

PRACTICE UPDATE

***The Name of the Rose* and Criminal Profiling: The Benefits of ViCAP and ViCLAS**

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Despite the continued growth in both the research and practice into criminal profiling, three major shortfalls continue to permeate the topic. The first is a lack of coherency in the field which has, as a consequence, led to increasingly discordant and contradictory theorems. In many respects this problem is connotative of the adage comparing apples with oranges. Likewise, the adage the elephant in the room describes the second major shortfall concerning a paucity of research testing the validity (i.e., accuracy) of espoused paradigms. Finally, the adage too many cooks spoil the broth describes the third major shortfall concerning the counterproductive popular interest surrounding the topic. These shortfalls when examined collectively appear to form a self-perpetuating cycle. The use of violent crime databases such as ViCAP and ViCLAS are suggested as potential mechanisms in arresting this cycle by rectifying these factors, which continue to stymie the cogent scientific development of criminal profiling.

KEYWORDS *criminal profiling, validity, criminal investigative analysis, investigative psychology, serial sexual murder, ViCLAS, ViCAP*

I had always believed logic was a universal weapon, and now I realized how its validity depended on the way it was employed.

The Name of the Rose
Umberto Eco (1983, p. 262)

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While the topic of criminal profiling enjoys considerable prominence among professional communities and the general public alike (e.g., Bumgarner, 2008; Helfgott, 2013; Kocsis, 2009; Shipley & Arrigo, 2012; Skeem, Douglas, & Lilienfeld, 2009), development of the technique over the past four decades has increasingly featured three major and somewhat interconnected shortfalls. This practice update offers some overdue illumination of these core problems which continue to plague the field and examines the pervasive impact they have upon both our conceptual understanding of criminal profiling as well as its continued development and practice. As it will subsequently become apparent, a cyclic pattern underpins these shortfalls which may explain their longevity. In this context, it is hoped that the present article will not only serve to create awareness of the problems hindering profiling but also provide suggestions concerning how these problems may be addressed in the future.

SHORTFALL ONE: COHERENCY *COMPARING APPLES WITH ORANGES*

What can be regarded as the most fundamental problem underlying criminal profiling is a lack of coherency as to what actually constitutes the topic and thus field in terms of both its practice and undertaken research. As a starting point in appreciating the scope of this amorphous disjuncture, it should be recognized that an issue as seemingly elementary as a universally accepted title for the technique does not exist (Kocsis, 2006a). The author adopts herein the term *criminal profiling* simply for colloquial expediency; however, the field associated with this topic features a veritable plethora of differing titles for what can loosely be regarded as the same concept (Kocsis, 2009, 2010). Compounding this circumstance even further is that there appears to be little consensus about what its functional parameters are (Egger, 1999; Palermo & Kocsis, 2005). For example, some appear to conceptualize it in a relatively narrow framework as an investigative technique optimally only applicable to police investigations of aberrant violent crimes (Ault & Reese, 1980; Kocsis, 2006a; Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988; Ressler, Douglas, Groth, & Burgess, 1980; Ressler & Shachtman, 1992) whereas others hold a broader, somewhat intermediary position, wherein it primarily remains an investigative device (with some forensic applications) but can be applied to a larger range of crimes (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 2013; van Zandt, 1994). At the other end of the spectrum is a more liberal conception, which appears to advocate the creation of a new academic subdiscipline featuring a potentially expansive range of applications (Palermo & Kocsis, 2005). As a consequence, only a very modest nucleus of conceptual agreement appears to exist surrounding the topic and what activities it encompasses (Kocsis, 2007).

Given this lack of uniformity it should come as no surprise that conundrums quickly arise when more advanced concepts concerning the overall conceptual parameters, development, and practice of the technique are subjected to scrutiny. Starting with the contextual framework of differing law enforcement agencies immediately raises the question of when the technique can be optimally used given the diversity of procedures not only encountered among inquisitorial and adversarial criminal justice systems (e.g., Dammer & Albanese, 2010; Montet, 2007; Reichel, 2005; Terrill, 2012; Zappala & Bosco, 2007) but also differing jurisdictions within the legal systems found in most nations (Lab & Das, 2002; Sullivan, Haberland, Schulz, & Rosen, 2005).

Thereafter, it also needs to be questioned what precisely is being performed and to what type of matters is it applied. In order to appreciate these nuances it should first be understood that whilst numerous process models have been advocated for the composition of a criminal profile (e.g., Dietz, 1985; Douglas, Ressler, Burgess, & Hartman, 1986; Hazelwood, 1995; Hazelwood, Ressler, Depue, & Douglas, 1995; Schlesinger, 2009), empirically grounded examination of the tangible functions practitioners actually perform in composing profiles is remarkably scarce (e.g., Kocsis, 2006a; Pinizzotto & Finkel, 1990; Ressler, Burgess, Depue, Douglas, & Hazelwood, 1985). Consequently, understanding what may be the functions for proficient practice, which can become prescribed parameters analogous to the conventions encountered in disciplines such as clinical psychiatry or psychology (e.g., Flet, 2014; Morrison, 2006; Shea, 1998; Zimmerman, 1995; Zuckerman, 1995), does not yet appear available.

