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International Methods of Offender Profile Construction, Standardization, and Effective Criminal Investigative Processes

Savannah Peoples
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Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Savannah Peoples

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Walden University
2024

Abstract

International Methods of Offender Profile Construction, Standardization, and Effective
Criminal Investigative Processes

by

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BA, Mount Royal University, 2013

MSc, Middlesex University London, 2017

MPhil, Walden University, 2022

BA, De Montfort University, 2023

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2024

Abstract

Offender profiling is a tool used within criminal investigations to infer offender characteristics according to evidence collected from a crime scene. The practice of offender profiling has been applied since the Roman era, empirically developed, and recently popularized in media depictions. Existing studies demonstrate that there is a lack of peer reviewed literature that examines current methods of criminal profile construction, opportunities for standardization, and effective criminal investigative processes. Motivation for this study came after reviewing research that revealed high rates of serious and violent international serial offending, noted as a major challenge for law enforcement agencies, and a significant social problem causing human suffering. The purpose of this qualitative study was thus to improve the understanding of international methods of criminal profile construction, explore opportunities for standardization, and identify any contributions to effective criminal investigations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and interpretative phenomenological analysis applied as the methodology, to study the lived experiences of 10 criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and or North America. Behavioral consistency, the homology assumption, and the profiling equation were frameworks referenced for understanding profile formulations. The results of this study indicate that there are a range of approaches to profiling implemented internationally, of which support effective criminal investigative processes, albeit there is a lack of practice standardization. Some social change implications of this study may include, an improved multiagency understanding of criminal profile methods and reasoning, of which facilitate increased crime linkage.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the divine forces that have guided my life and to my parents, it is with deep affection and eternal gratitude for their support that I was able to complete this research. To my parents, Debra and Gary Helmer, and Lloyd Peoples, your love, sacrifice, and faith in my abilities has given me the confidence and motivation to pursue my dreams. I am forever grateful for the values instilled in me and for your infinite love and encouragement. The unwavering love, care, and understanding of my siblings and those dear to me, anchored me throughout this journey. Regardless of the continents between us, my family and loved ones have been there for me, ready and willing to offer support. To this end I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my closest confidants during this process, Kayode Adeniji, Charmaine Richardson-Buckle, and Rachel Richardson-Buckle, who were my support system and stood with me through the peaks and valleys of this academic endeavor. I would also like to thank my fellow doctoral colleagues, in particular Dr Victor Mosconi, your camaraderie and support made the challenges of my research more manageable. These meaningful relationships helped me to stay focused, afforded me perspective, and provided balance in my life. The contributions of loved ones have left an indelible imprint on me, for which I am profoundly grateful to all for being a part of this important chapter in my life. For future generations of my family who I have yet to meet, but will love deeply, this was for you. I can only hope that this piece of work highlights the value of academic research and information sharing, as it has been through my personal and professional experiences that I have learned, that no one person is a lighthouse unto themselves, we all need each other.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the study	1
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	3
Problem Statement.....	5
Literature Overview	6
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions.....	11
Theoretical Foundation	12
Behavioral Consistency	12
Homology Assumption.....	13
Conceptual Framework.....	15
Profiling Equation.....	15
Nature of the Study	16
Definitions.....	18
Assumptions.....	23
Scope and Delimitations	24
Limitations	25
Significance.....	27
Summary	28
Chapter 2: Literature Review	29

Introduction.....	29
Literature Search Strategy.....	36
Theoretical Foundation	38
Behavioral Consistency	39
Homology Assumption.....	40
Theoretical Analysis and Rationale	41
Conceptual Foundation	44
Profiling Equation.....	45
Literature Review.....	46
Summary and Conclusion.....	55
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	60
Introduction.....	60
Research Design and Rationale	61
Role of the Researcher	63
Methodology.....	66
Participant Selection Logic	66
Instrumentation	69
Researcher-Developed Instrument.....	71
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	72
Data Analysis Plan.....	74
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	76
Credibility	76

Transferability	76
Dependability	77
Confirmability	77
Ethical Procedures	78
Summary	80
Chapter 4: Results	81
Introduction	81
Setting	82
Demographics	82
Data Collection	84
Data Analysis	87
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	89
Credibility	89
Transferability.....	90
Dependability	90
Confirmability.....	91
Results	91
Theme Cluster 1: Criminal Profile Methods and Reasoning	92
Theme Cluster 2: Practice Standardization.....	116
Theme Cluster 3: Criminal Investigative Processes	132
Summary	142
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	143

Introduction.....	143
Key Findings.....	144
Theme Cluster 1: Criminal Profile Methods and Reasoning	144
Theme Cluster 2: Practice Standardization.....	150
Theme Cluster 3: Criminal Investigative Processes	154
Interpretation of the Findings.....	157
Confirmation of Preceding Literature	157
Extension of Knowledge.....	161
Disconfirmation of Preceding Literature	163
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Relative to the Findings	164
Limitations of the Study.....	167
Recommendations.....	168
Implications.....	170
Conclusion	171
References.....	173
Appendix A: Mind Map.....	206
Appendix B: Interview Invitation	207
Appendix C: Interview Protocol	208
Appendix D: Treatment of Human Participants	210

List of Tables

Table 1 Demographics and Employment Background	84
Table 2 Case-by-Case Approach	93
Table 3 Profile Characteristics	97
Table 4 Theories and Models.....	108
Table 5 Professional Collaboration.....	117
Table 6 Succession Planning	122
Table 7 Practice Standards	128
Table 8 Practices and Procedures	133
Table 9 Investigative Recommendations	138

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Introduction

Offender profiling is an investigative tool that has been refined throughout the centuries (Bartol & Bartol, 2013), with many scholars in recent decades focusing on offender characteristics through the application of quantitative methods (Goodwill et al., 2016), while others have worked to gain a deeper understanding of offender profiling using qualitative approaches (Yokota et al., 2017). Abreu et al. (2019) have contributed to classifying offender typologies, as have Adjorlolo and Chan (2017). Equally, other researchers have worked to study crime linkage (Tonkin et al., 2017) and victim characteristics within the context of offender profiling (Pecino-Latorre, et al., 2019). Theoretical foundations for offender profiling have varied, but among the most prominent are the homology assumption (Mokros & Alison, 2002) and behavioral consistency (Canter, 1995a), of which are theoretical frameworks that have been proposed to explain criminal behaviors relevant to offender profiling. With varying advances, the field of forensic psychology grows, as does interest in research on methods of offender profiling.

With increased interest in offender profiling methods in contemporary literature (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2017), this study was conducted in recognition of a lack of knowledge surrounding the current methods of international criminal profile construction (see Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). Few standardized classification systems exist to guide offender profiling practices (Fox & Farrington, 2018) and support effective criminal investigative processes (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). Kocsis and Palermo (2020) described the essential attributes of a criminal profiler as, having objectivity and insight into human

behavior. Apart from such vague explanations, little is known about what an operational definition of criminal profiling is, from a criminal profile author's perspective, and the logic applied during the profile construction process (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020).

Employed for purposes of investigative support, criminal profiling is primarily commissioned in cases of serious and violent crimes (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Given the negative psychosocial (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019) and financial (Tonkin et al., 2017) implications of violent crime, this study aimed to collect data that could progress international profiling practices and construction processes that aid in effective criminal investigations. The potential social implications of this study comprise, an enriched multiagency comprehension of profile construction methods, and, as a result, the enhanced ability of offender profiling to limit suspect pools (Yaksic, 2020) and link crime series (Tonkin et al., 2017). Moreover, this study may better inform approaches to signal policing (Roach et al., 2012), and bolster public perceptions of safety, by supporting the successful clearance of signal crimes, or those that are highly visible within society and perceived as major threats to the community (Innis, 2004).

Chapter one outlines the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions. The theoretical foundation and conceptual frameworks are established, as is the nature of the study. Additionally, chapter one includes definitions and assumptions, together with the scope, limitations, significance, and a summary of the chapter and overall study. Current topics in forensic psychology are then presented, specifically research on issues in the subfield of criminal profiling, to demonstrate evidence of the research problem and the gap in the literature that this study addressed.

Background

Offender profiling is a widely debated discipline, with academics and clinicians alike offering conflicting views regarding the validity of the practice as a criminal investigative tool (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2017). A description of the practice that is however generally agreed upon irrespective of opinion is that, offender profiling is a technique by which criminal offenders are profiled, and characteristics of personality, demographic, location, and habits of the offender are produced, according to crime scene analysis (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). Following are offender profiling methods relative to the scope of this study, and those used globally by police and psychology professionals.

Historically, offender profiling can be traced back to ancient Rome, as early as 38 CE when ritual killings were crimes believed to be committed by individuals that subscribed to specified religions (Turvey, 2012). It was only later in the 19th century that European novels highlighted offender profiling as a criminal investigative technique employed by fictional crime solving detectives (Bartol & Bartol, 2013). During World War II, offender profiling was used by intelligence organizations, one of which included the Office of Strategic Services (Kapardis, 2017, as cited in Bartol & Bartol, 2004). Over the years, principles of criminal profiling have developed and currently continue to be implemented by law enforcement agencies worldwide (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

Present day methods of offender profiling relevant to the scope of this study vary, though can be roughly grouped into one of three main approaches. The first is that of the clinical or practitioner-oriented model, which consists of the creation of an offender profile by an experienced clinician that has received training, has worked with criminal

demographics, and is knowledgeable regarding interview techniques used to evaluate offenders (Alison et al., 2010; Petherick & Brooks, 2020). The next is the investigative method, which employs multiagency resources, namely the combined efforts of law enforcement and academics, and is concerned with evidence-based techniques (Abreu et al., 2019). Experience is the largest advantage for professionals that use the investigative approach, as investigative work is refined through years of involvement in complex cases, and the application of tacit knowledge (Alison et al., 2010; Olszak-Häukler, 2019). Thereafter, statistical methods of offender profiling use empirical data to construct probability equations and predict criminal behaviors, as is illustrated by actuarial tools and within crime linkage studies (Canter, 2000; Kapardis, 2017; Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020).

The gap in knowledge that this study addressed, was the lack of peer reviewed literature available on current methods of international offender profile construction (Fox & Farrington, 2018), the absence of standardized practices (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016; Petherick & Brooks, 2020), and the void in research surrounding the effectiveness of offender profiles within criminal investigations (Fox et al., 2020; Rossmo, 2021). This research is important as there is little known about offender profile content or reasoning (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). As well, though a multitude of approaches are taken when it comes to offender profiling (Olszak-Häukler, 2019; Tonkin et al. 2017), both in Europe (Mittal & Singh, 2016) and North America (Shea, 2021), the practice has not yet been standardized, and thus is unable to be recognized as a hard science and relied upon as such (Briggs, 2015; Yaksic, 2020). Hence, I conducted research that tackled the aforesaid gaps in the literature and worked to further develop international profiling practices.

Following, I was interested in international methods of offender profile construction and related effective criminal investigative processes, as well, I aimed to explore any standardization opportunities that may exist within offender profiling practices. Given the current high rate of international unsolved serious and violent crimes (Baughman, 2020; Morgan et al., 2020) and the resulting human cost of crime (Tonkin et al., 2017), this study was needed to offer insight into international methods of offender profile construction and the efficacy of profiles within criminal investigations (Fox et al., 2020), with the aim of increasing public protection and offering data for crime linkage research. If further information can be gleaned regarding international offender profile construction, such data may contribute to the creation of a standardized practice that is evidence based, as well, it may also increase public confidence in law enforcement.

