bomb left on a windowsill in a toolbox at the Consolidated Edison Building in New York City in November 1940. The bomb consisted of a short brass pipe filled with gunpowder that police believed was from rifle bullets, but either by design or faulty technique, it did not detonate. The release, or triggering, mechanism contained sugar, which is linked with dry-cell batteries. Nearly a year later, a similar bomb was found lying in the street about four blocks from Con Ed headquarters. There was no note, and that crude bomb, which was wrapped in a red sock, also did not detonate. Neither bomb drew much attention, but New York detectives speculated that the person who made them probably was someone on the company payroll with easy access to the building—possibly a former employee who had been fired and harbored bitter resentment (Meagher, 1956).

After the United States entered World War II in December of 1941, police received a letter from the bomber. He wrote that he would no longer make bombs for the duration of the war, indicating that his patriotic feelings led him to stop temporarily. However, once the war had ended, the bomber sent a letter that said, “I WILL BRING THE CON EDISON TO JUSTICE—THEY WILL PAY FOR THEIR DASTARDLY DEEDS . . . F. P.” It would later be revealed that these initials stood for “fair play.”

During his hiatus, however, the bomber continued to send letters and postcards to the police, newspapers, theaters, hotels, private citizens, and Con Edison executives, many letters containing the words and phrases “dastardly deeds” or “acts” and signed with the initials F. P. (See Focus 1.1 for a discussion of the relationship between the bomber and New York newspapers.)

The gunpowder-filled pipe bombs began to reappear in 1951, the first one detonating in Grand Central Terminal. Some bombs were discovered before they detonated, others did not detonate, and some detonated but caused no injuries. The Grand Central bomb was followed by other bombs at Con Ed, the Paramount Theatre, subway stations, Radio City Music Hall, telephone booths, and other theaters. The first injury occurred in December of 1952, when a bomb exploded at the Lexington Theatre (Greenburg, 2011). In 1953, the bomber placed bombs at Radio City Music Hall, Penn Station and Grand Central Station, and the Capitol Theatre. Three more bombs were placed in 1954, and another in 1955.

Altogether, over his 16-year history, the bomber had targeted numerous locations, including the New York Public Library, Radio City Music Hall, Macy’s, the Port Authority Bus Terminal, train stations, and several phone booths (Greenburg, 2011). The seemingly random placement of the bombs was baffling to the police, who concluded that the bomber was probably an eccentric and possibly “mad.” Hence, the perpetrator was soon dubbed the “Mad Bomber of New York City.”

Focus 1.1

Metesky and the Media

An interesting aspect of the "Mad Bomber" case was Metesky's relationship with the news media. During his bombing spree period, he wrote to the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Journal American*, and the *New York Times*, warning that he planned to continue planting bombs until justice was done. The writing appeared to be fairly literate, and it was always in heavy pencil in printed letters. The letters G and Y were rather peculiar, and the detectives thought that this indicated the person was educated in a European country (Meagher, 1956). Sometimes, the bomber would send notes that were created from pasted block letters from newspapers or magazines rather than hand printed.

The *Journal American* in particular established an ongoing correspondence with the bomber. The newspaper agreed to publish his letters and even promised to investigate his injury case against Con Edison (Considine, 1957). The *Journal American* kept this promise, as Greenburg (2011) noted: Within hours of his arrest, the paper retained the services of a prominent attorney to represent him in his compensation claim. After his capture, Metesky revealed that he had come very close to walking into the *Journal American* editorial office to get some "first-hand advice" (Considine, 1957, p. 25). He told investigators that he appreciated what the newspaper had done for him and said, "I felt I had to talk to someone" (p. 25).

After the bomber was captured, many credited the *Journal American* with helping solve the case. On the other hand, media scholars and critics have argued that the press in the Mad Bomber case often skirted ethical boundaries and allowed itself to be manipulated by Metesky. Greenburg (2011) notes that the newspaper took full advantage of the acclaim it received; its representatives allowed themselves to be interviewed, and the paper published virtually every accolade that came across its editorial desks.

Greenburg (2011) has written an extensive and well-documented account of the years of terror inflicted on New York by the bomber. The unpredictable appearance of the bombs produced intense public anxiety and taxed the resources of the New York City Police Department. When bombs were found under seats of movie theaters, parents understandably began to forbid their children to attend movies. Often, the bomb placements were accompanied by warning phone calls to police or the media, but the caller did not provide an exact location of the bomb. Some bombs were timed to detonate precisely at the start of rush hour (Greenburg, 2011). No one died from bombs that detonated, but many were injured, some seriously.