Following on from this issue is the question of how the technique is applied. While most police agencies feature standard operating procedures for criminal investigations, the realities of how cases actually unfold seldom follow any universal formula. Accordingly, while the same form of crime may be under investigation (e.g., murder) each matter is likely to involve diverse factors, in terms of how criminal profiling may potentially assist, dependent upon the features of a particular case. Moreover, the types of information potentially conveyed in a profile can be quite eclectic featuring biographical, psychological, and geographical information (Rossmo, 2000). Finally, some consideration also needs to be had about how information from criminal profiling is optimally communicated in terms of its content, format, and quantity (e.g., Kocsis, 2006a).

Encompassing all of these points is the issue of what types of investigation criminal profiling can pragmatically offer assistance in. While various paradigms have been developed enumerating offender typologies and crime behavior patterns in the context of murder (e.g., Ressler, 1988; Ressler, Burgess, Douglas, Hartman, & D'Agostino, 1986), can these principles be

generalized to differing crime modalities such as rape? Moreover, what is the intrinsic range of applications surrounding these theorems? For example, to what extent can principles originally developed based upon the study of serial sexual murderers be applied to offenders who perpetrate serialized murders but evidently due to quite different drives (e.g., Albarus & Mack, 2012; Censer & Miller, 2010)? Alternatively, to what extent can concepts developed from the study of single murders that do not relate to underlying psychopathologies extend to the composition of a criminal profile related to the investigation of aberrant violent crimes such as serial sadistic sexual murders? Finally, some contemplation is needed regarding the extent that profiling can be applied given that some factors are known to impact upon the proficiency of theorems (Fritzon, Doley, & Hollows, 2014; van der Kemp & van Koppen, 2007; Warren et al., 1998).

When all of the aforementioned issues are considered together, it is apparent that consistency amongst these concepts is a pivotal first step before any attempt can be made to soundly advocate procedures for the practice of profiling. Instead, the field of criminal profiling is largely consumed with vagaries concerning these issues and in the absence of coherently established parameters espoused dictates claiming to *professionalize profiling* are often somewhat misguided ventures that can only validly offer rudimentary suggestions beyond the discrete framework in which they were conceived. Thus, as criminal justice systems, police agencies, and criminological factors differ between, for example, the United Kingdom and the United States (let alone other nations such as Italy, Egypt, China, Argentina, or Russia), it should be evident that the coherency of procedures conceived in the United Kingdom will be of little relevance outside its own discrete jurisdiction.

The shortfall of coherency has, thus far, been canvassed from the perspective of procedures associated with the practice of criminal profiling. Unfortunately, analogous issues concerning coherency extend, and arguably are far more problematic, when considered within the framework of research and the theoretical development of criminal profiling. In this context, what is perhaps the most detrimental phenomenon is the extrapolation of conclusions from sampled data. Topics that are the subject of scientific research featuring forms of data that are inherently rare, logistically difficult, or expensive to obtain are not unique obstacles only encountered within the field of criminal profiling. In this respect, the history of scientific endeavor has a well-established tradition concerning the use of proxy data sources for experimentation. However, justifications for such substitutions invariably feature very cogent rationales validating the suitability of utilized proxies. Unfortunately, what appears to be the problem with research endeavors into criminal profiling is that, in order to overcome difficulties in obtaining

suitable data, researchers appear to utilize proxies where outright invalidity or significant corruption of the studied construct seems evident.¹

It is important to appreciate that the manifestation of this problem is not always immediately apparent as the differences in the underlying constructs inherent to the utilized data can, at times, be quite subtle. Additionally, the employed research methodology and statistical analyses in many studies can initially seem compelling (see Kocsis, 2010, 2013; Kocsis, Middledorp, & Karpin, 2008). Ironically, the manifestation of this problem often only begins to become apparent when analyzed findings are extrapolated as arguments toward concepts which the researchers evidently *wished* to examine as opposed to what they did, in fact, examine. As an example of this circumstance, Kocsis and Palermo (2015) illustrated that in view of the diverse and complex milieu of psychopathologies and mechanisms typically operating within serial sadistic sexual murderers, there is little scope for valid extrapolation of principles related to the profiling of such aberrant violent crimes that can be drawn from research examining commercial robberies which are unlikely to share the same underlying mechanisms. Alternatively, even when data appears to be derived from the same crime modality it does not necessarily mean that the inherent constructs are sound for the purpose of extrapolation and theory development. For example, the validity of principles derived from the analysis of single-offense murders such as in domestic violence is also likely to be limited when generalized to the dynamics operating within the perpetration of serial sadistic sexual murders. Although these examples appear to pose seemingly blatant incompatibilities, extrapolations of this nature can be found throughout the published literature over the decades concerning criminal profiling.