Problem Statement

The research problem addressed through the completion of this study was the lack of existing empirical scholarship on international approaches to the construction of criminal profiles (Davies & Woodhams, 2019) and the lack of data available regarding if and or how offender profiling approaches can be standardized (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). This study also aimed to determine if there is a relationship between offender profiling and effective criminal investigative processes, as to date, limited publications have tackled this gap in the literature (Reynolds et al., 2019). Although offender profiling has been a topic of collective interest, both highlighted by academics and within popular culture in recent decades (Winerman, 2004), the aforesaid research problem does not appear to have been exclusively examined according to the lived experiences of the

professionals that author criminal profiles. Therefore, this study endeavoured to explore the lived experiences of profile authors relevant to international methods of offender profile construction, to discover experts' insights in terms of practice standardization prospects, and to identify any corresponding effective criminal investigative processes.

Literature Overview

Supporting evidence for the research problem in this study can be found within current empirical literature, as is illustrated in the findings of Fox and Farrington (2018), in a systematic review of offender profiling publications from 1976 until 2016. Following the completion of a meta-analysis of 426 studies, the authors concluded that the consensus reached amongst academics indicated that the existing research on offender profiling offered minimal data in the way of agreed standards of practice, methods of profile construction, and the usefulness of profiles within criminal investigations (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Kocsis and Palermo (2020) revealed similar findings of limited benchmark practices within the field of offender profiling and recommended that future research focus on establishing a standardized practice, able to withstand legal scrutiny.

Equally, Yaksic (2020) advocated for evidence-based profiles, as it was noted that knowledge gained from such profiles may meaningfully contribute to successful criminal investigations. Even still, although research has shown the potential for offender profiles to aid police investigations (Mittal & Singh, 2016), many studies have stressed that at present, there is little known about profile utility (Reynolds et al., 2019). In the same way, Olszak-Häukler (2019) emphasized a void in knowledge surrounding access to profile sources, construction methodology, and subsequent criminal profile outcomes.

Echoing the above findings, works completed by Rossmo (2021) further substantiated the need for a better understanding of the impact of offender profiles on criminal investigations, as the author noted a current lack of disclosure from law enforcement regarding profiling evidence that investigative procedures are based upon, and that constitute the crime-evidence-suspects-offender sequence. Rossmo (2021) argued that, when taking a pragmatic approach to crime solving, investigators must ensure evidence is founded on the recorded facts of a case and that such have identifiable sources. An equivalent stance was also taken by Petherick and Brooks (2020), when the scholars advocated for dissemination of the logic used within offender profiles. While themes of best practice appear common in the literature, there is nevertheless currently a lack of known offender profile sources and logic available to reference and conclude the content and role that profiles play within criminal inquiries (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

Further supporting evidence for the research problem in this study was seen in a systematic review of offender profiling literature that referenced international publications from 1995 until 2020 and discussed the validity of offender profiling and established that, there is currently a gap in the literature in terms of the lack of transparency surrounding the function of offender profiles and proceeding validity (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). Kapardis (2017) suggested that future studies of offender profiles focus on real world applications, as the contemporary methods studied have proved to be mainly unreliable social science experiments that are not objective nor replicable. Given consensus in the literature, the research problem in this study emerged as being current, relevant to the discipline, and worthy of continued academic research.

The research problem evaluated within this study is significant to the discipline because, it concentrated on the ongoing social dilemmas faced by international criminal justice agencies and academics in the field of forensic psychology, those being, problems of violent international serial offending (Tonkin et al., 2017), and largely ineffective criminal investigative processes, each evidenced by increasing rates of unsolved serious crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017; Morgan et al., 2020). Specifically, this study contributed to the subfield of offender profiling through the acquisition of previously inaccessible accounts of the lived experiences of internationally based criminal profile authors, in relation to the disclosure of profile construction methods, alongside an understanding of practice standards, and effective criminal investigative processes. The self-reported data collected because of this study provided significant knowledge about common practices, opportunities for the improvement of profile formulations, and supplementary literature focused on how and why profiles are created.

The findings of this study may prove useful for informing future effective criminal investigations and decreasing international unsolved serious crime rates. Contributions may also be seen in the positive social change this study expects to support, through the exploration of evidence-based profiling methods according to experts, as such may underwrite future profiling frameworks and assist law enforcement agencies in maintaining public protection. Qualitative research is recognized as informing quantitative research (Bachman et al., 2017); thus, this study is significant, as results may afford future quantitative studies foundational data that could help shift the trajectory of offender profiling and support the practice in becoming a reliable and replicable science.

Following, this study set out to build on work completed by Petherick and Brooks (2020), in which approaches to offender profiling and the justifications applied within prevailing practices were reviewed. Likewise, work by Yaksic et al. (2019) was also extended in terms of the completion of semi-structured interviews with experts, as the objective of this study was to interview professional criminal profile authors to clarify information relevant to the logic and function of existing profiles, of which included the utility, if any, of profiles used within effective criminal investigations. Ensuing, this study also aimed to progress the work of Yokota et al. (2017) and the *Coals to Newcastle* (CTN) project conducted by the British Home Office, as it focused on the efficacy of profiles within solved criminal investigations. Accordingly, this study advanced the initiative of Yokota et al. (2017), as profile construction methods were analyzed and interview questions created, based upon similar lines of inquiry as that of the CTN, with linked effective investigative practices queried, parallel to that of Yokota et al. (2017).

Comparable to the positioning of this study within the aforesaid offender profiling literature, this study can further be framed in the context of having been authored after review of research by Ribeiro and Soeiro (2020), in which the researchers concluded that offender profiling may have the capability to be validated, dependent upon face validity, of which the design of this study aimed to facilitate. Alike, citing research by Pecino-Latorre et al. (2019), crime scene and victim characteristics recognized as valuable for the identification of an offender were further examined in this study, following criminal profile authors' insights. Offender typologies developed by Abreu et al. (2019) may also be advanced by way of offender profile methodologies reviewed throughout this study.

Purpose of the Study

What Kocsis and Palermo (2020) described as the amalgamation of theoretical approaches to the analysis of criminal behavior and subsequent logical predictions of likely offenders, is the paradigm that is offender profiling. While existing international studies have provided data on the known features of criminal profiling, such as the general methods applied within investigative, clinical, and statistical domains, clear and definitive operational definitions of these practices are largely unknown and thus difficult to assess or improve upon (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Although those interested in the functioning of this investigative tool have worked to study the discipline for decades, given the ever-changing nature of variables that emerge when evaluating human behavior (Brookman et al., 2018; Tonkin et al., 2017), offender profiling continues to be a complex and ambiguous practice that is largely misunderstood (Mittal & Singh, 2016).

After careful review of the empirical literature related to the above paradigm, the purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an understanding of international methods of offender profile construction, explore opportunities for standardization within the practice of offender profiling, and describe how offender profiling may contribute to effective criminal investigative processes. Each of these objectives were sought to be determined through evaluation of the lived experiences of profile authors. The assembly of offender profiles is the phenomenon that is of interest within this study, because at the best of current presentations, it is void of concise structure. Consequently, fascination of this phenomenon and awareness of its potential effective application sparked a desire to further investigate and contribute to the phenomenological analysis of the discipline.

Research Questions

I was interested in international approaches to offender profile construction and the justifications of associated profile claims, opportunities for standardization, and any associated effective criminal investigative processes. The following three research questions (RQs) thus guided this qualitative study and the related methods of completion.

RQ1: How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles, and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?

RQ2: According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?

RQ3: What is an offender profiler's experience of if and/or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?

The research questions in this study were investigated using a qualitative research design, as interpretative phenomenological analysis has been highlighted as a valuable approach to examining the lived experiences of participants in criminological studies, and results have offered robust measures of in-depth data, capable of influencing policy and industry practice standards (Miner-Romanoff, 2012). The intention of this study was to explore stepwise processes implemented by international criminal profile authors in Europe and North America, to gather rich data regarding methods of profile construction, and to explore if opportunities exist for standardization within profiling practices. The use of offender profiles in effective criminal investigations was also studied to collect data that may improve profiling practices. Research questions originated from an exhaustive review of the literature and a goal of contributing to scholarship in the field.

Theoretical Foundation

The fundamental lack of standardization in the phenomenon described as offender profiling, is further illustrated within the numerous theories that have been put forth as models, or practice guides (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). While theories that have been disseminated in the literature may be of significance, perhaps none are as essential to the existing host of offender profiling approaches, as that of behavioral consistency and the homology assumption (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Hence, behavioral consistency and the homology assumption merged to serve as the theoretical foundation of this study and will be briefly defined below and expanded upon further within upcoming chapters.

Behavioral Consistency

In the context of offender profiling, behavioral consistency refers to the prevalence of behaviors associated with the same offender across offenses in a crime series, behaviors that are more alike than the same behaviors observed in other offenders' crime series (Alison et al., 2010). The theory of behavioral consistency was first applied in studies of personality psychology (Funder & Colvin, 1991), though later was considered a necessary theory within offender profiling literature when posed by the renowned British Psychologist, David Canter (Woodhams et al., 2007). The two major propositions of behavioral consistency include first the idea that an offender's behaviors are similar over time and offense, and second that behaviors are more similar within, than between offenders (Bateman & Salfati, 2007). It is noteworthy that the behavioral consistency hypothesis is a requirement of successful offender profiling, as behavioral inferences necessitate consistent characteristics (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014).

Ensuing, behavioral consistency relates to the approach taken in this study, as information gathered from interviews with criminal profile authors, may prove valuable in detailing offending behavior patterns that could further substantiate or dispute the behavioral consistency theory. Equally, behavioral consistency also relates to the research questions in this study, as perhaps most obvious, this study is on topics of offender profiling and as previously mentioned, behavioral consistency is integral to the practice (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Likewise, the analysis of international offending patterns is crucial to offering a better understanding of cultural and geographical themes in offending that may improve future criminal investigative processes. Thus, offending behaviors assessed in this study by means of the application of behavioral consistency may support practice standardization, as identification of patterns within effective profiles may reveal methods of best practice relative to the constructs of this study.

Homology Assumption

Initially a theory within the biological sciences, the homology assumption was first proposed by Sir Richard Owen in 1843 when referencing anatomical similarities in animals (Hall, 1994). Later adapted as a theory in offender profiling, Canter and Heritage (1990) tested the homology assumption via a likeness in criminal behaviors according to offenders' background characteristics. The major hypothesis of the homology assumption therefore denotes that, those individuals with similar life experiences will innately display similar personal and criminal behaviors (Doan & Snook, 2008). Theories of homology and behavioral consistency are coupled throughout the literature and conferred as the two underpinning theories required for offender profiling to exist (Mellink et al., 2021).

Application of the homology assumption in this study provided a theoretical foundation for the discussion of offenders' background characteristics, and the corresponding offense behaviors examined within interviews conducted with criminal profile authors. The homology assumption thus relates to the research questions in this study, as the premise outlined in the homology assumption was referenced within interview questions and may provide data that could shape future effective criminal investigations, and potentially contribute to the standardization of offender profiling practices. As the homology assumption has focused on establishing sociodemographic features of an offender according to crime scene evidence (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014), this study worked to confirm the validity of such features in the content of existing profiles, and by way of the lived experiences of profile authors practicing internationally.

Designation of the homology assumption as the theoretical basis of this study transpired because of the interconnected nature of the theory to that of behavioral consistency, and the possibility that this study could further build upon both theories. With results of empirical research offering support for the homology assumption (Mellink et al., 2021), and acknowledgment of behavioral consistency being a fundamental requirement of offender profiling (Fox & Farrington, 2018), the two theories together appeared to be the most appropriate frameworks to further investigate contemporary profiling practices and prospects for improvement. The incorporation of these theories also facilitated resolution of the research problem, by directing dialogue relevant to the research questions in this study. The theoretical groundwork for this study is developed more in chapter two, with rationalization of the theories described in detail.

