

Human Profiling: A Socio-Psycho Analysis of Humans

By Jenny Hwang

Jenny Hwang graduated from Lone Star College in Spring 2017 as an Honors College Chancellor's Fellow, earning an Honors Associates of Science degree, and has been offered a scholarship from Hofstra University to study neuroscience. Her essay was the product of an honors learning community, which combined English Composition I and General Psychology, and earned her a presentation opportunity at the Fall 2016 Undergraduate Research Day at LSC-North Harris. Her research has also taken her to the Great Plains Honors Council (GPHC) Conference in Beaumont, Texas, and the National Collegiate Undergraduate Research (NCUR) Conference in Memphis, Tennessee in Spring 2017 as a representative of Lone Star College. While at LSC-NH, Jenny has been active in the Honors College Student Organization, Psi-Beta Honors Society, as well as a member of Phi Theta Kappa. This past year, she was named Student Life's "Outstanding Leader of the Year." A graduate of Aldine High School, Jenny has worked hard to improve as a writer and a speaker, and she places great emphasis on communications skills as a key to her success as a student with many cross-disciplinary interests.

--English Professor Brian Kyser

Introduction

In the television show *Criminal Minds*, Dr. Spencer Reid and SSA (Supervisory Special Agent) Aaron Hotchner utilize criminal profiling to identify a suspect for "stabbing and burying a young boy to death by analyzing the gruesome crime scene photos" (Ryan 1). Criminal profiling is a tool used for criminal investigative analysts, or C.I analysts, to identify and apprehend subjects based on the way they commit the crime. Dr. Reid and SSA Aaron Hotchner analyze the weapons used, the brutal nature of the killing, and the psychopathic factors in the burial of the boy to gather information about what kind of person would commit such a crime. The components of the evidence are analyzed via criminal methodology and victimology, which are the study of the victim as well as the crime itself. Dr. Reid and SSA Hotchner also come up with a profile of the unknown subject, or unsub. Even though this is a television show, the practice of using criminal profiling to depict an unsub is used with C.I. analysts, in which the investigator "has to keep in mind that a criminal profile is essential" (Ebisike 50) to

understanding the nature of crimes. These analysts use behavioral analysis experience and attempt to step into the offender's mind. Without proper training related to constructing human profiles, however, individuals tend to make biased judgments of other individuals. Therefore, they create a subjective depiction rather than an objective view based on evidence. Racial profiling, for example, is defined by Jesper Ryberg as "any action undertaken for reasons of safety, security or public protection, that relies on stereotypes about race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, or place of origin, or a combination of these, rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to single out an individual for greater scrutiny or different treatment (Ryberg 80). Such subjective racial profiling is done intentionally and/or unintentionally in our daily life when we see people of a different race whom we don't know. A criminal investigative analyst's purposeful profiling assessment of criminals is vastly different from an average citizen's tendency to form subjective victimized judgments of innocent civilians whenever one studies the methods of building and utilizing the profile.

Racial Profiling

The motive driving an untrained citizen to create a racial profile often amounts to falsifying information when attempting to unmask an identity. Ensuring security becomes an aspect that is crucial when civilians aren't aware of their surroundings and are afraid. The profile constructed will lean towards determining whether someone is in danger or not. To figure that out, civilians feel compelled to make a decision on how to classify what makes a person dangerous. Often, assessing someone that is unfamiliar will be based on pulling the details from something that is familiar. When familiar information is obtained to fill out the "incomplete information, stereotypes fill that void" (Niiler 1) in the racial profile. The biased details derive from personal and societal views. Civilians have the mindset of looking out for themselves, so

they create a racial profile from those exact details. Perhaps this profile is assessed when a white civilian is behind an African-American man at a bank. The white civilian's perspective could be affected by a past experience with an African-American man that robbed a bank and shot hostages—either from a television show or actual experience-- which would lead him to assume all African-American males inside a bank could have the intention to rob it and shoot those around him. Even though the civilian doesn't know this individual, he might assume that "African-American males are dangerous from what the media describes" (Niiler 1). All of this information is applied towards the civilian's racial profile—because of fear—and that racist view then leads the white person to conclude that he should be careful around this man. Civilians of any race are more willing to racially profile a person of a different race in order to protect themselves because they "freely rely on culture, society and the media to tell us what we should be afraid of" (Niiler 2). Since such assumptions are typically false, however, they then "produce faulty judgment that can then lead to erroneous decisions and inappropriate behaviors" (Niiler 2). One could say, then, that racial profiling is employed for the right reasons, namely looking out for one's own safety but is often implemented in the wrong (i.e., inaccurate) way, leading to bigotry at best and violence at worst.