Possibly the most insidious manifestations of these problems ironically tend to arise when attempts are made to undertake direct replications of research without the use of any proxy data source whatsoever. One example of this pertains to the classic study by Ressler et al. (1986, 1988) examining sexual murderers. From this research the organized/disorganized behavior dichotomy was developed which represents a cornerstone principle to the profiling of aberrant violent crimes by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Subsequent research by Kocsis (2006a) also examined aberrant sexual murders and found support for Ressler et al.'s (1986, 1988) work concerning the organized/disorganized dichotomy albeit elaborated from its original conception as a categorical taxonomy into a conceptual continuum of graduations in behavioral sophistication. However, another published study produced by different authors challenged Ressler et al.'s

¹ This is stated within the conceptual framework adopted in this article of criminal profiling representing an investigative tool optimally applicable to assisting with the investigation of aberrant violent crimes (Ault & Reese, 1980). The prevalence of these crimes is rare in most societies relative to the range of crimes routinely perpetrated and investigated by law enforcement agencies.

work but was itself compromised as its criticisms were not derived from a validly formulated analysis of *sexual murderers*, but instead a sample of *serial killers*, a term reflective of a highly nebulous and eclectic construct in terms of offenders/crimes feasibly included under such a rubric (e.g., Hickey, 2013). Accordingly, the study is one arguably rendered void *ab initio* as it fails to examine genuinely congruent data akin to that analyzed by Ressler et al. (1986, 1988) and from which the organized/disorganized dichotomy was developed.

In conclusion, due to this overarching shortfall of coherency, much of the published literature and advocated practices over the past decades are largely artifacts of the differing contextual frameworks in which they were conceived. In this respect, the topic of criminal profiling is in essence beset with problems which, in the vernacular of research methodology, are fundamentally related to construct validity. As a consequence, many of the apparent controversies and contested paradigms in the field are not indicative of genuinely cogent debate but instead products of unsound generalizations and extrapolation (Kocsis & Palermo, 2015). Put simply, many of the supposedly discordant theorems and disagreements surrounding the topic are artificial in basis and are simply attributable to what in more colloquial parlance is commonly referred to as *comparing apples with oranges*.

SHORTFALL TWO: ACCURACY *THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM*

In early descriptions of criminal profiling various authors indicated that the technique was in its infancy (Rossi, 1982; Vorpapel, 1982) yet paradoxically this nascent characterization appears to have persisted for decades. In light of the seemingly glacial rate of development, Oleson (1996) facetiously commented that it was long past time that criminal profiling grew up. Progress surrounding criminal profiling techniques can arguably be observed over time (e.g., Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 2006, 2013; Hazelwood & Burgess, 1995, 2008; Kocsis, 2006a; Schlesinger, 2008, 2009; Schlesinger, Kassen, Mesa, & Pinizzotto, 2010). Despite such endeavors, the topic nonetheless continues to suffer from one irreconcilably profound deficit concerning direct scientific examination of its accuracy and thus validity.

A succinct explanation that adequately accounts for this paucity is not simple, but it appears that this circumstance is the result of interrelated factors sourced in a number of methodological difficulties in undertaking such research as well as the vested interests of scholars and practitioners associated with the topic (Britton, 1997; Kocsis, 2006b; Kocsis et al., 2008). What does, however, seem plainly apparent is that this paucity of scientific research attesting to the validity of criminal profiling represents, in colloquial parlance, the awkward *elephant in the room* issue for the entire field.

The magnitude of this paucity is best understood via analogy with the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry. In these disciplines the development and application of new psychotherapies routinely occur in conjunction with clinical trials to test the effectiveness of any treatment regimen and such research is largely *de rigueur*. Indeed, in contemporary practice, the formulation, progress, and wider acceptance of any treatment method typically does not even begin to occur without such evidence. Accordingly, when the contemporary usage of criminal profiling² is traced back to the 1970s, it is something of an enigma how it has continued when there exist a comparatively meager number of original, data-driven, scientifically grounded studies appropriately testing its validity (see Kocsis, 2006a).

In order to appreciate the scope of this shortfall, it is crucial to understand what the available scientific evidence is, what it tells us, and more importantly, what the limitations of this evidence are and thus what remains to be understood. The answers to the first two limbs of this conundrum are summarized in Kocsis (2013) which indicates that, while modest in volume, robust scientific evidence directly attesting to the validity (i.e., accuracy) of criminal profiling is now available. However, as foreshadowed, what is arguably of far more importance is an appreciation of the boundaries of these findings. The short answer is that this evidence only pertains to the concept of criminal profiling in a generic capacity. Consequently, what is absent is specific analysis concerning the relative efficacy of differing methodological approaches to criminal profiling (Kocsis, 2007). Transposing this situation into the previous analogy is akin to the early historical development of psychiatry and the finding of scientifically grounded evidence supporting the use of a new technique loosely referred to as *psychotherapy* as a viable method for the treatment of individuals suffering from a mental illness (Stone, 1998). However, while the findings supported the use of psychotherapy as a viable treatment method, the research at that time had not yet progressed to examine the efficacy of what particular disorders the differing forms of psychotherapy might optimally remedy.