Conceptual Framework

One of the primary conceptual frameworks referenced throughout the empirical literature on offender profiling is termed, the profiling equation (Almond et al., 2018). Emerging as a dominant concept within the field of investigative psychology, the profiling equation functions to observe thematic data points in offenders' histories and proceeding offenses, as the psychological model aims to determine reliable associations between offender and offense characteristics (Canter, 2011). Thus, the profiling equation was the contextual lens applied in this study and will be discussed further in chapter two.

Profiling Equation

The profiling equation is a structured method of inquiry that refers to the $A \rightarrow C$ equation, a conceptual framework used in crime analysis and defined as the process by which criminal actions are examined and inferences made regarding the characteristics of a likely offender (Canter, 2011). The purpose of the $A \rightarrow C$ equation is to highlight meaningful connections between offenders' actions, A and the inferred background characteristics, C of an offender. Sociodemographic features, such as the offender's age, the location an offender resides, and any previous criminal convictions are determined following the deduction of actions reviewed after the comprehensive collection of crime scene evidence (Trojan & Salfati, 2011). The profiling equation is based upon the scientific method of inference and thus exhaustive evidence is necessary for professionals to form a conclusion regarding the probable offender's characteristics (Youngs & Canter, 2006). Correspondingly, the conceptual framework of the profiling equation was applied to the data collected, and this contextual lens was used to analyze the results of this study.

The profiling equation relates to the qualitative approach taken in this study, as the data collected was done so by referring to this conceptual framework during instrumentation development, that being the formulation of interview questions, as profile authors were asked questions that involved aspects of the framework relative to their professional practices. Alike, this conceptual framework was also referenced during data analysis, specifically data was viewed through this conceptual viewpoint by means of interpretative phenomenological analysis, offering awareness of any connection between offenders' actions and background characteristics. Thus, the profiling equation directly connects to the research questions in this study, as thematically significant offender actions and or characteristics were of particular interest, and information regarding such features was reflected in methods of profile construction and the content of the profiles studied. Patterns of offending and or offender characteristics determined using the profiling equation may be useful in exploring practice standardization and effective criminal investigative processes assessed in this study during data collection and analysis.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative in nature and designed as such to provide a suitable method of data collection and analysis that facilitated answers to the research questions, given the qualitative tradition of the data addressed within the gap in research. The qualitative design selected in this study enabled interviews to be conducted and rich data to be explored, relative to participants' operational decision-making justifications (Brookman et al., 2018). Offender profiling was the paradigm chosen due to its potential to link serial offenders and inform criminal investigations (Davies & Woodhams, 2019).

In reference to the paradigm or phenomenon under investigation in this study, the key concepts within offender profiling that were the focus, were international methods of offender profile construction, linked effective criminal investigative processes, and any opportunities for profile standardization. Accordingly, offender profiling can be described as a criminal investigative tool that seeks to outline the behavioral features of an offender, following analysis of behavior displayed at a crime scene (Kapardis, 2017). The construction of offender profiles, including the characteristics of a profile and the logic motivating assembly were examined. Similarly, the role that profiles play within real world criminal investigations and any prevailing practices noted among professionals that formulate offender profiles, were also considered within the constructs of this study.

Use of interpretative phenomenological analysis as the qualitative methodology in this study allowed for data to be collected via the completion of semi-structured interviews with 10 criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America. Interviews were conducted remotely permitting interviewee preference and were facilitated by using online platforms with all audios recorded. Approaching participants in this study as experiential experts, profile authors were encouraged to disclose their lived experiences creating criminal profiles and their knowledge of the profession, such as “their thoughts, feelings, and memories” (Noon, 2018, p. 75). Later, interviews were analyzed by transcribing the audios using transcription software, and then again manually, to determine thematic and differentiated data. As the researcher, my interpretation of participants’ lived experiences guided the conclusion of this study and revealed the findings pertinent to the research questions posed (see Creswell, 2013).

Participants were recruited for this study via snowball sampling (see Creswell, 2007), as profile authors were identified and contacted following networking efforts and the sharing of recruitment information by fellow experts. Thereafter, participants were stratified according to their expertise in the field. Building on the work of Yokota et al. (2017), participants were interviewed regarding their lived experiences authoring criminal profiles. Likewise, this study imitated approaches to qualitative research completed by Ahlin (2019), as semi-structured interviews focused upon practitioners' contributions to criminal justice processes and deferred to subject matter experts to facilitate a deeper understanding of international methods of criminal profiling.

Definitions

Below are definitions of the key terms used throughout this study according to the purposes of this study, and of which are irrelevant to akin meanings outside of this study.

Actuarial assessment: A systematic process that involves calculations by tools that use statistical methods to analyze violence risk data and thereafter predictive values are generated regarding the likelihood of future violence risk (Garrington & Boer, 2020).

Behavioral consistency: The consistent performance of behavior(s) across a crime series, assuming less variance within, than between offenders (Abreu et al., 2019).

Behavioral distinctiveness: The consistent distinctiveness displayed in offending behavior(s) amongst offenders of the same crime type (Oziel, 2012).

Behavioral evidence analysis: A practice that requires the physical reconstruction of a crime and analysis of a crime scene to be combined, for a practitioner to provide a behavioral profile of the likely offender (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

Behavioral investigative advice: Advice based on scientific research, offered to law enforcement during the investigation of serious crimes, which includes behavioral and psychological analyses of evidence and likely offenders (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

Case linkage analysis: The study of crimes considered to be linked or committed by the same offender, and of which display evidence indicative of similar offending styles, such as the level or form of violence perpetrated (Tonkin et al., 2017).

Clinical judgement: Consists of opinions or diagnostic evaluations composed by professionals who have specialized training, education, and experience in forensic psychological settings and that can be applied to the assessment of criminal behavior within serious crime investigations (Kocsis & Palermo, 2020; Smits et al., 2021).

Coals to Newcastle: A research project undertaken by the Home Office in collaboration with and funded by the Metropolitan Police, as part of a Special Interest Series, which sought to determine the effectiveness of offender profiling in serious crime investigations in the United Kingdom, circa 1990 (Copson, 1995; Yokota et al., 2017).

Crime matching: The association of crimes based on similarities in crime type and commission, wherein recurrent crime variables are matched (Qazi & Wong, 2019).

Crime scene analysis: The observation, collection, examination, and documentation of physical evidence recovered from the scene of a crime for the purposes of preserving all available material for necessary analysis (Gardner & Krouskup, 2019).

Criminal investigation: The process of maintaining legislation through the evaluation of criminal conduct, verifying the facts, motivation and identification of offenders involved in committing an act contrary to common law (Reilly, 2019).

Discrimination accuracy: The differentiation of linked and unlinked crimes, or crime pattern identification via the application of statistical models (Tonkin et al., 2019).

Evidence-based offender profiling (EBOP): The practice of inferring the profile of an unknown offender according to evidence collected from a crime and the review of statistical data, together with other valid and reliable sources, measurable references are used to create profiles considered to be evidence based (Fox et al., 2020).

Face validity: The evaluation, consideration, and appraised trustworthiness of an instrument's function, according to expert valuation (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020).

Forensic psychology: A subdiscipline within the field of professional psychology, that provides specialized knowledge on a variety of psychological topics that interact with pertinent regional legislation (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Homology assumption: The theory that similar offending styles or behaviors are indicative of offenders with common background experiences (Almond et al., 2018).

Illusory correlation: The mistaken attribution of the conclusion of a criminal investigation, to factually non-existent crime scene evidence (Reynolds et al., 2019).

Interpersonal coherence: A concept in the field of investigative psychology that emphasizes behavioral consistency and is one of the theoretical components of the five-factor model used to describe offending behavior (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis: A qualitative research design used to study participants' lived experiences and interpreted meanings (Noon, 2018).

Investigative psychology: A subfield of professional psychology that focuses investigative psychological expertise on issues of criminal and civil law, in the detection of criminal activity and facilitation of effective legal action (Youngs & Canter, 2006).

Law enforcement: All entities within the justice system authorized to enforce legislative processes, including judicial, civil, criminal, and administrative actors that work to protect the public and enforce common law (Villalobos et al., 2014).

Offender profiler: A professional that works alongside law enforcement agencies within serious crime investigations, to author profiles of likely offenders in accordance with the evidence gathered from a crime (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

Offender profiling: The practice of inferring characteristics of an offender, according to the established characteristics of a crime (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

Offender typology: The categorization of offending behaviors, including historical offenses and the psychological features of a crime (Abreu et al., 2019).

Offense paralleling behavior: A conceptual framework used to recognize themes of fantasized or actual behavior(s) linked to an offense series (Daffern, 2010).

Profiling equation: The conceptual model required for all offender profiling practices, of which is described as the $A \rightarrow C$ equation, and it posits that a criminal's actions can offer inferential data regarding characteristics of the criminal (Canter, 2011).

Qualitative research: The study of non-numerical data, of which can include such methods as that of interviews conducted to gain in-depth knowledge of the reasoning and function of experiences, via non-quantitative approaches (Brookman et al., 2018).

Scientific method: A procedural technique that defines the natural sciences, consisting of specified methodologies applied to hypothesis formulation and testing, germane research disciplines are required to devise experimental designs (Haig, 2018).

Self-reported data: Data gathered from participants' disclosures regarding their experiences, including admissions in psychometric materials (Culhane et al., 2019).

Semi-structured interview: The interaction between an interviewer and interviewee in which the interviewer poses initial questions that facilitate discussion and follows up with further open enquiries relevant to a research question(s) (Ahlin, 2019).

Serial offender: An individual that commits a series of crimes, often crimes are similar in nature and offending endures beyond a 24-hour period (Mellink et al., 2021).

Serious crime: Includes the distribution of illegal narcotics, human trafficking, child sexual exploitation, cyber and economic crimes (The National Archives, 2015).

Signal crime: A crime that can be perceived as a signal regarding threat levels, or an imminent risk of harm to the public that exists, also understood as a "warning signal" that communicates to audiences the likelihood of harm or loss (Roach et al., 2012).

Snowball sampling: A qualitative sampling method that relies on networking and participant referrals to contact and access further participants (Parker et al., 2019).

Tacit knowledge: Knowledge that is established according to experience, effort, and consideration of theoretical approaches relative to a task (Alison et al., 2010).

Violent crime: The threat of, or actual commission of violence against another person, including sexual and or other assault, murder, robbery (Department of Justice, 2022), the use of weapons, and corrosive substances (Crown Prosecution Service, 2017).

Assumptions

The completion of this study required several assumptions, with the first and perhaps the most important being that the participants interviewed were professionals in the field of offender profiling, with relevant experience authoring criminal profiles. The next assumption present was that existing high rates of internationally unsolved crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017; Morgan et al., 2020), are perpetrated by serial offenders (Tonkin et al., 2017). Other assumptions were that offender profiling is a worthwhile tool to study (Kappel, 2020), and that forensic psychological research completed in this study is imperative, as it may offer investigative support. It was thus also assumed that police are ultimately responsible for crime solving (Tshababa, 2020).