Criminal Profiling

A criminal profile of the unsub is constructed by the criminal investigative analyst in order to predict criminal behavior from examining evidence. There are four steps during the process of figuring out the perpetrator's behavior. The C.I. analyst first learns about how the crime was committed by taking into account the "level of planning" (O'Toole 44); next, the "level of control" (O'Toole 44) is looked at; then, the motive of the offense can be determined; finally,

the overall story between the victim and the perpetrator is understood by analyzing the "offender and victim risk levels" (O'Toole 44). When arriving at the scene of the crime, the C.I. analyst looks at the evidence in sight. If there is a lack of physical evidence, it would suggest that the perpetrator premeditated the crime and is cautious enough to not "leave a forensic trail, such as fingerprints, semen, hairs..." (O'Toole 44) and other evidence that could tie the him/her to the offense. However, if there is evidence lying around on the victim as well as the surrounding crime scene, the C.I. analyst will be able to determine that that offense was executed with no planning ahead. Then, the C.I. analyst examines the victim's body to see if there are any markings that could indicate the use of restraint against the victim by "bindings and/or ligatures" (O'Toole 44). If there's an excessive amount of impressions on the victim's body, this could raise a flag that the perpetrator is a "sexual sadist or a characteristic that involves bondage behavior" (O'Toole 44). The victimology could also determine how amateur the perpetrator is. For example, an amateur would apply only a small amount of force to the body, and might then kill the victim with a gun to the head rather than a knife slashed across the chest. Next, the C.I. analyst evaluates the "level of emotion" (O'Toole 44). For example, the victim could have extreme or fatal markings on the body and be led to a state of "overkill [which] demonstrates excessive trauma or injury beyond the necessary to cause death" (O'Toole 44). The victimology would also indicate the perpetrator had an angry and premeditated agenda towards the victim. The motive could also be a result of a verbal or physical altercation. This can be detected if there are defensive injuries/battery on the body. These markings indicate the possibility of a particular argument or fight that became deadly. Lastly, by knowing more about the victim, the C.I. analyst will have a greater understanding of the perpetrator. Taking into consideration the "victim's lifestyle, family, friends, habits, behaviors, and environment,"

(O'Toole 44) the C.I. analyst can evaluate if this victim is a high- or low-risk victim. If the victim is low-risk, then he would be an ordinary person with an ordinary lifestyle. Therefore, the risk of the victim being murdered is significantly low. This suggests that the victim and perpetrator knew each other. On the other hand, a high risk victim would be someone who is encountered in a dangerous job such as a "prostitute, drug-dealer, [or] hitchhiker" (O'Toole 44). Then, the risk level of the perpetrator is determined by asking "how much risk did the offender take in committing this crime?" (O'Toole 44). Depending on the level of risk, the C.I. analyst will also question "why did the perpetrator take this risk?" (O'Toole 44). The answer to knowing the motive behind the risk lies between two possibilities. The first mentions that the perpetrator specifically targeted the victim and the second suggests that the perpetrator needed to commit the crime to be "emotionally or psychologically satisfied" (O'Toole 44). Having all four steps carefully combed through, it makes the interpretation process of the crime less difficult. By analyzing the victim, the unsub's details from the crime, risk levels, and the overall story between the victim and offender, the criminal profile materializes into a form that can be used to solve crimes. The C.I. analyst is now able to "read all of the behavior and behavioral clusters present at the scene in order to understand the dynamics that took place there" (Ebisike 61). So, he/she can make behavioral interpretations of the perpetrator from the evidence presented. This will help "limit the suspect pool and structure investigative strategies" (Ebisike 70) when constructing the possibilities of who the perpetrator could be.

The CJ analyst becomes aware of "organized dichotomy" when connecting the crime from unsub to the victim in order to develop the criminal profile:

Organized crimes are premeditated and carefully planned, so little evidence is found at the scene. Organized criminals, according to the classification scheme, are

antisocial but know right from wrong, are not insane and show no remorse.