The police were quite certain that the bomber had been in the armed service because the postwar bombs were of semi-military design. Furthermore, they identified and investigated 9,750 persons with a history of mental illness in the New York metropolitan area, focusing on those with mechanical skills, such as toolmakers, machinists, electricians, and plumbers. The police even believed that they had identified a time pattern in that the bombs had been planted within 3 days of a full moon. This hypothesis led some detectives to refer to the bomber as a "mooner" or "the moon bomber." At

one point during the investigation, a person was arrested as a suspect and was sent to Bellevue Hospital for psychiatric evaluation; during his 37-day evaluation period, another bomb was placed, and authorities realized they had arrested the wrong man.

In December 1956, after a bomb went off under a seat in the Paramount Movie Theatre in Brooklyn, New York Police Commissioner Stephen P. Kennedy ordered the department to undertake the greatest manhunt in the history of the department ("Suspect Is Held as 'Mad Bomber,'" 1957). Note that by that time, numerous bombs had been placed, many had exploded, and some had caused injuries. The New York Bomb Investigation Unit, the Police Bureau of Technical Service, handwriting experts, fingerprint technicians, demolition engineers, and machinists all worked on the case. A reward of \$26,000 was offered for the apprehension of the mysterious "F. P." by the Board of Estimate and the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association.

Interestingly, police investigators had apparently contacted several psychiatrists and possibly psychologists during their 16-year search for the bomber. However, none of their names was revealed to the press except for that of Dr. James A. Brussel, Assistant Commissioner of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. By all accounts, Brussel offered the most interesting and perhaps the most comprehensive "profile" of the bomber during the investigation. He was given access to the bomber's postcards and every scrap of information police considered significant to the investigation, including crime scene photographs. Brussel then provided an oral profile within hours of reviewing the information. The profile was eventually published in the *New York Times* on Christmas Day, 1956:

Single man, between 40 and 50 years old, introvert. Unsocial but not anti-social. Skilled mechanic. Cunning. Neat with tools. Egotistical of mechanical skill. Contemptuous of other people. Resentful of criticism of his work but probably conceals resentment. Moral. Honest. [Not] interested in women. High school graduate. Expert in civil or military ordnance. Religious. Might flare up violent at work when criticized. Possible motive: discharge or reprimand. Feels superior to critics. Resentment keeps growing. Present or former Consolidated Edison worker. Probably case of progressive paranoia. (quoted in Meagher, 1956, p. 31)

In his memoirs, *Casebook of a Crime Psychiatrist*, Brussel (1968) refers to the profile quoted above and stated it included his essential and major predictions (p. 47). The profile really did not add much information beyond what the police detectives had theorized or already knew, but to some extent it validated their suspicions. The police had surmised, long before consulting Brussel, that the bomber had a grudge against Con Ed, and they strongly suspected he was either a current or past employee of the utility company.

A different version of the profile appeared in newspapers across the country a week later, in January 1957, shortly before the bomber was captured:

He believes he has a pact with God to right some wrong done to him by the Consolidated Edison Company, the first victim of his bombing attempts 16 years ago. He feels he is persecuted and has no qualms or conscience about destroying lives or property in "getting back" at instituted authorities who have "done him wrong." (Winship, 1957, p. 9)

On that same date, the Associated Press (Winship, 1957) further reported that Dr. Brussel believed the bomber was of German descent and might live in Manhattan's East Side "Yorkville" district. Brussel further thought he was a skilled mechanic and might have worked for Con Ed at some time during the 1930s. In addition, Brussel predicted that the bomber led the life of a lone wolf and would probably have the appearance of a quiet, scholarly, middle-aged man.

Several weeks later, 53-year-old George Metesky was arrested in Waterbury, Connecticut. When detectives closed in on the three-family apartment house shortly after midnight, Metesky was in bed. As the police officers entered the house, they told a barely awake Metesky that they were investigating an accident. Metesky greeted them cordially (in his robe and pajamas) and said to the police, "You're looking for more than an accident," and then, "I guess it's because you suspect that I am the mad bomber" (quoted in Sheehan & Butler, 1957, p. 12). He smiled frequently and appeared to be in a state of high self-satisfaction at being captured. When the police ordered Metesky to get dressed, he reappeared wearing a double-breasted suit, buttoned. Photos of him



Photo 1.1: George Metesky, the "Mad Bomber," flashes a smile as he is led by police into the station in Waterbury, Connecticut, for booking.

surrounded by arresting officers show a bespectacled man smiling broadly (see Photo 1.1). It was only after extensive questioning through the night that Metesky eventually confessed. Due to the statute of limitations in effect at that time, he could only be charged with crimes that occurred from March 1952 forward (Greenburg, 2011).