Theoretical assumptions critical to this study and that of offender profiling are the assumptions of behavioral consistency and homology, as together these two assumptions validate the profiling equation (Abreu et al., 2019) and are necessary frameworks for offender profiling to be possible (Mellink et al., 2021). In this same way, it was also then assumed within this study that criminals commit crimes using notably different signature behaviors (Kapardis, 2017), in comparison to other offenders of the same crime type (Morar & Filip, 2018). Likewise, interpersonal coherence was assumed within the conceptual and theoretical bases of this study, as it was within the profiling practices assessed, given that offender characteristics are thought to be displayed similarly during interactions with victims and with other person(s) in the offender's life (Nedelcu, 2019). Petherick and Brooks (2020) also noted that offender profiles should be assumed to be ineffective without the rationale of a profile adequately communicated when presented.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this study was on specific aspects of the research problem, as interest in the phenomenon of offender profiling was concentrated on international methods of profile construction, prospects for standardization, and determination of any relationship between effective criminal investigative processes and offender profiling. The topic of this study was selected because of concern for the high rates of international unsolved violent crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017; Morgan et al., 2020). As well, this topic was chosen because of the possibility that increased knowledge of what works within international profiling methods and criminal investigations, may assist in addressing the social problem by providing data that can be put into operational use by law enforcement to reduce rates of serious serial offending (Tonkin et al., 2017). This study limited coverage of topics in the field of offender profiling to those related solely to the research questions examined by way of the lived experiences of profile authors.

The participant sample assessed within the boundaries of this study included, 10 criminal profile authors publicly recognized as experts and of whom were professionally established in Europe and or North America, while those based outside of these geographical areas were excluded, as were those that did not meet the remaining criteria instituted in this study. Following are theories most related to the research questions addressed, but of which were not explicitly investigated, although this study may provide transferable knowledge. Namely, theories of crime linkage (Davies & Woodhams, 2018), as this study may offer insight into the theory of behavioral distinctiveness (Oziel, 2012) and the allied conceptual framework titled, offense paralleling behavior (Daffern, 2010).

Limitations

While this study offered significant information regarding the practices of internationally based criminal profile authors, associated effective criminal investigative processes, and opportunities for the standardization of profiling procedures, it did have limitations. Primarily, because there were 10 profile authors interviewed, this sample size was not extensive enough to be representative of all international criminal profile authors, as such it served as merely a sample of the profession. Likewise, weaknesses of the chosen methodology were found in the potential for ambiguity within the implementation of IPA, as critics have suggested that this methodology can overemphasize participants' perceptions, and that it lacks interpretative value (Tuffour, 2017). IPA has also been criticized for the lack of contextual understanding that it provides, as the lived experiences shared by participants have been slated for being unable to capture social-cultural influences that may offer insight into experience formation (Tuffour, 2017).

Because this study was not experimental in design, there was no proof of causation amongst the variables examined, regardless of any correlational relationships observed (see Grosz et al., 2020). Similarly, given the qualitative nature of this study and the consequential lack of statistical generalizability, the results of this study were limited to theoretical transferability. In terms of dependability, although this study was able to ensure trustworthiness by maintaining audit trails illustrated in the original data collected, by way of field notes and transcripts derived from interviews, a reflexive journal which is accepted as a central feature of dependability in qualitative research, was not originally composed in this study, and thus reduced initial dependability (see Nowell et al., 2017).

Biases that could have influenced the outcome of this study may have also been present in the conception of interview questions, as although the relevant frameworks and empirical literature was referenced to guide the creation of questions, inevitably researcher bias may have influenced questions and follow up discussions. Similarly, during the interpretation of this study's findings, the estimated impact that the results of this study could have on the field of offender profiling and within real world criminal investigations may also have been impacted by researcher bias. Furthermore, because snowball sampling was used to recruit participants in this study, it is possible that bias could have existed in the type of criminal profile authors that agreed to participate in this study, as it is conceivable that participants may have had similar experiential influences.

Reasonable measures that were taken to address not only the limitations but also the potential biases in this study are seen first in the awareness of limitations and bias through mindfulness of my own preconceptions as a researcher, namely through the institution of a reflexive journal, albeit not as early in the process as was ideal. The use of a reflexive journal was also important as it increased transparency within the rationale established for steps taken and conclusions drawn within this study, thus reducing ambiguity and misinterpretation (see Galdas, 2017). Next, there was awareness of the sociocultural influences of lived experiences and the inclusion of such questions within interviews. Thereafter, clarifying the scope of this study within the findings and conclusion, it was important to address sample size limitations. Focus on the systematic processing of data was also key to guard against bias and reduce the latent exaggeration of this study's impact, or its generalizability and dependability (see Galdas, 2017).

Significance

This study was significant in that it was believed to be the first of its kind to apply interpretative phenomenological analysis to the study of international offender profile construction methods. As such, this study potentially contributed to the advancement of knowledge within the field of offender profiling, specifically by increasing the literature available on how and why offender profiles are constructed transnationally, any insights offered regarding the standardization of offender profiling practices, and the involvement of offender profiles within effective criminal investigations. Information gleaned from this study in the form of practical advice developed through the lived experiences of participants, may also have contributed to the discipline via the institution of future international offender profiling practice standards, and criminal investigative policies.

The potential implications for positive social change consistent with the scope of this study included, the possibility for improved methods of effective offender profile construction, of which may advance criminal investigative processes and the responses of international law enforcement agencies to violent serial offenders. Specific implications for positive social change because of this study may also involve improved approaches to crime linkage and thus public protection. Hence, it is possible that offender profile formulations could be enhanced, as could associated operational criminal investigative processes, with such progress perhaps contributing to reducing the current high rate of internationally unsolved serious and violent crime (Home Office, 2022; Statista, 2022) and related human suffering and financial loss. While this research aimed to yield sweeping positive social change, it remained bounded by the scope of this study.

Summary

There is little known about the processes and justifications that underwrite offender profiles internationally (Fox & Farrington, 2018), nor is there much information within the peer reviewed literature regarding the effectiveness of offender profiles within criminal investigations, and or any opportunities that may exist for the standardization of profiling practices (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). While offender profiling is considered a controversial and multifaceted occupation (Fox et al., 2020), this research intended to take a novel approach to the study of offender profiling, via the implementation of interpretative phenomenological analysis, to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of profile authors. As such, this study may contribute knowledge in a meaningful way to the field of forensic psychology and the subfield of offender profiling. In summary, this chapter introduced the study and outlined the background, problem statement, and purpose of the study. It described the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, nature of the study, definitions, and pertinent assumptions, as well as the scope, limitations, and significance of the study.

Following, chapter two further introduces the phenomena of interest and provides the literature search strategy used to undertake the necessary research for completion of this study. Next, the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this study are highlighted and defined, those being, the theories of behavioral consistency and the homology assumption, together with the conceptual framework defined by way of the profiling equation. Thereafter, an exhaustive review of the literature related to the key variables in this study are noted, as is a summary and conclusion of the main themes in chapter two.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Acknowledging the current rise in violent and serious crime globally (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019) and the continual increase in unsolved international crime rates (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017; Morgan et al., 2020), violent and serious crime is a major social problem that requires attention. Following, serial offenders responsible for criminal activity are of interest as an academic, because research has shown that in the United States and the United Kingdom, over 50% of all crimes are perpetrated by between only 6 to 10% of serial offenders (Tonkin et al., 2017). Human suffering is thus caused as a direct result of violent crime, with much of the cost being intangible (Gabor, 2015). Government reports and aggregated sums suggest that the mean cost of victimization absorbed by the criminal justice system annually is substantial, with the total estimated yearly cost of crime in the United States being \$2.1 trillion (Miller et al., 2020) and in the United Kingdom, £59 billion (Home Office, 2018).

The research problem that emerged from the above social problem was the finding of a lack of data available regarding international methods of offender profile construction (Davies & Woodhams, 2019). Standardized offender profiling practices and information to determine if there is a relationship between offender profiling and effective criminal investigative processes was also limited (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Thus, this research problem is important, as data on effective offender profiling practices may contribute to crime linkage, the narrowing of suspected serial offenders, a reduction in human suffering, and the international financial deficits caused by serial offending.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn more about international methods of creating offender profiles, explore if there are prospects for standardization in the field of offender profiling, and see if and how offender profiling may support effective criminal investigations. Data was collected to offer insight into the offender profiling practices of European and North American based profiling professionals. This study aimed to contribute original research to the field of forensic psychology and further to the subfield of offender profiling, as recent empirical profiling publications have suggested gaps in the literature regarding varied practices and minimal disclosure of the rationale that underlies the construction of offender profiles (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

Current literature that establishes the relevance of the above stated research problem was conducted by Olszak-Häukler (2019), when the author noted that criminal profile authors' evaluations of crime and the following profiles formed are at present not evidenced by empirical research, and thus do not offer any standardized method of profile construction open to contradictory reasoning, nor scrutiny from the judicial system. Likewise, Fox and Farrington (2018) second this opinion, as the researchers stressed that the current lack of data regarding international profiling methods, add further scepticism to the validity of the practice. Kapardis (2017) also illustrated the inconsistencies found within offender profiling practices, when the researcher posited that offender profiling is largely subjective, given that multiple profilers provided with the same information from a crime scene, commonly formulate varying profiles of an offender. The absence of scientific rigor has raised serious concerns for psychologists regarding profile construction methods, as researchers have pointed to procedural errors (Nedelcu, 2019).

The lack of a standardized practice of offender profiling internationally, has been highlighted by the fact that it is not currently considered a science (Nedelcu, 2019), and, therefore, it is also inadmissible as evidence in a court of law, as error rates are high due to predictive inability, while terminology and concept incompatibilities also persist within the discipline (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016). There has been a disassociation with former intuition-based approaches to offender profiling, because of criticism regarding a lack of empiricism, though Briggs (2015) suggested that although past methods of offender profiling have not yet been standardized, future studies may create opportunities for standardization. Similarly, Petherick and Brooks (2020) have advocated for further research to be conducted on the operational methods of offender profiling, as it was suggested that with increased information, standardized principles may be structured, and a framework created to offer scientific guidelines and reliable profile outcomes.

While various methods of offender profile construction have evolved and been endorsed over time, little is known about the rationale nor actual assembly of profiles. Canter (2010) reported that crime data used to structure profiles has been generally undisclosed by profilers, and thus profiles often consist of the invalid speculation of offender characteristics. Profile compositions have similarly been described as the assessment of crime-related variables and behaviors (Goodwill et al., 2012), as Sea et al. (2016) noted that profiles are the synthesis of psychosocial, physical, and lifestyle factors relative to a crime and unknown offender. Criminal motivation and typology have also been evaluated as methods of profile construction (Shea, 2021), though such data are often viewed as conjecture and unhelpful in understanding how a profile is generated.

The use of inconsistent terminology and comparisons of unrelated crime profiles have also been blamed for a lack of profile organization and clarity (Yaksic et al., 2019), with academics repeatedly having expressed that offender profiles are probabilistic and not evidence based (Kocsis & Palermo, 2020). Though scientists have endeavoured to provide prototypical offender profiles, of which encompass the collaboration of crime scene analysis, empirical research, actuarial and clinical judgements, and other paths of exhaustive analysis, present day profile construction methods remain largely unknown (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). Additional publications have however specified categories used within offender profiles studied internationally, with such characteristics of profiles including, an offender's age, occupation, geographical location (Yokota et al., 2017), gender, modus operandi, criminal background, and any suspected offender-victim relationship (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019). Yet disclosure of profile content remains rare.

Nevertheless, upon further review of the literature, Douglas et al. (2008) outlined that the characteristics implemented in a criminal profile are extracted following the analysis of crime scene evidence, and that information, including but not limited to the sex, intelligence, and mode of transportation of an offender are inferred. Thereafter, the procedure used to generate a profile was described as a five-step practice, which has involved profiling inputs, decision process models, crime assessment, the criminal profile, and the investigation (Douglas et al., 2008). Dr. Ann Burgess was a co-author of the aforesaid literature and studied criminal profile construction methods. During my research for this study, we were in contact, and she offered her insights, having also studied professional profiling practices. This exchange is elaborated upon in chapter five.