This circumstance has a number of analogous implications for the field of criminal profiling. First, contrary to promulgated claims, there does not currently exist any scientifically robust evidence capable of demonstrating the superiority or inferiority of any approach to criminal profiling over any other³ (see Kocsis, 2013). Second, despite the evidence supporting the validity of criminal profiling, reliance on this research to substantiate its use in some forensic capacity such as expert witness testimony should still be treated with caution, as it is unclear to what extent this research will satisfy

² Refer to footnote 1.

³ Although limited, the only approach to criminal profiling that can be commended for attempting to examine in a scientific capacity the validity of its methods is, to the author's knowledge, the work by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (e.g., Pinizzotto & Finkel, 1990).

relevant legal standards—that is, whether this generic support for criminal profiling can, for example, be generalized to the expertise of every potential expert witness and their particular methods. Thirdly, there is no legitimate framework, based upon scientific research demonstrating validity, for regulating the practice of individuals who might engage in criminal profiling.⁴ In other words, as there is a paucity of robust evidence demonstrating the efficacy of any particular methodological approach to criminal profiling over any other, there are no valid criteria to delineate what works and what doesn't. This is not to suggest that other cogent reasons may not exist for the creation of registers of practitioners who may provide some form of service based upon their possession of desirable attributes such as educational qualifications, insurances, or a suitable history of professional service or consultancy with law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies. However, any societies or regulatory bodies that currently sanction particular methodologies to criminal profiling⁵ while discounting others will not be sourced in independent, scientifically grounded evidence demonstrating the validity of their advocated doctrines for practice.

SHORTFALL THREE: POPULARITY *TOO MANY COOKS SPOIL THE BROTH*

Possibly the most extraordinary aspect surrounding the topic of criminal profiling is the popular interest it attracts. For example, Herndon (2007) provides a systematic analysis of the unparalleled number of public media depictions concerning criminal profiling. Despite the existence of far more venerated law enforcement tools such as fingerprinting (James & Nordby, 2009), no other investigative device even remotely rivals the amount of media coverage expended on criminal profiling. Perhaps as a result of these media portrayals the concept of criminal profiling unsurprisingly dominates student perceptions concerning the disciplinary parameters of forensic psychology and is often cited as the reason why qualifications are pursued (Arrigo & Shipley, 2004; Shipley & Arrigo, 2012). Indeed, enthusiasm by academics and professionals alike to provide media commentary and publicly profile offenders of unresolved crimes also appears to be so prevalent that warnings have been issued to law enforcement agencies concerning the tendency of such individuals who may lack suitable expertise (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008).

⁴ Refer to footnote 1.

⁵ Refer to footnote 1.

Possibly the most perplexing facet of this popularity arises in the anomalous circumstances it seems to foster in the traditionally conservative realm of academia. In this sense, it is difficult to conceive of any other field of scholarship that features such a disproportionate amount of literature generated on a topic that is arguably rare,⁶ especially when the frequency of its use is considered relative to the gamut of investigative mechanisms that law enforcement routinely utilizes (Ault & Reese, 1980; Geberth, 1996; Kocsis & Palermo, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2005). Even more bizarre is the occurrence of seemingly authoritative commentaries on the topic by authors who indicate that they have no involvement in the provision of profiling advice (see Kocsis, 2010, p. 231–232). The harm from this situation is twofold: in not only the initial circulation of errant literature that serves to misinform the public, but thereafter the requisite expenditure of other authors' resources in having to clarify promulgated misconceptions (e.g., Dern, Dern, Horn, & Horn, 2009; Douglas, 2007; Kocsis, 2006b, 2010, 2013; Kocsis et al., 2008). The overall outcome of this counterproductive circumstance has led a number of scholars to note that appraising the academic literature in the area is, in metaphor, an exercise in *separating the wheat from the chaff* (e.g., Martell, 2010; Slovenko, 2005).

It needs to be clearly noted that the aforementioned should not, in any capacity, be construed as arguments advocating for the imposition of restrictions upon intellectual endeavors such as academic freedom. What is, however, being highlighted is the detriment to the scientific development of criminal profiling that increasingly seems evident from these factors. That is, the apparent popularity surrounding criminal profiling appears to foster a disequilibrium and overabundance of feasible contributors to an arguably small area. As such, this situation is connotative of the adage *too many cooks spoil the broth*.