After his arrest, details about Metesky's motivation for his 16-year bombing mission began to emerge. On September 5, 1931, he was working on a generator wiper at the company's plant when a broiler produced a blast of hot gases, knocking him to the ground. The hot gasses filled his lungs, causing serious and extensive lung damage. The accident left him disabled; after collecting 26 weeks of sick pay, he lost his job. Eventually, he developed a disabling case of pulmonary tuberculosis, which he believed was directly linked to the Con Ed accident. According to his two older sisters, he was in bed much of the time, coughing blood after the accident, and unable to eat. After

receiving hospital treatment for months, he was told he would have to go to Arizona for relief for his lungs, which he did. However, while in Arizona, financial support from his sisters and parents began to run out. He returned to Connecticut and sought monetary compensation from Con Ed for his injury. Unfortunately, his claim for workers' compensation was denied because he had waited too long to file it. Metesky was angry and resentful about the injury and the fact that he had never been justifiably compensated—thus his habit of signing his notes F. P., for fair play.

Metesky was the youngest child and only son of Lithuanian immigrant parents. A resident of Waterbury, Connecticut, all his life, he lived with his unmarried sisters who supported him during his 20 years of unemployment. Additional background information revealed that Metesky did not complete high school, but did serve in the military as a Marine Corps specialist electrician at the United States Consulate in Shanghai (Berger, 1957). When he returned home, he worked as a machinist for a subsidiary of Con Ed for 2 years (1929–1931). Metesky was interested in women and had a steady girlfriend at the time of his arrest, but refused to name her. Although he considered himself a devout Catholic, he could not bring himself to confess his bombing “sins.”

Interestingly, Metesky was never put on trial for the offenses. He was arraigned and then sent to Matteawan State Hospital for observation and assessment of whether he was competent to stand trial. Following this initial examination period, he returned to court where a judge in 1957 declared that he lacked the sufficient ability to understand the charges against him and help his attorney in his own defense—in other words, he was found incompetent to stand trial. Throughout these early court appearances, Metesky beamed and seemed to be enjoying the attention he was gaining in the press. Metesky remained at Matteawan, but his lawyers continually challenged the state’s authority to keep him there (Greenburg, 2011). Approximately 15 years later, in the case *Jackson v. Indiana* (1972), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a defendant found incompetent to stand trial could not be committed to a mental hospital indefinitely unless he was making progress toward competency—“treat me or release me,” Jackson had told his doctors. However, if he was considered dangerous to the public, an incompetent defendant could be committed to a mental institution under civil commitment laws. In the wake of the *Jackson* decision, doctors determined that Metesky was not dangerous, and apparently they could not demonstrate that he was making progress toward competency. He was released on December 13, 1973, having been institutionalized for about 16 years. He went back to Waterbury, Connecticut, and—defying all predictions based on his ill health—he lived another 20 years, dying at the age of 90.

THE BRUSSEL LEGACY

We have described the Mad Bomber case in considerable detail because it was the first documented case in the United States where a criminal profile was sought by police investigators and widely reported in the news media. The public was fascinated with this new approach to crime investigation. Moreover, Dr. James Brussel became highly recognized as the first profiling expert in U.S. history and—as noted earlier—he is sometimes called the father of criminal profiling (Gladwell, 2009; Ramsland, 2009). But an examination of the profiles Brussel provided the police before Metesky’s arrest do not closely fit the description of the man arrested. Brussel’s original profiles—as printed in the newspapers during the 1950s—were often “Barnum-like” statements that could be descriptive of many men during the 1940s and 1950s. (See Focus 1.2 for illustrations of **Barnum statements**.) Moreover, large portions of the profiles provided by Brussel included much of the information the police had revealed to the news media during their extensive and widely publicized investigations. It is likely that Brussel himself had followed the news accounts.

Focus 1.2**Barnum Statements**

In social psychology, Barnum statements refer to very general terms or comments that could apply to many different people. The term is said to originate from a quote by the showman P. T. Barnum, who claimed with regard to his stage offerings, "We've got something for everyone." Given a list of Barnum-like statements, almost anyone would say, "Sure, that describes me well." Following are some examples:

- There are occasions when you do not make full use of your potential.
- You have a strong need to have other people like you.
- Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and somewhat insecure inside.
- At times you will put things off, but you are generally compulsive about getting work done.
- You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others.
- You are relatively open-minded.
- You prefer a certain amount of change and variety, and you become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.

In addition, Brussel's profiles did not necessarily lead to the discovery of the bomber. As we shall see shortly, they missed the mark in many important aspects. One of the true heroes in this case was Alice G. Kelly, a filing clerk at Consolidated Edison, who was struck by phrases used in the letters to the *New York Journal American*. According to Greenburg (2011), Kelly had been instructed to review employment compensation cases at Con Ed labeled "troublesome." Other sources indicate that she did this on her own initiative ("Who Gets 'Mad Bomber' Reward?" 1957). Regardless, it is undisputed that she uncovered the dusty file of George P. Metesky, a machinist and electrician, who had been seriously injured at work at Con Ed in 1931. The file also contained his photographs, work record, and address, and letters with the phrases "injustices," and "take justice in my own hands." Greenburg reports that there was a scramble for the reward money when Metesky was arrested (even the *Journal American* sought some of the cash), but there was great sympathy for Kelly and her discovery. She, however, declined the reward on the grounds that she had only been doing her job.