Next, current literature on the relationship between offender profiling and criminal investigative processes indicates that offender profiling has been increasingly employed by law enforcement agencies internationally, with the objective being, to dissect criminal activity, as profiles cannot offer predictive value (Mittal & Singh, 2016). Studies have suggested that future research on the impact of offender profiles on criminal investigations may provide enhanced predictive offender profiling systems, as currently, research denotes that offender profiling significantly supports the decision-making processes of law enforcement, in relation to resource allocation and suspect prioritization (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019). Benefits are thus expected in the justice system and crime linkage research, given prospects of predictive offender profiling (Tonkin et al., 2017).

While there has been criticism noted by academics regarding methodological issues applied to the study of offender profiling, and the construction styles used in the United States (Nedelcu, 2019), the peer reviewed literature also maintains a critical view of offender profiling practices globally. Research conducted in the United Kingdom found that only 14% of criminal investigators reported that offender profiling assisted in effectively resolving criminal cases (Vettor et al., 2013). In this same study, it was found that 70% of police psychologists in North America reported feeling uneasy producing criminal profiles, due to concerns with profile validity (Vettor et al., 2013, as cited in Bartol, 1996). Current research on the validity of offender profiling remains doubtful, as Ribeiro and Soeiro (2020) suggested that international methods of offender profiling are not considered statistically valid, and that further methodological research is required.

Contemporary literature in the field of forensic psychology has recommended the application of offender profiling to criminal investigative processes, to tackle the crisis that is, unsolved serious and violent crime (Yaksic, 2020). The accuracy of existing profiles within police investigations are questioned however, as Reynolds et al. (2019) proposed that criminal investigators often experience illusory correlation, which is the attribution of crime resolutions, to the crime scene beliefs of an investigator of whom adhered to unsubstantiated offender profiles. Nevertheless, knowledge of the behavioral traits outlined within a criminal profile can assist investigators by narrowing a suspect pool (Khoshnood & Fritz, 2016), though currently, profiles are not scientifically based, and thus research is required (Almond et al., 2018). Abreu et al. (2019) argued that studies of offender profiling methods are imperative, as such offer crime pattern data.

Research completed on the efficacy of offender profiling within criminal investigations underscores the usefulness of the technique in reducing investigative costs (Lino et al., 2017), though scholars have warned that erroneous offender profiles can negatively interfere with criminal investigations (Davies & Woodhams, 2019). At present, international police forces implement offender profiles in serious and violent crime investigations, though with minimal evidence of utility, many questions remain regarding the effectiveness of criminal profiles (Almond et al., 2018). Hence, the impact of offender profiling on criminal investigations is important to study, as increased knowledge of useful profiling methods may contribute to law enforcement efforts by supporting crime linkage and reducing unsolved serious crimes rates (Fox et al., 2021).

Homicide rates in America have risen by a dramatic 30% in recent years (Makridis & VerBruggen, 2022), a violent crime rate that has historically been statistically comparable to that of the United Kingdom and Canada (Sea et al., 2020). Such violent and serious crimes pose a significant international social problem, with unsolved crimes often interpreted as a reflection of the ineffectiveness of criminal investigations and the low quality of profiles (Witt et al., 2022). Current research has noted that higher clearance rate crimes tend to have more accurate offender profiles, in contrast to crimes less likely to be solved (Avdija et al., 2021). Namely, evidence-based criminal profiles prove to be more accurate than those that have less data to reference. Following, this study is relevant and necessary as it will provide insight into international offender profile construction methods, opportunities for standardization, and increased knowledge of effective criminal investigative processes experienced by profile authors.

Current literature maintains that professionals that specialize in the behavioral sciences, including those in the fields of forensic psychology and criminal investigation, are the foremost experts in offender profiling (Spicer, 2019). Likewise, Tshababa (2020) highlighted that professionals concerned with topics at the intersection of psychology and the law should work together, as these individuals possess the knowledge and skills required to improve criminal investigative processes. Although offender profiling is not yet considered a hard science, evidence from recent studies indicates that with continued research, the potential exists to have a deeper understanding of the development required to increase the accuracy and utility of this investigative tool (Curtis-Ham et al., 2022).

Chapter two features an introduction and the literature search strategy used to conduct this study, including a list of the key search terms, the databases, and search engines accessed. The theoretical foundation of this study will be discussed, with the origin and previous applications of the theories noted, and the rationale for theory selection examined. Thereafter, the conceptual framework of this study is considered, alongside the literature review, which describes historically related research on the constructs of interest and methodology, noting past approaches to the subject, and a justification of variable selection. Key studies related to the phenomena of interest will be reviewed, together with the meaningfulness of the approach. Therein, a summary and conclusion close the chapter and offer an overview of the themes observed throughout the chapter, with a description of the known and unknown aspects of the topic, and an explanation of how this study is an original contribution to the discipline. It is noteworthy that this study fills gaps in the literature and is deemed a good fit with the methodology.

Literature Search Strategy

Research was completed for this study using a variety of computerized search engines and databases as sources for the empirical literature reviewed. Predominantly, psychological or behavioral sciences and criminological databases were referenced. The Walden University Library was searched for articles on topics related to offender profiling, criminal profile construction, behavioral investigative advice, criminal investigative processes, and offender profile standardization practices. Thereafter, other search engines were also employed to collate literature, including Google Scholar, WorldCat, and Research Gate. Specific databases accessed comprised the following:

APA PsycArticles, ProQuest Central, Criminal Justice, Academic Search Complete, SocINDEX, Education Source, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, APA PsycInfo, International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Centre, ERIC, and the Home Office website. While the most recent literature, or that published within the past 5 years, between 2019 and 2024, was focused upon, publications dating back to 1895 were also examined.

An iterative process was undertaken to search a combination of terms using the above databases, as terminology, or search terms, were consistently adjusted during the literature review process. Committee feedback was also incorporated, which added to the iterative literature review. Following, results in EBSCO for the search terms *offender or criminal profiling* yielded 180,421 results, with 173,951 being peer reviewed academic journals, 3,447 reviews, 2,017 reports, 1,941 magazines, and 251 conference materials. The key search terms were entered into each of the aforesaid databases, and using the filters Full Text and Peer Reviewed Scholarly Journals Only, EBSCO was searched.

Results in EBSCO for key search terms within the peer reviewed literature were as follows: *offender profiling AND criminal profiling AND approaches or strategies or techniques or methods* (179 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND practices or strategies or approaches* (45,822 results), *behavioral investigative advice AND practices or strategies or approaches* (7 results), *case linkage analysis AND offenders or criminals or prisoners* (11 results), *crime matching* (135 results), *offender profiling and investigative psychology AND criminal profiling* (154 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND homology* (13 results), *offender profiling AND criminal profiling and forensic psychology* (63 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND criminal*

investigation processes (14 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND international* (21 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND construction process* (58 results), *criminal investigation AND process* (3,076 results), *interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research* (20 results), *semi-structured interviews in qualitative research* (9,946 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND standardization* (188 results), *offender or criminal profiling AND behavioral consistency* (129 results), and *offender or criminal profiling AND validity and reliability* (2,173 results).

While a multitude of results returned for the above search terms using EBSCO databases, limited current research was found on *offender or criminal profiling* within the dissertations/theses (2 results) sections of Walden University's Library, using EBSCO. This lack of research was resolved by accessing other databases outlined above, through which supplementary resources were obtained. A collection of dissertations/theses on topics in offender or criminal profiling were thus found via the earlier noted databases.

Theoretical Foundation

A multitude of theoretical frameworks have been applied to the practice of offender profiling from its conception through to present day, though for the purposes of this study, one of the central theories of human behavior relative to offender profiling will be focused on, alongside analysis of a similarly prominent theoretical assumption. Theoretical explanations of criminal behavior are necessary to discuss, as insight into the predictive nature of profiling may offer a deeper understanding of individual and collective behavioral patterns (Mellink et al., 2021), and, thus, theories from existing

profile models may be further built upon. Pertinent theories provide context for offender profiling practices and will be considered when examining the data in this study.

Behavioral Consistency

The theory of behavioral consistency as it relates to offender profiling first originated as a testable principle by Canter (1995a), and explained interpersonal coherence, or the idea that the behavior of an offender is consistent throughout criminal and non-criminal activities, and despite an individual's feelings and actions changing across the lifespan, the theory recommended that an offender's pattern of change remains consistent. Canter (2000) noted that behavioral consistency may facilitate crime linkage, as research has shown that offending styles are often reliable across crime series. While statistical methods were initially employed to substantiate the theory of behavioral consistency, the use of other profile development methods have also confirmed the theory's utility (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Mellink et al. (2021) described behavioral consistency and the homology assumption as requirements of offender profiling.

The major theoretical proposition of behavioral consistency maintains that, an individual's offending style is distinct in comparison to other offenders of the same crime type (Salfati & Bateman, 2005). Scholars have emphasized a requirement of behavioral consistency as being that an offender displays similar behaviors across all crime series, including signature behaviors (Bateman & Salfati, 2007). The theory advises that various factors influence the consistency of an offender's behavioral patterns, of which, during the analysis of a crime, can be inferred, including an individual's interpersonal characteristics and routine activities (Youngs & Canter, 2006). Research on serious crime

types, including burglary, arson, robbery, and sexual assault have shown support for the theory of behavioral consistency and offending style preference (Alison, et al., 2010).

The main hypothesis that underlies the theory of behavioral consistency claims that the variability within collective behavior(s), is greater than the variability within individual behavior(s) (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Following, it is also hypothesized that there are five prominent factors that impact the behavioral consistency of offenders, and of which shape the tendencies of an individual's personality and behavior, namely, maturation, responsiveness, development, learning, and career (Youngs & Canter, 2006). Accordingly, insight into an individual's situational responsiveness may be gained via delineations of circumstantial information, while maturation is understood in terms of age, physiological, cognitive, and emotional development, and experiential knowledge gained by learning and career succession (Youngs & Canter, 2006). While human nature is complex and impossible to predict with any amount of certainty, theories of human behavior can be useful in better recognizing and understanding themes in criminality.

Homology Assumption

The theory of homology was first posed as a biological concept (Panchen, 1999), though subsequently evolved into a foundational assumption referenced within offender profiling literature (Vettor et al., 2013), and often considered alongside the theory of behavioral consistency (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Accordingly, the homology assumption hypothesizes that there are personality resemblances amongst offenders congruent with offending style, in that behaviors reflected at a crime scene are indicative of personality traits possessed by offenders (Woodhams & Toye, 2007). A further

hypothesis of the homology assumption is that, in addition to personality, offenders' background characteristics may also be comparable (Almond et al., 2018). Given the nature of offender profiling, the homology assumption offers a logical theoretical basis used in known profiles to outline deduced offender features (Kocsis & Palermo, 2015).

Effectively, the homology assumption was established as a means of describing the connection between offenders' crime scene actions and inferred personality features (Goodwill et al., 2016), suggesting personality and demographic similarities, as well as corresponding offending styles (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Although a multitude of behavioral typologies exist within the literature on offender profiling, the homology assumption has been the primary typology-based theoretical model, because of the broad application of its premise to all inductive offender profiling approaches (Chifflet, 2014). It is notable that the homology assumption is not a condition of behavioral consistency, but supportive of the theory (Vettor et al., 2013). Despite being void of predictive value, the homology assumption has benefited criminal investigations (Mokros & Alison, 2002).

Theoretical Analysis and Rationale

Research on offender profiling has highlighted the function and agreed significance of the behavioral consistency theory, in tandem with the homology assumption, as valid theoretical frameworks relied upon as the foundation of deductive offender profile formulations (Petherick & Ferguson, 2014). Comparable to the methods proposed in this study, previous qualitative studies have applied the theory of behavioral consistency, whether by name or supposition, to explore means of effective criminal investigation (Muller, 2011) and crime linkage analysis (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

Likewise, academics have also applied the homology assumption to the study of offender profiling, often during the appraisal of serial offenders (Mellink et al., 2021). The below analysis notes similarities in preceding publications of associated theoretical models of behavioral consistency and the homology assumption, relative to this study.