(Ebisike 15)

Based on the definition of the types of dichotomy, the methodology and victimology of the crime can depict the perpetrator's qualities. To show the difference between the two, one disorganized crime scene can serve as an example. This murder was unplanned, full of usable evidence, and involved a quick association with the identity of the perpetrator. In the 1998 double murder case of Gaetano and Maria Russo, the couple was found in their home. Multiple blunt force strikes to the head indicate that Gaetano was beaten to death without much thought. Likewise, the mutilated face of Maria Russo suggested the perpetrator repeatedly smashed the victim's face into the concrete. Actions such as these exemplify irrational and disorganized criminal behavior. "The actions of blunt trauma to the face and blitz attack are...commonly cited as indicative of the disorganized serial murderer" (Godwin 12). The brute force demonstrated in the killings of Gaetano and Maria led the C.I. analyst to conclude that the killer might be young and mentally ill. As it turned out, the offender of the crime was later revealed to be the "schizophrenic, 29- year-old son of the Russos"(Godwin 12). The murder wasn't premeditated due to the great amount of evidence left behind at the crime scene. This type of crime scene makes better material for a criminal profile because the disorganization of the crime allows the C.I. analyst to gather more evidence to apply towards the profile. Thus, a disorganized crime scene speaks more about the characteristics of the perpetrator, which can determine their behavior and identity.

A criminal profile of the individual who committed the crime can now be rendered by the criminal investigative analyst in order to solve the crime. He/she goes through a template of questions concerning the offender's behavior at four crime stages. The first stage is a precursor

and asks "What was the murder's plan before committing the crime?"; next, the analyst would question the method and manner by asking "What victimology and methodology did the offender choose for the crime?"; then, the third stage in the process is body disposal and the question is, "At what scenes did the murder and body disposal take place?"; and the final step is post offense behavior, which may be determined by the question, "Is the offender trying to insert themselves into the investigation in any means necessary?"

In the beginning, the C.I. analyst focuses on the motive of the offender and the evaluation of the victim—to determine if there is a connection between the victim and the perpetrator. However, the answer to the question could also determine that there was no relationship between the victim and perpetrator (uncovering no specific motive), which means the plan focused more on the methodology of the crime. Then, the analyst deciphers the comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the victim and the specific aspects of the crime scene. By studying the methodology and understanding the victimology, the motive of the offense then could be determined right away. These two components would be directly tied in the reason for committing the crime because it's the best way to show the analyst what the perpetrator intentionally wanted to do. If the perpetrator's plan is not clear, there would be no purpose in figuring out the aspects of the crime.

Next, the C.I. analyst learns about the areas that the crime took place and thus may be able to come up with a greater depiction of why the offender chose the specific scenes to commit the crime. Even if the scene is in a random place that has no connection with the victim or perpetrator, this could add significant meaning because it suggests that the perpetrator traveled a great distance to dispose of the body. It could be connected to hiding the victim far away to not be found, or it could be to hide the guilt behind the crime.

Finally, the analyst tries to find out if the unsub is trying to gain an insight of the investigation. If so, it would mean that the perpetrator cares more about the crime than the victims, which could be added to the profile. If the perpetrator isn't playing a role in the investigation, then more killings would continue at a rapid pace.

The answers to these following questions are essential to creating a profile—whose purpose is to allow the incriminating aspects to help determine the suspect of the crime. In the end, the analyst is trying to identify the background, back stories, behaviors, and personality of the perpetrator in order to serve justice within the investigation.

Conclusion

Profiling has two forms: racial profiling and criminal profiling, each with distinctive similarities and differences. Although both criminal and racial profiling construct a foundation for an identity, it's imperative to not confuse the two. The racial profile created is done with a conscious or unconscious mindset as individuals who use it as a defense mechanism based on fear, to ensure safety in unfamiliar surroundings. They then form biased or bigoted opinions of other civilians and based their action on them, with or without any real physical or legal damage; nonetheless, there is still a kind of damage done in the very roots of the profile. On the other hand, criminal profiling seeks to create a psychological assessment of the unsub to build a criminal profile, which then becomes a blueprint to locate the perpetrator. In the end, criminal profiling uses psychological and behavioral principles to achieve justice. Finally, a profile can either reveal one's fears and biases in regard to others, potentially leading to the commission of a crime—or it can provide a viable path for identifying the perpetrator of a crime after the fact.

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