Forensic literary scholar Donald Foster (2000) and noted author Malcolm Gladwell (2009) point out that the actual profiles Brussel gave the police during the Mad Bomber investigation were nothing like the one he described in his book, *Casebook of a Crime Psychiatrist* (1968). Brussel's *Casebook* reads like a detective novel, full of elaborate and embellished accounts of how he skillfully developed various profiles, including one of the Boston Strangler, another case in which he was involved and which will be discussed below. Interestingly, the profile that most writers and experts cite as being a

highly accurate one of the Mad Bomber comes exclusively from Brussel's memoirs—published nearly 12 years after Metesky was arrested—and not from those published in newspapers and other accounts prior to Metesky's arrest.

Essentially, it appears that Brussel—as reflected in this profile—may have had a serious case of hindsight bias. **Hindsight bias** is the tendency to change a previous judgment in the direction of newly provided information (Mazzoni & Vannucci, 2007). It is one of the most pervasive errors in everyday human judgment and prediction. Brussel used hindsight bias by reconstructing his original prediction and using the knowledge of the arrested offender as a guide in his memoirs. Hindsight bias is especially likely to occur when an individual strives to protect his or her professional skill, knowledge, and reputation. The motive to present oneself favorably may encourage experts to demonstrate hindsight bias (Musch & Wagner, 2007). Hindsight bias is most likely to occur in situations where experts are uncertain or just plain wrong about the outcome (Ash, 2009). Nonetheless, we should note that anyone writing memoirs may be subject to hindsight bias, and this does not necessarily imply something devious or a deliberate attempt to mislead readers. Without the benefit of documentation on one's past life, one is apt to see past events in a very subjective light. In the profiling world, there is no shortage of such memoirs.

In Brussel's book, and true to his psychiatric profession, he writes that he was convinced the bomber suffered from chronic and progressive paranoia, which was accompanied by persistent delusions. It appears, however, that Metesky was basically suffering from an angry, long-term, and misguided grudge toward a major utility company that he felt had done him wrong. An incentive that likely spurred him on was the attention the random bombings were receiving from the media, the public, and the New York Police Department (NYPD). Whether Metesky's grudge against Con Ed would qualify as paranoia, a relatively rare disorder, is highly debatable. Today, the term "delusional disorder" has replaced "paranoid disorder," and it is possible that Metesky would have more likely met the criteria for that disorder. One of the essential features of delusional disorder is non-bizarre delusions that are not due to schizophrenia (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

In the *Casebook*, Brussel also elaborates on what went into his thinking in the development of the profile. Brussel was thoroughly Freudian in his orientation, which was a very popular approach in psychiatry (and to some extent psychology) during that time. For example, as mentioned, Metesky had a distinctive way of forming certain letters, including W, G, and Y. In explaining why Metesky made rounded W's or why he slashed the bottom of the seat at the Paramount Movie Theater, Brussel concluded that Metesky was fixated at the Oedipal stage of psychosexual development and felt antagonism toward his father and sexual attraction toward his mother. Brussel believed that the curved W found in Metesky's letters resembled a pair of female breasts as seen from the front, or it could symbolize a scrotum. After examining a police photograph of the slashed seat at the Paramount Theatre, Brussel surmised that the bomber lashed the underside of the seat because the seat symbolized the pelvic region of a human body. Brussel further deduced that, in the act of slashing the seat, the bomber gave expression to a submerged wish to penetrate his mother and castrate his father. These speculations could have been made by anyone and are beyond scientific scrutiny.

Moreover, the extent to which they contribute to criminal investigation of the case is highly questionable.

In his *Casebook*, Brussel writes that he had further predicted the bomber was likely a Slav, and therefore was most likely Roman Catholic. Interestingly, however, no profile or description *prior to the arrest* mentions the bomber being a Slav. Since his letters were usually postmarked from New York or Westchester County, Connecticut, where the largest population of Slavs resided, Brussel assumed that the bomber lived in or near Westchester. Even though it was unlikely that the bomber would mail his letters from his hometown, there were enough Slavs living in nearby areas to suggest the region. Brussel (1968) writes, “For a long while, as . . . police officers sat and waited in silence, I studied the Mad Bomber’s letters. I lost all sense of time. I tried to immerse myself in the man’s mind” (p. 33).

Brussel adds that, as detectives prepared to leave his office, he said,

“One more thing. When you catch him—and I have no doubt you will—he’ll be wearing a double-breasted suit.”

“Jesus!” one of the detectives whispered.