Historical publications that have applied the theory of behavioral consistency in ways parallel to this study, have focused on the examination of violent behavioral patterns amongst offenders (Salfati et al., 2015), and methods of capturing offender variance (Tonkin et al., 2017). As well, like this study, previous studies have employed the principles of behavioral consistency as guidelines used to create reliable systems of offender profiling (Kocsis & Palermo, 2020). Oziel (2012) was noted as applying behavioral consistency during a study in which crime characteristics were examined, including victim, attack, and crime scene features, as well as offender type identification, all of which the current study considered in relation to the themes detected within the data. Alike, this study explored serial offending behaviors relative to crime linkage.

The current study further resembled prior research by Vettor et al. (2013), as the authors advocated for the application of behavioral consistency within the study of offender profiling, given the potential for the theory to support law enforcement in the collection of crime series data, the provision of increased prosecutorial evidence, and the optimization of criminal justice resources. In this same way, this study applied the theory of behavioral consistency to the study of effective international criminal investigations. As one of the research questions in this study aimed to explore opportunities for standardization among international methods of offender profile construction, earlier

research by Kapardis (2017) was referenced because of the author's review of the application of behavioral consistency, as the study noted that the theory is fundamental to offender profiling globally and has contributed to professionalization of the practice.

The rationale for selecting behavioral consistency as a theory to build upon in this study, was based on a review of the scientific literature, which suggested that there has been minimal research conducted on behavioral consistency in relation to offender profile construction, given the restrictive, analytical, and operational procedures involved (Deslauries-Varin & Beauégard, 2013; Woodhams & Labuschagne, 2012). Additionally, behavioral consistency was chosen because it directly relates to the research questions in this study, underscoring the behavioral patterns of serial offenders, which upon further examination may offer opportunities for the standardization of international practices in offender profiling, and contribute to effective criminal investigations. This study intended on using the decided theory as a foundation, alongside the incorporation of professionals' lived experiences, to support the development of a standardized model of profiling.

Thereafter, the homology assumption has also been applied within earlier studies of offender profiling in a similar manner to that of this study, as was illustrated when Almond et al. (2018) employed the theory and termed it an essential feature of the profiling equation, or rather described it as the basis of the relationship between crime scene actions and inferred offender characteristics. In this same way, Kocsis and Palermo (2015) applied the homology assumption to trait-based methods of offender profiling, with a view of testing the theory's proficiency. This study thus analyzed data collected using the hypothesis of the homology assumption to determine the theory's relevance to

the research questions, specifically to what degree could the homology assumption be built upon, and or could the theoretical premise be challenged. Accordingly, this study referenced the homology assumption to see if and how it could explore opportunities for the standardization of international profile construction practices, and it clarified the extent to which the theory could be applied to enhance criminal investigative processes.

The rationale for choosing the homology assumption in this study developed after knowledge of the theory's interconnectedness with behavioral consistency was gained, and after research revealed that the homology assumption has been found to have medium accuracy (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). Consequently, the homology assumption may prove to be a reliable theory and offer increased credibility to offender profiling approaches. As well, the simplistic nature of the homology assumption (Abreu, 2019) may allow this study to expand upon the basic hypothesis of the theory when investigating its potential efficacy in practice. This theory may also work to disentangle offender profiling methods and highlight successful approaches to crime linkage.

Conceptual Foundation

The profiling equation is the dominant conceptual framework implied throughout all offender profiling practices and is rooted in personality psychology (Canter, 2011). Initially, the profiling equation was employed in studies that focused on the actions and corresponding characteristics of persons within educational, organizational, and clinical settings, with the equation often supported through the application of psychometric procedures (Canter, 2011). Thereafter, the profiling equation was proposed within the field of investigative psychology, given its potential utility for law enforcement, as a

promising effective method of criminal investigation (Canter, 2010). As such, the profiling equation was selected as the conceptual foundation for this study and is referred to throughout as a psychological model, possessing criteria that may be helpful in identifying offenders' actions and related characteristics noted within offender profiles.

Profiling Equation

The profiling equation is defined by what is known as the $A \rightarrow C$ equation, which represents offender's actions, or the A observed at a crime scene including the time, location, and victimology information, followed by the inferences made, or the \rightarrow and concluded with the characteristics of probable offenders, or the C within the equation (Canter, 2011). Dependent upon the homology assumption, the profiling equation relies upon the principle that, similar types of offending behaviors are indicative of homologous sociodemographic offender characteristics (Almond, 2018). A requirement of the $A \rightarrow C$ equation is that sufficient evidence be accessible for an assessment to be completed, and the accurate corresponding offender characteristics generated (Carson & Bull, 2003).

One of the key theorists of the profiling equation David Canter, who was responsible for transposing the contextual lens from the social and environmental psychology disciplines to the field of investigative psychology, suggested that interpersonal styles and the routine activities of offenders are important considerations in the deduction of characteristics from actions (Canter, 2010). Carson and Bull (2003) also argued that interpersonal styles, or individuals' patterns of relating to others are of significant value and should be studied to create future inferential models that better categorize connections between offenders' actions and characteristics within the $A \rightarrow C$

equation. Similarly, Mokros and Alison (2002) identified a direct relationship between an offender's personality and behavioral expressions portrayed at a crime scene, albeit noting that personal and situational factors may also influence an offender's actions. Equally, Almond et al. (2018) suggested the inclusion of prior convictions and cluster behaviors in the analysis of offenders' background characteristics in the $A \rightarrow C$ equation.

In a study by Trojan and Salfati (2011), researchers explored the $A \rightarrow C$ equation as it relates to single and serial homicide offenders and results illustrated meaningful patterns of criminal behavior in support of the concept. Likewise, Morar and Filip (2018) articulated that the $A \rightarrow C$ equation is an investigative approach that uses the scientific method and thus is more comprehensive than FBI profiling systems, because of the detail required. Given the investigative utility of this model (Almond et al., 2018), its success in studies of serial offenders, and the reliance of profiling on this framework (Trojan & Salfati, 2011), the profiling equation was used as the conceptual foundation of this study.

Literature Review

Academic approaches to offender profiling have often focused on applications of the scientific method in the assessment of human behavior (Tonkin et al., 2017). Pecino-Latorre et al. (2019) explained that empirical research has supported the operational functioning of investigative processes, as evidence-based methods contribute to efficient techniques and the standardization of profiling practices. Levitt et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of qualitative research methods in the exploration of the psychological sciences, and Yokota et al. (2017) demonstrated how qualitative interview data can be used to inform quantitative approaches to offender profiling, with qualitative interviews

having been implemented to offer a deeper understanding of the profile construction methods used by professional criminal profile authors. Rossmo (2021) recommended that in the context of criminal investigations, interviews are regarded as a useful data collection tool, a finding echoed by Ahlin (2019), when it was noted that semi-structured interviews can produce an organized conversation between researcher and expert.

As such, semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study, congruent with the approach advocated for by Ahlin (2019), as the author underscored the ability of interviews to offer insight into the how and why of events, with this methodology working to create a foundation for future research and the potential standardized practice of experts. Thereafter, other methods consistent with the scope of this study included researchers having reviewed postconviction records as a means of objective measurement, a process used to study offender profiling by Almond et al. (2007), when comparing differences in offender profile content and style. Petherick and Brooks (2014) then also referenced postconviction records with the goal of verifying offender profiling claims. Similarly, Khoshnood and Fritz (2017) also acquired court documents that contained personal details regarding offenders and convictions to describe accurate offender profiles. Building on these methods, this study reviewed relevant legal documents where possible, to support interview disclosures and for objectivity purposes.

The methodology applied in this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature, as it sought to apply interpretative phenomenological analysis to reveal the lived experiences of criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America, with a focus on the logic and methods used during the construction of offender

profiles. Previous studies have applied IPA in the humanities disciplines (Noon, 2018), and when studying criminal offenders (Love et al., 2020) in terms of violence risk management (O'Dowd & Laithwaite, 2022), though few studies were found to be consistent with the variables considered in the scope of this study. Primarily, a limited number of known studies have employed IPA to the lived experiences of forensic psychology and law enforcement professionals within the field of offender profiling.

In the past, researchers have approached problems in criminal profiling using a variety of methods. Some scholars have been interested in the validity and accuracy of profiling and have used quasi-experimental methods (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016), while others have concentrated on the statistical correlations observed in offenders' actions and personality characteristics (Canter, 2011). Case linkage analysis (Fox & Farrington, 2018) and crime linkage have also been subjects of interest among academics, with some known to use iterative regression designs to link crime series (Tonkin et al., 2017).

The above approaches to offender profiling share a basis in statistical modelling and have been praised as being empirically sound to the degree that such methods can offer statistical predictions of the variables measured (Davies & Woodhams, 2019). As well, it has been argued that some statistical approaches to offender profiling are of greater evidentiary value to law enforcement when compared with qualitative methods, because strictly evidence-based information is provided (Tonkin et al., 2019).

Furthermore, controls of empirical systems increase validity (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016).

A weakness of the quantitative approach to offender profiling is seen in the freedom in choice of statistical model and paired topic of research, as each are entirely

dependent upon the researcher, and thus there is increased variance regarding the choice of appropriately matched variable and design (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). In addition, research has demonstrated that the connection between belief and perception of offender profiling validity influences the results of studies, and thus this can be a weakness attributed to researcher bias, even when applying quantitative methods (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). As well, although empirical methods are thought to be advanced, there is yet to be a quantitative method of offender profiling that can facilitate a relationship that signifies causation between offender and crime characteristics (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016).

Alongside quantitative approaches, researchers have used qualitative methods to study issues related to offender profiling, of which were displayed in early practices of offender and offense categorization (Almond et al., 2018). Expressly, practitioners collected self-reported data from interviews with offenders, to systematically organize offender characteristics (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). Likewise, clinical assessments have also been applied in the construction of offender profiles, given the interpretative nature of actuarial tools, clinicians have been required to synthesize observations and educational experiences, to determine a forensic diagnosis (Smits et al., 2021). Shea (2021) suggested that when overlapped with theory and data, criminal investigator's use of qualitative methods can increase the validity, reliability, and consistency of an inquiry. Thereafter, qualitative research in forensic psychological fields, has been proven to be an effective method of research that enhances the efficacy of police practices (Shea, 2021).

Major strengths of qualitative research in offender profiling are exhibited in the ability of qualitative studies to discover novel phenomena and gain a deep understanding

of topics of interest, as qualitative research allows for the inclusion of contextual factors that influence participants, with minimal resources required (Mohajan, 2018). Gregory (2019) explained that without qualitative methodologies, challenging topics are unable to be confronted. Smits et al. (2021) also maintained that qualitative approaches to research are useful in the study of forensic psychology, as important and complex subjects like the meaning and motives related to criminal behavior can be studied and rich data collected.

In comparison with the strengths of qualitative approaches to offender profiling, a weakness of qualitative research described by Gregory (2005), was that qualitative inquiries overvalue opinion-based results. Another weakness of qualitative methods are that they often require skilled researchers to undertake sound research, data collection and analysis tasks (Tuffour, 2017). Critics have noted that qualitative datasets are not often publicized, and thus studies are unable to be replicated (Mohajan, 2018).