Possibly the most deleterious artifact of this popularity is a phenomenon that has been referred to as the *nomenclature illusion* which describes the “*arguably unwarranted creation of terminology and differences that can serve as mechanisms for generating artificial distinctions that may, in turn, influence perceptions of merit*” (Kocsis, 2010, p. 232). Ironically, what may be perceived as an inconsequential semantic practice can, in fact, lead to dramatic repercussions. One example arises within the framework in which criminal profiling is portrayed. The study by Torres, Boccancini, and Miller (2006) demonstrated that perceptions of the merits of criminal profiling were easily manipulated when the technique was simply described with a different title. Thus, while the underlying description of the technique remained exactly the same, a simple two-word change from *criminal profiling* to *criminal investigative analysis* resulted in greater perceptions of the merits of the

⁶ Refer to footnote 1.

latter. Likewise, Kocsis (2010) highlighted that the invention of the title *investigative psychology* appeared to lack cogent justification as the constituent topics suggested to comprise this newly entitled subdiscipline were already thoroughly encapsulated in previously established labels such as *forensic psychology* or *criminal psychology* (e.g., Arrigo & Shipley, 2004; Bull et al., 2006; Howitt, 2002; Kocsis, 2009; Presetsky, 1986; Toch, 2001; Wrightsman, 2001). Consequently, other than acting as a moniker for research activities associated with one school of thought related to criminal profiling, there seemed to be little basis for such a label. Nonetheless, following the tenets of the nomenclature illusion, the creation of this terminology fosters perceived distinctions between *criminal profiling* and *investigative psychology* and thus perceptions of its differing merit.

Unfortunately, far more insidious manifestations of the nomenclature illusion can arise through the creation of new terminology and constructs that are juxtaposed with previous research based upon differing preexisting terminology and constructs. In explaining the problems inherent to this circumstance, a brief examination is necessary to consider what constitutes aberrant violent crime and thus data used in the course of such research. As comprehensively illustrated through the work of Hickey (2013), the conceptualization of what constitutes *serial murder* is a multifaceted and quite diverse phenomenon. As one case in point, *serial murder* and *sexual murder* can reflect quite different constructs. Consequently, crimes can occur that are representative of serial murder which do not involve an identifiable sexual dimension. Conversely, sexual murders can occur that do not involve a serial dimension to their repeated perpetration. Moreover, as explained by Schlesinger (2004), the motivational dynamics of such crimes are not necessarily readily apparent and interpretable. Thus, some sexual murders are not perpetrated due to an overt sexual motive and some sexual murders are not manifestly sexual in their evident perpetration. Such principles become even more complicated when considering the nuances surrounding what constitutes serial rape and thus the differentiation of crimes committed by individuals driven by the operation of underlying psychopathologies, fetishes, and/or fantasy mechanisms in comparison to individuals who over their life history possess a criminal record featuring multiple sexual assault charges (Kocsis & Palermo, 2015). Due to such complexities, the conceptualization of aberrant violent crimes is itself a topic subject to considerable scholarly scrutiny and discourse (e.g., Arrigo & Purcell, 2001; Egger, 1984, 1998; Giannangelo, 1996; Hickey, 2013; Kocsis, 2006a; McClellan, 2008; Prentky et al., 1989; Proulx et al., 2007; Purcell & Arrigo, 2006; Schlesinger, 2004).

With these factors in mind, the adopted conceptualization as to what constitutes serial murder as opposed to sexual murder actually reflect pivotal issues as they inform the sample parameters for any undertaken study. As a

consequence, a veritable quagmire immediately arises whenever new terminology is posited such as, for example, *male stranger sex offenders who have committed multiple sexual offences*, as there often appears to be little cogent framework as to how a study based on such terminology reconciles with previous studies utilizing preexisting terminology such as *serial sexually sadistic rapist* (e.g., Hazelwood & Burgess, 1995). The real conundrum comes to the fore when contradictory findings arise between studies and thereafter the pivotal question is whether any discordance is actually attributable to the newly conceived terminology. That is, whether the differing research findings are reflective of the differing terminology (i.e., constructs and thus sampled offenders) which are being juxtaposed with previous research that has possibly used quite different definitions, constructs and thus sampled offenders. Essentially, these dilemmas yet again relate back to what in colloquial parlance is simply known as *comparing apples with oranges*.

NEVER-ENDING SHORTFALLS: A SELF-PERPETUATING CYCLE

When the three aforementioned shortfalls (labeled herein simply as *coherency*, *accuracy*, and *popularity*) are holistically considered, they broadly integrate together into what can be conceived of as a self-perpetuating cycle which can account for their continued manifestation. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the shortfalls and presents the cyclic nature of their interaction.

The shortfall of *popularity* is delineated in Figure 1 by the circle marked with the letter A, and represents the inordinate interest in criminal profiling, which, as previously explained, fosters a disproportionate number of feasible participants in the field relative to the modest quantum of resources⁷ and cases that may in some pragmatic capacity benefit from criminal profiling.