“And it will be buttoned,” I said. I opened my eyes. Finney [the lead detective] and his men were looking at each other. (p. 46)

Although the above dialogue may have been exactly what happened that afternoon, we have only Brussel’s account of the conversation, written after the fact. Nothing written prior to Metesky’s arrest mentioned the double-breasted suit, buttoned. However, many today believe the most impressive part of the profile was the prediction concerning the offender’s preference for clothing. When the police told Metesky to get dressed at the time of his arrest, he did proudly appear with the double-breasted suit, buttoned. The description of what the bomber would be wearing at the time of his arrest prompted many modern writers to extol the accuracy of the profile.

Furthermore, even assuming Brussel *did* make this oft-cited prediction of clothing, it is not that astonishing. Double-breasted suits were very popular between the mid-1930s and the early 1950s (Bryan, 2006; Nolan, 2011). In fact, over 50% of the suit jackets sold during the 1940s and early 1950s were double-breasted (Chenoune, 1993). Consequently, it was not hard to predict that a middle-aged man during the 1950s would be wearing one. Furthermore, it was also highly fashionable and culturally expected to have it buttoned, especially for someone ready to meet the press.

Another strategy that Brussel used in optimizing his profile was that he made more incorrect predictions than correct ones. Gladwell (2009) writes,

Brussel did not really understand the mind of the Mad Bomber. He seems to have understood only that, if you make a great number of predictions, the ones that were wrong will soon be forgotten, and the ones that turn out to be true will make you famous. (p. 354)

Making more incorrect predictions than correct ones is not unusual, say some profilers (Finn, 2008). One well-known profiler quoted in Finn (p. 36) recently confessed, “You make hundreds of mistakes, but you get a couple of things right. . . . It helps lead the investigation in a new direction.” The problem with this, however, is that the many

mistakes can lead officers in inconsequential directions (the prototypical “wild goose chase”) and may prove costly in terms of wasted investigation time.

To be fair to Brussel, he was indeed a pioneer in the uncharted and murky waters of criminal or offender profiling. He was able to bring this new technique of crime investigation—using psychological or psychiatric knowledge to assist law enforcement agents—to the forefront. In fact, the director of the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI, Howard Teten, sought his advice and knowledge for the training of FBI agents during the early 1970s, a topic to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Interestingly, Brussel reported, again in his *Casebook* (1968), that he lost favor with the NYPD after he insisted in a later case that two men they had arrested, at separate times, were not responsible for the brutal deaths of two young women. Charges were eventually dropped against the first man, but the second—Richard Robles—was tried, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Brussel provided police with a list of characteristics, few of which fit Robles. Brussel believed the real killer had fled to Europe, and that the wrong man had been imprisoned. “Richard Robles did not murder anybody,” Brussel said in his memoirs (p. 135). Nonetheless, Robles confessed to the murders, was repeatedly denied parole, and remains imprisoned as of 2012.

If the NYPD became disenchanted with Brussel, the Boston Police Department was more welcoming, as we see below.

THE BOSTON STRANGLER

Between June 14, 1962, and January 4, 1964, a total of 13 single women in the Boston area were murdered by a single serial killer or possibly several killers. At least 11 of these women were considered victims of the Boston Strangler. All the women were murdered in their apartments, had been sexually assaulted—sometimes with objects—and their bodies were positioned in a degrading manner. The women were all strangled with articles of their own clothing, such as stockings or belts. With no indications of forced entry, police believed the women may have known their killer. These horrific incidents were later encapsulated in a movie in which the actor Tony Curtis played the lead role; to this day, some movie aficionados see Curtis’s face when they are reminded of the Boston Strangler.

The first five women were advanced in age, ranging from 55 to 85. After a short hiatus, a 21-year-old woman was found, followed by both young and older women. Police were not sure that the murders were the work of a single individual, and a group of behavioral scientists (psychologists, criminologists, psychiatrists) tended to agree that they probably were not. The victims varied widely in age, occupations, education, and interests, and the sexual assault method was often different. Brussel, however, felt there was only one strangler. As described in his *Casebook*, he believed the strangler was first striking out at his mother, symbolized by the older women. Once he came to terms with his Oedipal complex, he was able to respond sexually to young women, as evidenced by semen left at the scene. Brussel (1968) indicated that, with his last victim, a 19-year-old named Mary Sullivan, the stranger had “suddenly grown, psychosexually, from infancy to puberty to manhood,” which he termed “instant maturity” (p. 152).



Photo 1.2: Albert DeSalvo in custody after being charged with multiple rapes. He was convicted and imprisoned for the “Green Man” crimes, but it was never established that he was responsible for the crimes committed by the Boston Strangler.