The concepts selected in this study were decided following a careful examination of the literature on offender profiling, and the finding that there is a limited number of peer reviewed publications that focus on how and why offender profiles are constructed (Vettor et al., 2013). Research has shown that there are no standardized international method(s) of offender profiling, nor is there a unanimous understanding of how profiling may contribute to effective criminal investigative processes (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Davies and Woodhams (2019) noted that few studies have confirmed the techniques professionals use to profile serial offenders, and Kocsis and Palermo (2020) emphasized that previously publicized methods of profile construction relied heavily upon outdated theoretical constructs. Further, the results of a meta-analysis, which encompassed all

published articles on offender profiling since its professional inception, found no standardized approach to profile construction and terminology (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Hence, as modern offender profile construction practices and data on how profiles impact criminal investigations has been limited (Petherick & Brooks, 2020; Vettor et al., 2013), interest in profile construction and standardization arose and resulted in concept choices. The existing literature on offender profiling outlines what is known about the topic and includes numerous perspectives. Specifically, there are various methods of offender profiling currently in existence, alongside terms used to classify associated practices. Common names used to reference offender profiling consist of, but are not limited to “psychological profiling, criminal profiling, criminal investigative analysis, crime scene analysis, behavioral profiling, criminal personality profiling, sociopsychological profiling, and criminological profiling” (Ebisike, 2007, p. 13). While there is great variability among the approaches to offender profiling taken by clinicians and law enforcement professionals alike, all methodologies can be organized into generalized categories of clinical, investigative, and or statistical procedures (Alison et al., 2010).

The well documented diagnostic or clinical approach was used throughout the United States in the 1950s and the United Kingdom in the 1880s (Kapardis, 2017). This method relied upon the judgement and experience of trained professionals (Kapardis, 2017). Notably, psychologists and mental health clinicians were consulted to gain expert insight into the behavior of violent and serial offenders (Davies & Woodhams, 2019).

The investigative approach was then used in the 1970s, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s, Behavioral Science Unit began crime scene analysis (Olszak-Häukler,

2019). This was a method in which investigators focused on crime details to create the profile of an unknown offender (Olszak-Häukler, 2019). The behavioral evidence analysis approach stressed crime scene re-creations (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

The static approach was thus applied using investigative psychology, and introduced as an offender profiling practice, concentrated on the scientific model of information processing (Canter, 2010), wherein the profiling equation was conceived and the connection between offenders' behaviors and inferred characteristics was emphasized (Youngs & Canter, 2006). Most recently, behavioral investigative advice (BIA) has become a popular evidence-based approach to offender profiling (Almond et al., 2018). Behavioral Investigative Advisers support police with major crime investigations and offer tactical solutions based on their knowledge of serious crime (Davies et al., 2018).

Given numerous approaches to offender profiling, it is no surprise that controversy surrounds methodologies. Critics of the clinical approach have argued that although there may be the potential for positive outcomes, much of the research produced by clinical methods of offender profiling have used small sample sizes, in studies that are not replicable, and because of methodology, are inherently bias (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016; Muller, 2011). Yaksic (2020) suggested that clinical approaches to profiling have been disparaged because clinicians are not capable of producing predictive profiles. Echoing this view, much of the empirical literature demonstrates that profile authors that use clinical approaches, are often only slightly more accurate than that of a lay person (Kapardis, 2017; Reynolds, et al., 2019). Another critique of the clinical approach is its reliance on a profile author's intuition, as such is deemed innately bias (Kapardis, 2017).

Comparable to the criticisms of clinical methods of offender profiling, Bennell et al. (2006) has criticized profile accuracy measurements and thus the results of statistical approaches to offender profiling, because of the difficulty associated with quantifying subjective variables, as these lack applicability in varying circumstances (Nedelcu, 2019). Moreover, statistical approaches are controversial as many are not accessible to criminal investigators, and thus law enforcement agencies frequently do not benefit from such approaches to offender profiling (Muller, 2011). Furthermore, there has only been a limited number of statistical methods applied to topics in offender profiling, thus such a void arguably runs the risk of producing discrimination accuracy, or the belief that a statistical model may be useful, given the absence of other models (Tonkin et al., 2019).

While offender profiling approaches and methodologies are vast and often thoroughly studied, operational definitions of international offender profile construction methods remain unknown (Yaksic, 2020). Fox and Farrington (2018) second this view as the researchers elaborated by noting that methodologies and an explanation of profiles currently in use remain unclear. Differences in offender behavior according to culture and geography are also factors that have not been widely explored (Tamsen et al., 2019), nor have predictable patterns of offending behavior and reliable approaches to crime linkage (Hipp, 2020; Tonkin et al., 2017). When discussing reliability, it is important to acknowledge that error rates in offender profiling are also yet to be determined (Fox & Farrington, 2018), as is the logic involved in the decision-making during offender profile creation, thus reflected in often unsubstantiated criminal profile claims (Kapardis, 2017).

Other aspects of offender profiling that have not eluded academic critique include, the variance displayed in the terminology used in offender profiling practices, and the lack of a relevant international database (Davies & Woodhams, 2019; Muller, 2011). In this regard, there is a void in the knowledge available in the field of offender profiling regarding how to effectively classify interchangeable terms used within the discipline (Kocsis & Palermo, 2020). In addition, most studies on offender profiling have evaluated small sample sizes (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016), thus little is known about the research outcomes of large sample sizes as they relate to offender profiling and criminal investigation (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020). The contributions of multiple modalities applied to offender profiling and the potential implications of an integrated practice of offender profiling, or a “gold standard” of practice are also unknown (Petherick & Brooks, 2020).

A review of the research questions and related publications have revealed that, there is a need to conduct interviews with criminal profile authors as a means of establishing the factors involved in the creation of international criminal profiles and to explore the impact of such on criminal investigations (Yokota et al., 2017). International perspectives on offender profile construction have been suggested as insights that are valuable for the advancement of criminal investigations (Tonkin et al., 2017), and thus these constructs were considered within this study. Following, this study examined the standardization of profiling practices, and the logic involved, as each appear to be key to the development of the discipline, if it is to become a science (Fox & Farrington, 2018).

The approach selected in this study was meaningful, because it worked to tackle the international social problem of serious and violent serial offending and ineffective

systems of criminal investigation seen within escalating unsolved serious and violent crime rates (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017; Morgan et al., 2020), using a unique qualitative methodology. Given this study's goal of positive social change, a meaningful approach was taken to improve methods of crime linkage, as well as to enhance both criminal investigations and offender profiling practices. Equally, this study is also meaningful, as criminological research has applied interpretative phenomenological analysis, mainly to studies of already convicted criminals (Love et al., 2020) and risk management (O'Dowd & Laithwaite, 2022), though few known studies have used the designated approach to study offender profiling. Thus, this study was meaningful as it contributed to ongoing problem-solving inquiries made by international law enforcement agencies and academics alike, investigating significant topics in forensic psychology.

Summary and Conclusion

Upon review of the literature in this study, major themes have emerged. Primarily, and perhaps the most common theme thus far, was that of variability within offender profiling, whether in reference to approach, terminology, or profile content, currently there are no standard methods of offender profiling in operation regionally or internationally, nor is there knowledge of what profiles exist (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Like the inconsistencies observed in offender profiling techniques, there has also been a pattern of major discrepancies amongst the professional backgrounds of those that create profiles (Yokota et al., 2017). As well, the idea that offender's leave indications of their identity within the evidence of a crime, is another fundamental theme discovered within the literature on offender profiling (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2017), and of which was signified

in the phrase popularized by the French scholar Edmond Locard, in *Locard's Exchange Principle* which stated, "Every contact leaves a trace." (Mummery, 2021, p. 512).

The next theme that became apparent in the literature was the finding that offender profiling has not been widely accepted as a science amongst academics, nor within international legal proceedings (Kocsis & Palermo, 2020). Likewise, within the literature there was a pattern of two distinct methodological approaches commonly used, with bivariate offender profiles, of which were predictive, while typology-based profiles were focused on offending behavior and thematic approaches. The final theme recognized throughout this study was the reported benefit of offender profiles within criminal investigations, despite the limited knowledge of content (Reynolds et al., 2019).

Unlike most topics in offender profiling, there is an overwhelming consensus within the empirical literature, that little is known about how offender profiles are established, and the logic that constitutes profile formulations (Fox & Farrington, 2018). However, amid the methods of profiling that have been disclosed within peer reviewed publications, the most common groupings include actuarial, clinical, and investigative approaches (Alison et al., 2010). Other known features of offender profiling in the context of this study comprise, recognition of the practice being void of scientific rigor (Kappel, 2020) and specified standards (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). Many theoretical models have been identified within offender profiling studies, though behavioral consistency was stressed as a valid and essential theory (Tonkin et al., 2017), along with the homology assumption, noted for having medium accuracy (Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020).

In contrast, there are many unexplored topics within studies of offender profiling, of which include an operationalized definition and the possible contribution of offender profiling to effective criminal investigations (Reynolds et al., 2019). Equally, there is little information available about the impacts of existing error rates in crime linkage data (Yokota et al., 2017). There is also relatively little known about the extent to which an individual's background (Almond et al., 2018), or culture influences patterns of offending, and international methods of offender profiling (Lino et al., 2017). Similarly, a database like that of ViCAP or ViCLAS consisting of the characteristics of successful offender profiles is also currently absent within the literature (Kocsis, 2015). Alike, large sample size findings within the profiling research have also remained obscure, with such being recommended as areas of interest in future studies (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019).

The significance of the research problem originally posed in this study has been highlighted within the publications discussed throughout this chapter, and in accordance this study aimed to undertake research that filled gaps in the literature. Principally, this study worked to fill a gap in the research, that being, the ambiguous relationship between offender profiling and effective criminal investigations (see Ribeiro & Soeiro, 2020), by collecting data directly from the professionals that have lived experiences relevant to these subjects. Next, this study aspired to clarify the standards of best practice within international approaches to offender profiling, by determining how profiles are made according to profile authors, as limited data exists that details international methods of profile construction (see Petherick & Brooks, 2020). This study also endeavoured to fill a

gap in the literature produced by the lack of transparency in logic relative to the contents of criminal profiles (see Fox & Farrington, 2018), by learning the categorical features.

This qualitative study thus contributed to the field of forensic psychology and the subfield of offender profiling, as the research built upon existing peer reviewed literature by exploring topics that have to date, remained undefined. Consequently, enquiries into international offender profiles may increase the knowledge base within the discipline and contribute to filling the existing gaps recognized within international methods of offender profile formulations, practice standards, and effective criminal investigations. Namely, this study intended on using data points from profile authors' answers to interview questions about profile content, evidence-based standardization prospects, and information from successful profiles in resolved criminal investigations, to address the social problem that is, serial offending, and to further refine approaches to crime linkage.

Ensuing, this study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Alase, 2017) as the qualitative methodology used to assist in processing the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with criminal profile authors, working in Europe and North America. This methodology allowed for the information collected to be dissected systematically and then organized into themes, to ensure recognition of important concepts gained from insights offered by profile authors, concerning aforesaid gaps in the literature. Specifically, IPA was applied to detect themes of best practice and opportunities for standardization, as well as to bring into focus any possible connections found between profiling practices and effective criminal investigations. Subsequently, the research questions in this study guided interview questions. Participant information will

be elaborated upon within the upcoming methodology section, alongside a description of how instrumentation was developed and how semi-structured interviews were conducted, each of which referenced gaps in the literature discussed throughout this chapter.

Following, chapter three will encompass an introduction of the research design applied in this study, together with the rationale for the selected approach. After which, the role of the researcher will be outlined, as will all methodological information relevant to this study, including the participant selection process and logic, instrumentation, researcher developed instrument guidance, procedures for recruitment, as well as the data collection techniques used. A data analysis plan was also devised and will be explained. Issues of trustworthiness will be addressed in chapter three, and all necessary ethical procedures identified, followed thereafter by a summary of the chapter's key topics.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning and methods applied to construct criminal profiles internationally. Moreover, this study also aimed to discover any opportunities for profile practice standardization. Finally, the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe if and how profiling practices may support effective criminal investigative processes.