Flowing on from these issues is the shortfall of *coherency*, which is delineated in Figure 1 by two circles, both of which are labelled with the letter B. While illustrated via the use of two circles, the factors arising from coherency function in tandem and thus their depiction as two separate circles in Figure 1 is presented as a means of separating and thus better illustrating the underlying mechanisms that are in operation. In this context, the first circle pertaining to *coherency* encapsulates the lack of uniform definitions and constructs. This circumstance acts as a bridging mechanism with respect to the previous issues pertaining to *popularity* by facilitating a way for the disproportionate volume of participants to engage in a comparatively small area. This, in turn, links into the second circle pertaining to *coherency*,

⁷ This disequilibrium also seems evident with respect to data that is relevant to research in the area (Kocsis, 2010).

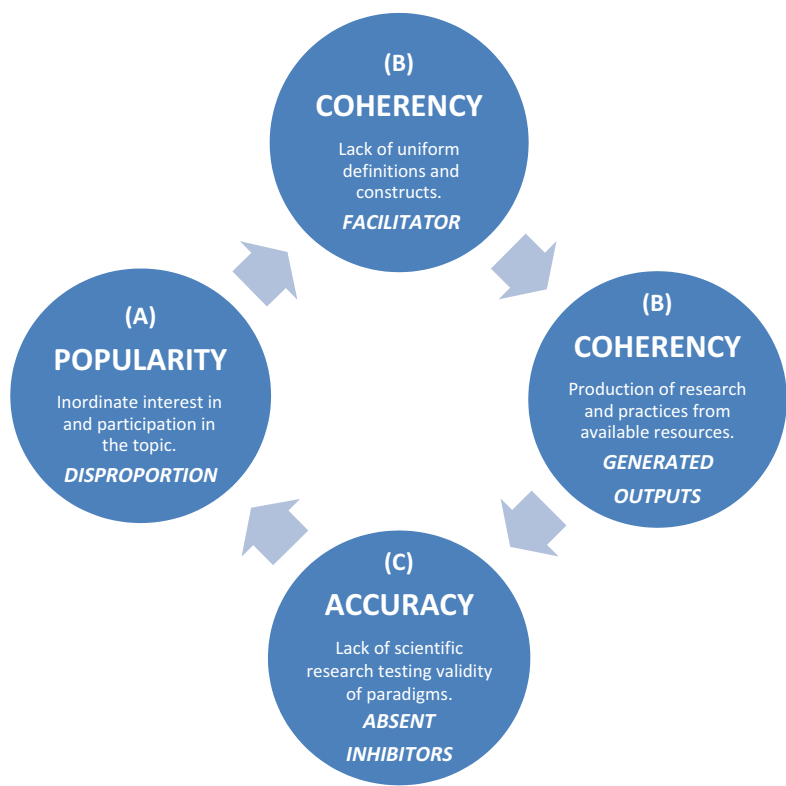


FIGURE 1 Self-perpetuating cycle of shortfalls to criminal profiling.

wherein generated outputs in terms of both research and advocated practices pertaining to criminal profiling are ostensibly produced in a somewhat idiosyncratic manner dependent upon the definitions and constructs adopted by the differing participants but circumscribed by the resources available to them.⁸

Concluding the conceptual cycle is the shortfall of *accuracy*, denoted by the circle marked with the letter C which encompasses the paucity of scientifically grounded research directly testing and thus demonstrating validity in the variously espoused paradigms for criminal profiling.⁹ Unlike the previous shortfalls, this circumstance does not so much reflect a contributory factor but rather the absence of an inhibiting mechanism that would otherwise typically be operating. Normally, a readily available presence of, for example, clinical trials (or research of such ilk) would provide evidence pertaining to the validity of variously espoused paradigms. Accordingly, there would be an

⁸ As previously explained, such circumstances reflect the contextual framework of the nomenclature illusion and the invention and use of terminology.

⁹ Refer to footnote 1.

environment of vetting that would, in effect, naturally filter the progression of generated outputs based upon their demonstrated validity. Instead, very little research of this nature occurs; and as a consequence, the progression of generated outputs continues in a largely unfettered manner. Finally, as little work testing and thus curtailing the production of generated outputs occurs, the field continues to expand in a somewhat amorphous fashion that only serves to further feed interest and thus popularity in the topic wherein the cycle begins to repeat and self-perpetuate.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION: THE BENEFITS OF ViCAP AND ViCLAS

In developing a solution to these problems with criminal profiling a genuinely effective remedy will be one that is multifaceted in nature and will exert some form of concurrent effect on all of the identified shortfalls. What is required is the continued development of criminal profiling in close collaboration with criminal justice organizations that have at their disposal appropriate resources pertaining to aberrant violent crimes in conjunction with suitably skilled scientists.¹⁰ As stated at the outset, the fundamental shortfall of criminal profiling pertains to its coherency. Consequently, an effectual long-term solution lies in attenuating on this shortfall by first focusing the topic into appropriate facets of research and practice. This is in contrast to what currently exists in the field, where all manner of definitions, concepts, and conceptualizations are conflated, and generated outputs in the form of research and espoused doctrines are largely customized to the resources that happen to be available to the varying contributors.¹¹ Ideally, a filtering system should evolve curtailing the promulgation of material concerning, for example, robberies and burglaries as well as offenses of rape and murder, which are not causatively related to underlying psychopathological mechanisms but are all nonetheless generalized and extrapolated as pertinent to the original conception of criminal profiling as a technique to assist with the investigation of aberrant violent crimes.¹² As a flow-on effect of this