Brussel also suggested that the strangler was a paranoid schizophrenic, of muscular build, in his late twenties or thirties, of average height, with no noticeable distinguishing features. He was clean-shaven, with clean fingernails, and a neat dresser. “I see him as a man who tends his hair lovingly. He probably has a mane of hair the average girl would envy” (Brussel, 1968, p. 157). He also predicted that he would be unmarried. Brussel’s profile of the strangler included a considerable amount of Freudian concepts, including the Oedipal conflict, but police made little headway in finding a suspect.

Then, in the summer and fall of 1964, a number of women in the Boston area were sexually assaulted, but not killed, in their homes. The rapist became known

as the Green Man because he wore green coveralls, sunglasses, and work gloves. The man eventually arrested for these offenses was Albert DeSalvo (see Photo 1.2). He was sent to Bridgewater State Hospital, where he apparently hinted to fellow patients that he was also the Boston Strangler and bragged of many conquests. DeSalvo met many of the broad demographic and descriptive characteristics outlined by Brussel, with the exception of the fact that he was married. Brussel would later say that he was wrong in that prediction, but that it was the only mistake he made.

Critics like Ramsland (2009) have indicated that Brussel’s profile of the Boston Strangler was unsophisticated and largely off-base, and it has never been established that DeSalvo was indeed the Boston Strangler. He was tried in 1967 for the Green Man crimes, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment. His defense lawyer, the noted attorney F. Lee Bailey, hired Brussel to testify that DeSalvo met the criteria for insanity and therefore should not be held responsible for the crimes but was not successful. After his conviction, DeSalvo was first sent to Bridgewater, from which he escaped for a brief period, and ultimately to Walpole State Prison. On November 25, 1973, he was stabbed to death by another inmate.

An interesting postscript to the Boston Strangler story is the fact that DeSalvo—due to DNA and other forensic evidence—was eventually cleared of the death of at least one of his supposed victims, the young Mary Sullivan (Sherman, 2003). Brussel had highlighted the significance of Mary Sullivan’s death, telling police the murders would then stop because the Strangler had finally achieved sexual intimacy. Indeed, Brussel indicated that killings that occurred after Sullivan’s death were not attributed to the Strangler. Because DeSalvo was eventually cleared of that murder, a key aspect of Brussel’s theory about the Strangler was negated.

The Mad Bomber and Boston Strangler cases are undoubtedly the two most sensational involving Brussel, whom we have used as the linchpin in our discussion of the early history of profiling in the United States. In later chapters, we will discuss more contemporary cases in which today's profilers or behavioral analysts are involved. For now, we turn our attention to the various forms of profiling and to concepts that are central to material in the remaining chapters.

The Five Areas of Behavioral Profiling

The very general term *profiling* encompasses an enormous range of investigations, methods, and assessments. As practiced, there are many models and classification systems primarily based on the analysis of homicide and sexual assault—these are the crimes that are most likely to attract the attention of profilers. However, as we have seen in the historical material above, “profiling” is not necessarily scientifically based. Brussel himself, for example, commented that his “method” was part science, but also part intuition and hope, and that he had “images” of the perpetrators in his mind. In addition, what was first called simply “profiling” now goes by various overlapping names, in both the scholarly and popular literature. These include offender profiling, investigative analysis, behavioral analysis, crime scene profiling, and criminal investigative analysis, to name just a few. Law enforcement agencies now often prefer the more respectable term “behavioral analysis,” presumably to divert attention away from the negative publicity “profiling” has sometimes garnered. In England, the term “behavioural investigative analyst” (BIA) is used rather than “profiler.” It should also be emphasized that profiling may involve a variety of investigative tasks, including providing advice for interviewing suspects, offering media strategies, prioritizing resources, and conducting statement validity analysis (Snook, Taylor, Gendreau, & Bennell, 2009). This text, however, will focus on one of the central processes of profiling, making inferences about an offender or potential offender.

Perhaps as a way of raising its credibility, supporters stress that profiling is an activity, but only one of several under the umbrella of behavioral analysis. For example, according to Bourque et al. (2009), “behavioral analysis units” in Canada perform the following duties:

- Develop profiles of unidentified offenders;
- Analyze crime scenes;
 - Reconstruct crime scenes;
 - Conduct indirect personality assessments;
- Provide advice on investigations and interrogations;
- Assist in the execution of search warrants;
- Analyze statements or testimony;
- Analyze suspicious deaths;
- Conduct threat assessments.

Likewise, the Behavioral Analysis Units of the FBI list “profiling” as one of many different activities in which it engages. This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.

In order to present the material in this book in a meaningful and manageable way, we use profiling as a general term, and then divide it into five somewhat overlapping categories:

- (1) Crime scene profiling
- (2) Geographic profiling
- (3) Psychological profiling
- (4) Suspect-based profiling
- (5) Equivocal death analysis (psychological autopsy)

Because each of the above focuses on individual behavior, we have included the phrase “behavioral profiling” in the title of our book. We devote one or two chapters to each of these categories, which are introduced very briefly below.