¹⁰ This statement should not be construed as only implying collaborations with academia. The central message is to foster productive partnerships between law enforcement and qualified scholars. Accordingly, there is nothing to preclude criminal justice organizations from employing suitable scientists themselves for such endeavors, collaborating with well-qualified individuals who possess extensive forensic clinical experience typically found in correctional and forensic psychiatric institutions or other professionals in the private sector.

¹¹ Refer to footnote 1.

¹² It should be noted that there is limited scope for the use of proxy data (such as burglaries), provided either the boundaries of their relevance to the profiling of aberrant violent crimes are explicitly acknowledged or they are used in a quasi-control capacity to highlight comparisons and inapplicability of theorems (see Kocsis, 2006a). The pivotal issue is that such data should only reflect a minor proportion of research endeavors in the field as opposed to their seemingly routine use as a directly applicable substitute for aberrant violent crimes (see Kocsis, 2010).

endeavor, an expansion of research in other key areas such as examining validity in criminal profiling should also gradually increase. The culmination of these various factors will thereafter slowly exert a curbing influence on the problems associated with popularity, since the overall volume of literature should gradually decrease as the parameters of the field become more uniformly defined and thus constrained. This should over time naturally restore equilibrium in the number of contributors participating in the field.

Arguably, anecdotal evidence demonstrating the merit of this proposed solution already exists. The resources for its implementation are likewise already in existence and can be found in many criminal justice agencies throughout the world. Numerous police organizations maintain databases specifically developed for the collection of information concerning the perpetration of aberrant violent crimes. Possibly the two most well known examples are the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) used in the United States and the Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS) used in Canada and a number of other countries. These tracking systems capture vital information which can provide an ideal opportunity for close collaborations between criminal justice agencies with suitable scientists for the purpose of developing criminal profiling.¹³

To better explain the underlying themes of this proposed solution the logistical activities involved in producing some of the research chronicled in Kocsis (2006a) is briefly canvassed by way of example. Following the provision of a federal government award for a university partnership with an Australian police agency, numerous collaborative research projects were undertaken. These activities involved collaboration with criminal justice and emergency service organizations, which furnished resources such as data, with suitably skilled scientists who undertook the research. The data for this research was primarily facilitated through the assistance of an Australian police agency tasked with the maintenance of the ViCLAS. Thus, the system served as a search mechanism wherein the large volume of recorded violent crime incidents could be efficiently appraised and thus filtered for the purpose of identifying specific cases suitable for the research. Thereafter, police case materials as well as ViCLAS forms and any other available resources pertinent to the identified offences were retrieved from various archives and thus these materials formed the data for the undertaken research. As a consequence of this entire process, the generated outputs were not constrained by the availability of resources which may otherwise have been the case had, for example, the research been undertaken without the partnership of a criminal justice agency or with a criminal justice agency which did not

¹³ Other suitable databases beyond ViCAP and ViCLAS have likewise been used to varying degrees (e.g., Godwin, 2000; Keppel & Walter, 1999). Moreover, the underlying theme in accessing appropriate resources can also be achieved via criminal justice agencies that hold some specialized involvement with the response to aberrant violent crimes (e.g., Schlesinger et al., 2010).

have at its disposal appropriate resources suitable for undertaking research, specifically in the area of aberrant violent crimes. Finally, as an additional artifact of this collaborative partnership in developing profiling theorems, a number of ancillary projects were also undertaken. These involved, for example, conducting scientifically grounded experiments related to testing the validity of criminal profiling.

The research activities chronicled in Kocsis (2006a) were undertaken independently of others in the area such as the American FBI Behavioral Science Unit (e.g., Ressler et al., 1988). Despite these respective endeavors occurring at differing corners of the globe, both nonetheless feature discernible coherency with each other in the examined constructs pertaining to aberrant violent crimes and as a result congruent themes emerged suited to theory development. As previously mentioned, one example pertains to the conceptualization of the organized/disorganized dichotomy from a categorical concept into a continuum of gradients in behavioral sophistication. Likewise, Kocsis (2006a) was also able to undertake research analogous to that of Pinizzotto and Finkel (1990) and thus further contribute to scientific theory development exploring the validity of criminal profiling.