CRIME SCENE PROFILING

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. Some researchers (e.g., Knight, Warren, Reboussin, & Soley, 1998) have introduced the term “crime scene analysis,” or the more technical term “criminal investigative analysis,” to describe the practice of developing offender descriptions based on the analysis of the crime scene. Others use the term “offender profiling.” This latter term can also apply to suspect-based profiling, however. To avoid confusion, we use the phrase “crime scene profiling.”

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 reasonable set of hypotheses for determining who may have been responsible for the crime. A crime scene profiler may employ research-based typologies, such as rapist or batterer typologies, to offer investigative leads. If done correctly, a profile will provide some subjective descriptions of the demographic, motivational, behavioral patterns, and psychological features of the offender and the probabilities that the offender or offenders will commit the crime again. If done incorrectly (consider the D.C.-area sniper case), it can lead investigators far astray. In recent years, much attention has been paid to common elements observed across different crime scenes, suggesting that the crimes may have been committed by the same person. Known as “linkage analysis,” this procedure has both supporters and critics but is often used in crime scene profiling, especially in the investigation of violent crimes. Crime scene profiling is currently regarded as art by some, and science by others. One mission of this book is to examine its *scientific* aspects and accuracy.

GEOGRAPHIC PROFILING

Geographic profiling is a method of identifying the area of probable residence or the probable area of the next crime of an unknown offender, based on the location of and the spatial relationships among various crime sites (Guerette, 2002). Geographic profiling, therefore, can help in any criminal investigation by locating the approximate area in which an offender lives, or by narrowing the surveillance and stakeouts to places where the next crime is most likely to occur. This type of profiling basically tries to identify the geographic territory the offender knows well, feels most comfortable in, and prefers to find or take victims in (Rossmo, 1997). Whereas a crime scene profiler hypothesizes about the demographic, motivational, and psychological features of the crime and offender, a geoprofiler focuses on the location of the crime and how it relates to the residence or base of operations of the offender. Nevertheless, behavioral aspects are important. For example, geoprofilers will pay attention to perpetrators' selection of body disposal sites or the zones in which they are comfortable in carrying out their crimes. Geographic profiling is useful not only in the search for serial violent offenders, but also in the search for property offenders, such as serial burglars.

Investigators have long used maps to help them identify “hot spots” of criminal activity or to follow the trail of crimes presumably committed by the same offender. Even agencies with few officers and resources may display a wall map with pushpins inserted in problem locations. Today, though, geographic profiling, particularly in urban areas, is sophisticated and computerized, as we will see in Chapter 4.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILING

Psychological profiling is most often used to identify and predict dangerous individuals in society—though it may also be used to identify positive traits. In most cases, the identity of the person being assessed and predicted is already known. There are two highly similar procedures for accomplishing the former task: **threat assessment** and **risk assessment**. Threat assessment is a process to determine the credibility and seriousness of a threat being carried out. In some cases, the identity of the person or persons making the threat may not be known. Risk assessment comes in many forms and is often used to evaluate “individuals who have violated social norms or displayed bizarre behavior, particularly when they appear menacing or unpredictable” (Hanson, 2009, p. 172). The goal is to assess the probability that someone will harm himself or herself or others. Both of these assessments are accomplished through various kinds of psychological measures, observations, and interviews. In most instances, the agency or parties requesting the threat or risk assessment report want more than a statistical statement about the chances of a damaging or violent act occurring. They usually desire an estimate of the potential consequences, and what can be done to reduce or mitigate those consequences (Hanson, 2009). David Canter, the British psychologist who is credited with developing the field of investigative psychology, and his colleague Laurence Alison (2000) point out that psychological profiling is basically an offshoot of psychological testing and assessment procedures.

SUSPECT-BASED PROFILING

Suspect-based profiling—some researchers prefer the term “prospective profiling”—refers to identifying the psychological or behavioral features of persons who may commit a particular crime, such as drug trafficking, school shooting, stalking, shoplifting, bombing, skyjacking, or terrorist activities. Whereas crime scene profiling examines features of the crime scene and tries to link a potential offender to that crime, suspect-based profiling is derived from the systematic collection of behavioral, personality, cognitive, and demographic data on previous offenders. Its basic principle “is to develop correlations between specific criminal activity and certain group-based traits in order to help the police identify potential suspects for investigation” (Harcourt, 2003, p. 109).

Suspect-based profiling is generally developed from statistical links between group membership defined by certain traits and the prevalence of criminal activities (Bourque et al., 2009; Harcourt, 2007). In other words, it assumes that the rate of criminality of the members of certain groups is proportionately higher than that found in the general population. Suspect-based profiling is largely actuarial in that it uses statistical rather than clinical methods to determine different levels of criminal offending associated with one or more groups.

The end product of suspect-based profiling should describe people from various offending groups. “For example, someone driving at a certain speed, at a certain time of day, in a certain type of car, and of a certain general appearance may fit the profile of a drug courier and be stopped for a search” (Homant & Kennedy, 1998, p. 325). “General appearance,” as used in the above quote, may refer to suspicious behavior, age, gender, or manner of dress, but it also has referred to race, religion, or ethnicity. Racial profiling, sometimes called race-based profiling and encompassing ethnicity as well as race, continues to be a major problem in modern society. In late 2011, the FBI arrested officers of the East Haven (Connecticut) Police Department for terrorizing residents of Hispanic neighborhoods, and the Justice Department announced its investigation of the department for wide-ranging illegal activities, including violations of constitutional rights, use of excessive force, and racial profiling. The recent move by the Transportation Safety Administration to train behavioral detection officers (BDOs) is another example of using suspect-based profiling. Although the use of BDOs has not been determined to be illegal, their training and the methods they employ merit continuing oversight.

EQUIVOCAL DEATH ANALYSIS

Equivocal death analysis, also called **reconstructive psychological evaluation**, is the reconstruction of the emotional life, behavioral patterns, and cognitive features of a deceased person. In this sense, it is a postmortem psychological analysis, and therefore is frequently referred to simply as a **psychological autopsy** (Brent, 1989; Ebert, 1987; Selkin, 1987). Most often, equivocal death analysis or the psychological autopsy is done to determine whether the death was a suicide, and if it was a suicide, the reasons why the person did it. Psychological autopsies may be performed

in insurance claims cases. At times, however, they are used to determine if the death was the result of homicide or foul play rather than suicide. Interestingly, many psychological autopsies today are conducted by military psychologists; this is because suicide rates among military personnel have been rising in recent years. The U.S. Army, for example, recently reported a record 32 suicides for July of 2011 (Jaffe, 2011). Although the military suicide rates are not disproportionate to those for the general population when controlling for age, race, and sex, they are cause for concern in the context of military life. In many if not all of these cases, psychological autopsies are conducted to assure that self-inflicted harm—and not homicide—was the cause of the death. We will discuss this issue in more detail in Chapter 8.

To some extent, the above five categories are overlapping, and one case can involve more than one form. Nevertheless, it is helpful to keep the categories conceptually distinct as we discuss them throughout the book, because they involve different techniques and research strategies. As you will learn in the book, effective profiling requires an integration of experience and judgment with theory, research, and professional consensus (including ethical standards). Ultimately, progress in the field demands well-executed empirical research.

Summary and Conclusions

Profiling—which is essentially looking for characteristics that “fit” a particular individual—is not a new enterprise. Scientifically based profiling, however, is of recent origin. Some scholars have traced profiling back at least 500 years, to an era when religious officials were given guidelines for hunting and eradicating witches. Examples of more modern profiling are found in literary works, particularly detective novels, as well as in accounts of actual law enforcement investigations.

We covered in some detail the profiling efforts of James Brussel, a psychiatrist who is sometimes considered the father of profiling. Brussel’s work on the Mad Bomber case is the first documented illustration of someone called in to assist law enforcement officers in their search for a serial offender. Brussel is often credited with helping investigators uncover the identity of the bomber, but evidence suggests he may not have been as influential as first believed. Police were already aware of many of the characteristics displayed by George Metesky, the bomber, and many of Brussel’s assertions either applied to many individuals or were so psychoanalytically oriented that they could not be proven. Furthermore, in recounting his own successes in his memoirs, Brussel likely experienced some hindsight bias.

Brussel consulted with police on a number of other cases, including the Boston Strangler case, with less impressive results. However, it is clear that Brussel deserves some credit for raising awareness that psychological characteristics of offenders were relevant to criminal investigations. Furthermore, he was called as a consultant when the FBI established its Behavioral Science Unit in the early 1970s.

In addition to providing a brief early history of profiling, we delineated five categories of criminal and behavioral profiling that will be covered in the book: crime scene

profiling, geographic profiling, psychological profiling, suspect-based profiling, and equivocal death analysis. It is important to stress that these are not the only terms that are encountered in the literature, and that “profilers” may be proficient in more than one of these categories. In addition, some profilers prefer to call themselves by other titles, such as behavioral analysts. As will become clear in the following two chapters, though, there is no universally accepted method of profiling, despite the fact that various programs are now available for the training of profilers or behavioral analysts. In addition, although certification is now available to those who complete these programs, they are not equivalent in their approach or in the extent to which they are based on research findings.

KEY CONCEPTS

Barnum statements	Geographic profiling	Reconstructive psychological evaluation
Behavioral analysis	Hindsight bias	Risk assessment
Boston Strangler case	Mad Bomber case	Suspect-based profiling
Crime scene profiling	Psychological autopsy	Threat assessment
Equivocal death analysis	Psychological profiling	