The coherency between these ventures is arguably due to the logistical parameters they both shared involving collaborative partnerships between criminal justice agencies and appropriate scientists. Additionally, both ventures were specifically orientated upon the examination of aberrant violent crimes for the purpose of developing theorems relevant to the profiling of such crimes. Unfortunately, many of the shortfalls outlined herein arguably arise from circumstances where logistical parameters preclude access by researchers to appropriate data, which in turn results in discordant research in the field being pursued (Kocsis 2006b, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Umberto Eco's sublime novel *The Name of the Rose* is set in 14th-century Italy. The chief protagonist is Brother William of Baskerville, a Franciscan friar renowned for his acute powers of logic and reason. Accompanied by his young ward, the novice monk Adso of Melk (the narrator of the story), William travels to a Benedictine monastery to participate in a theological debate. However, upon arriving he is asked by the monastery's abbot to investigate the mysterious death of another monk at the abbey just prior to their arrival. In the following days, as William and Adso investigate this death, other monks are successively found dead in gruesome circumstances. The inhabitants of the abbey are gripped by fear that the deaths are attributable to the supernatural, but William deciphers the mysteries of the abbey and discovers that the deaths are actually the result of mortal connivances.

Akin to most crime novels, Umberto Eco's story seemingly follows the classic literary formula of the perspicuous detective who connects the clues leading to the discovery of the culprit. However, the brilliance of Eco's novel comes to the fore from the twist in plot at the story's conclusion wherein it deviates markedly from traditional clichés. Although William astutely solves many mysteries at the abbey, his arrival at the penultimate finale is actually accomplished via a coincidental mistake. Thus, William's acumen upon which he prides himself ultimately falls short. The subtlety to his failing is not appreciated by Adso, who still marvels and recounts his mentor's many amazing feats of deduction. To explain this fiasco William states:

I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand was the relation among signs. I arrived at [name withheld] through an apocalyptic pattern that seemed to underlie all the crimes, and yet it was accidental I arrived at [name withheld] pursuing the plan of a perverse and rational mind, and there was no plan, or rather . . . a sequence of causes, and concauses, and of causes contradicting one another, which proceeded on their own, creating relations that did not stem from any plan. Where is all my wisdom, then? I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe. (Eco, 1983, p. 492)

One striking theme underpinning *The Name of the Rose* is the ideological rivalry that exists amongst the various characters and their singular investment in the superiority of their beliefs. Ironically, William's own avocation to Roger Bacon's philosophies is one such example that, despite its cogent framework, can still prove fallible. In many respects, these themes in *The Name of the Rose* are merely fictional depictions of the psychological phenomenon referred to as the *confirmation bias*: the human proclivity to focus upon favorable evidence that is supportive of an individual's beliefs and interests while simultaneously being readily dismissive of material to the contrary (Nickerson, 1998). Beyond its abstract conception, the confirmation bias has been argued to fundamentally underpin numerous facets of human existence and was eloquently described by Leo Tolstoy:

I know that most men—not only those considered clever, but even those who are very clever and capable of understanding most difficult scientific, mathematical, or philosophic problems—can seldom discern even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as obliges them to admit the falsity of conclusions they have formed, perhaps with much difficulty—conclusions of which they are proud, which they have taught to others, and on which they have built their lives. (Tolstoy, 1930, p. 143)

It is often stated that the truth is stranger than fiction, and in this context the parallels between *The Name of the Rose* and the various shortfalls encompassing criminal profiling outlined in this article warrant examination. Despite the growth in the field of criminal profiling, the problems identified in this manuscript have not dissipated over time but instead have continued unchecked and in some respects have worsened. Thus, somewhat akin to William of Baskerville, the field of criminal profiling may feature contributors who, despite their credentials, may suffer from myopia concerning their shortcomings (Dern et al., 2009; Kocsis, 2010; Kocsis et al., 2008; Kuhn, 1962). Until contributors in the field can robustly demonstrate that their endeavors are not subject to the shortfalls canvassed in this article, then their existence must, to some extent, be contemplated. Unfortunately, when such an examination is undertaken with a critically dispassionate perspective, the implications for the field are not encouraging and suggest that much academic literature published over the decades may hold little value when transitioned into the pragmatic context of lending proficient assistance to the investigation of aberrant violent crimes (White, Lester, Gentile, & Rosenbleeth, 2011).

Regrettably, the unpalatable solution to the problems outlined herein will only come about when contributors are prepared to undertake the difficult introspective task of examining inherent fallibilities. Thus, it can be seen in allegory that, while there may be truth in signs, the relationship (if any) between them may not be consistent with espoused theorems. Stubbornly pursuing a semblance of order that may be congruent with espoused theorems should be discouraged. Although clearly not envisioned with these shortfalls of criminal profiling in mind, analogous sentiments are poignantly illustrated in *The Name of the Rose* when William comes to the realisation that “*the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth*” (Eco, 1983, p. 491).

DEDICATION

This article is dedicated in honor of retired American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Agent Robert K. Ressler, pioneer of the FBI Behavioral Sciences and criminal profiling programs. Your work brought justice to the families of innumerable victims, for which we are all forever in your debt. Akin to the *old* Adso of Melk remembering William, you will always live on in my memories and be remembered as a fundamentally good man.

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