A major section of this chapter outlines the research design and rationale for this study, within which the research questions are stated, the central concepts and phenomena of interest defined, and the research tradition highlighted. The ensuing major section in this chapter denotes the role of the researcher, which explains the role of the researcher as an interviewer, and examines any conflict of interest and or potential power dynamics involved in the researcher-participant relationships in this study. Next, bias management is also discussed, as are relevant ethical issues. The methodology section includes subsections, which set out the participant selection logic, and the researcher developed instrumentation. Further subsections of the methodology section examine the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Thereafter, the remaining sections in this chapter comprise the data analysis plan and an additional subsection that evaluates issues of trustworthiness; such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, with a following ethical procedures section, and then a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative research design was used to answer the below research questions.

RQ1: How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles, and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?

RQ2: According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?

RQ3: What is an offender profiler's experience of if and/or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?

The central phenomena of interest in this study were offender profiling and linked methods of profile construction, opportunities for standardization, and effective criminal investigative processes that are related to the application of offender profiles. Additional central concepts and or the frameworks referenced in this study were those of behavioral consistency, the homology assumption, and the profiling equation. These theoretical and conceptual frameworks were the foundation of this study and important to consider in the collection of data and analysis of topics in offender profiling and criminal investigation.

For the purposes of this study the phenomenon of interest, offender profiling, was described as the practice of analysing information associated with a crime to determine the characteristics of a likely offender(s) (Fox & Farrington, 2018). Similarly, criminal investigation was described as the process of examining criminal behavior and evidencing the facts of a prosecutable crime (Reilly, 2019). Next, the theoretical framework in this study, behavioral consistency, was defined as the theory that denotes that offenders' behavior(s) are more consistent across crime series, than that of other

offenders of the same crime type (Abreu et al., 2019). Equally, the complementing theoretical framework focused on in this study was the homology assumption, which recommends that similar criminal behaviors reflect similar features in offenders' backgrounds (Almond et al., 2018). Lastly, the conceptual framework in this study, the profiling equation, was explained as a model of reasoning applied to all offender profiling practices, as the framework maintains that criminals' characteristics can be understood or deduced, by systematic analysis of criminals' actions at a crime scene (Canter, 2011).

The qualitative research tradition selected to explore the concepts of interest in this study, was phenomenology. Classic phenomenological studies have concentrated on the meaning of phenomena according to the interpretations of those that have relevant lived experiences (Qutoshi, 2018). In keeping with the tradition of phenomenological inquiry, this study applied a branch of phenomenology known as interpretative phenomenological analysis. Originating within the psychological sciences, interpretative phenomenological analysis has been employed to study psychological issues that arise in the real world (Creswell, 2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis thus consists of purposeful conversations between a researcher and participant, in which research questions are posed and interpretive data collected and analyzed (Alase, 2017).

When deciding the most appropriate qualitative research tradition to investigate the phenomena of interest in this study, it became clear after searching various designs, that interpretative phenomenological analysis was ideal because this research tradition has proven effective within criminological studies and offers meaningful data that can be used to inform policy (Miner-Ramanoff, 2012). Moreover, this tradition was chosen

because this research method quadruples the benefits of qualitative study, including the provision of a structured method of analysis (Alase, 2017). Therefore, this tradition was selected because of the flexibility it offers the researcher in terms of design creativity, as the guidelines embrace scholars' originality and subsequently support the ability of the researcher to formulate germane questions that meet research objectives (Noon, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study was that of a participant to the extent that I was the interviewer and person responsible for collecting and analysing data following the disclosure of interviewees' lived experiences. The role of the researcher also involved choosing the research design and creating the data collection instruments used in this study. Further, the role of the researcher included being responsible for the sourcing and vetting of participants and the interpretation and publication of the findings of this study.

Given my role as the researcher facilitating this qualitative study, it is possible that researcher bias likely influenced data collection and analysis. Specifically, confirmation bias (Schumm, 2021) may have occurred, as my understanding of the phenomena of interest was informed by my review of the literature during this study. Likewise, cultural bias (Schmidt et al., 2021) may have also been present due to my increased exposure to North American depictions of offender profiling, in contrast to my limited knowledge of European profiling practices. As such, the design of this study and subsequent interpretation of the findings may have been guided by my cultural understanding of the subject. Selection bias (Hannerz & Tutenges, 2021) may have also impacted this study, as participants were selected based upon credentials and experience.

The above-described researcher biases were managed by use of the following strategies. Principally, multiple methods of coding were introduced, as the data in this study was analyzed both manually and by software (Lungu, 2022) to avoid confirmation bias or the verification of any personal preconceptions regarding the topics studied. Similarly, during interpretation and discussion of the results of this study, alternative explanations were acknowledged to reduce the possibility of confirmation bias. Next, issues related to cultural bias were addressed by developing a culturally informed international perspective on criminological issues (Van Swaaningen, 2021), like that of offender profiling and criminal investigation, by means of the continual review of relevant literature. Selection bias was likewise combated by ensuring that participants in this study were representative of the population of interest (Taherdoost, 2016), as the sample was chosen as randomly as possible, according to methods of snowball sampling.

Comparable to issues of bias noted, ethical issues were also important to examine in this study. Accordingly, the potential for harm was a significant ethical issue, given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in this study, it was possible that the researcher and or participant(s) could experience psychological harm (Moran & Asquith, 2020). Equally, researchers have historically highlighted the difficulty associated with accessing criminal profile authors (Olszak-Häkler, 2019), so it was anticipated that confidentiality issues could arise in terms of participants' privacy concerns related to the disclosure of lived experiences. An ethical issue of informed consent was also considered in this study, because it was challenging to gain the informed consent of participants without fully revealing all interview questions to participants beforehand (Allmark et al., 2009).

Following is the plan that was implemented to manage the above ethical issues in this study. Regarding the ethical issue of a researcher and or participant(s) being harmed due to the research process, the recommendations of Allmark et al. (2009) were adhered to, as adequate support systems were put in place when conducting this study, namely the supportive relationships established between the researcher and committee. In this same way, suggestions by Allmark et al. were followed, as attention was given to participants' cues during interviews, with interviews offered to be paused or stopped if questioning was believed to be harmful, and information was given to participants regarding resources available that could offer support. Issues of confidentiality were then resolved by referring to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct guidance, as confidentiality was maintained in this study by removing participants' identifiable information and safeguarding all records through the secure storage of the data collected (American Psychological Association, 2017). Informed consent issues were also addressed, as the purpose, duration, and methods of the study were disclosed before participants agreed to join, as was acknowledgment of the participants' right to withdraw and to ask questions about the study (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Researcher and participant relationships in this study were based strictly on professional connections, with contacts made through networking efforts, and no prior relationships having existed between the researcher and participants. However, as snowball sampling (Parker et al., 2019) was implemented as part of the research design in this study, it was possible that power dynamics existed within participants' relationships before the study, which may have influenced the cross section of participants referred,

and thereafter, participants' willingness to contribute to the study. Nevertheless, the power dynamics that existed between the researcher and participants in this study consisted of those of a student researcher seeking tacit knowledge regarding the lived experiences of professionals with expertise in the field of criminal profiling. Thus, given the nature of the study and the backgrounds of criminal profile authors, interviewees were subject matter experts with insight superior to that of the researcher. The power dynamics in these relationships were thus managed by defining the roles of the researcher and participants, as well as acknowledging participants' expertise from the onset of the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Professional criminal profile authors were the population of interest in this study, with chain-referral, or snowball sampling applied as the strategy for participant recruitment. Snowball sampling is a purposeful form of sampling employed to access specified participants with preferred characteristics (Naderifar et al., 2017). This method of sampling was chosen as it appeared to be the best strategy that fit the qualitative design of this study and facilitated answers to the research questions. Further, snowball sampling was selected because this method of sampling is suitable for studies that explore topics of a closed nature, since snowball sampling uses participants from initial recruitment to encourage or refer additional participants within confidential professions to participate in a study (Taherdoost, 2016). In addition, snowball sampling or chain-referral sampling, is a popular sampling strategy used in criminological subculture research, given the participant engagement afforded by this sampling method (Hannerz & Tutenges, 2021).

There were five domains of expertise that represented the criteria for participant selection in this study. First, participants were required to have professional experience relative to offender profiling, as Alison et al. (2010) argued that effective offender profiling is fundamentally based upon tacit expert knowledge developed from experience. Second, it was vital that participants had credentials, as although offender profilers' credentials are diverse and there are no definitive educational requirements necessary (Snook et al., 2007), credentials represent scientific soundness and offer experts credibility (Postal, 2019). Third, participants had to have taught or disseminated expert knowledge, as teaching is indicative of reflexive practice and the intentional skills development essential for the establishment of expertise (Winch, 2016). Fourth, participants had to have authored peer reviewed literature, as such publications represent scientific legitimacy (Baldwin, 2018). Fifth, and perhaps most important given the sampling technique used in this study, as part of the criteria participants had to be referred by peers, as consensus amongst peers confirmed expert achievement (Chi, 2006). In addition, all participants were professionally based in Europe and or North America.

Participants were known to meet the criteria in this study based initially on referrals from other participants using snowball sampling (see Parker et al., 2019). Following, an interview invitation was shared within participants' personal networks, which highlighted the participant selection criteria, and a consent form was then emailed to participants after their expression of interest was received (see Crombie et al., 2018). Participants' expertise was corroborated via online research to verify participants' identities and contributions to the field and again verified during the interview process.

Given the phenomenological research tradition observed in this study, it was decided that 10 criminal profile authors would be recruited as participants. The rationale for this sample size was based upon the approach taken to data collection, as in-depth interviews were sought in line with recommendations from Nizza et al. (2021), with the researchers suggesting that academics using interpretative phenomenological analysis focus on the quality of data collected, as opposed to the quantity. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) also advised that a minimum of six and maximum of eight participants be included within interpretative phenomenological analysis research designs, as advocated in British doctoral psychology programs, albeit many interpretative phenomenological studies have been known to employ larger samples, between one and 15 participants.

Like the above sample size recommendations, Alase (2017) encouraged the recruitment of between two and 25 participants within studies using interpretative phenomenological analysis, because of the homogenous nature of participants in these studies, the authors reasoned that a sample size within this range could provide the most detailed and meaningful data required to reach sufficient saturation. Saturation was important in this study as it was essential for the demonstration of content validity and was indicative of the phenomena of interest being investigated exhaustively (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Accordingly, while there are varying sample sizes endorsed for this type of phenomenological study, to achieve a deep understanding of participants' lived experiences, to guard against attrition (Mitchell et al., 2021), and to allow for a rigorous sample size that would ensure saturation of the data wherein no further insights into the phenomena of interest were attainable, 10 participants were selected in this study.

Ensuing, participants were identified by way of networking efforts, as committee members were consulted regarding pertinent knowledge of potential participants. Likewise, online research was conducted to locate professionals in the field of criminal profiling that met the criteria. The first participant was contacted through direct message and email, and a request was made for the profile author to participate in this study and or to refer other qualified candidates. After initial contact with a participant, it was confirmed that the profile author was interested in joining the study, and that they met the criteria. A consent form was then emailed to participants, which included all details of the study. Following, participants were engaged via online audio platforms. A semi-structured interview was completed with data captured using audio recordings, with my thoughts as the researcher logged in a journal and any associated legal documentation regarding further information on the cases discussed during interviews, then investigated and where possible, accessed via online open-source databases. These procedures were repeated for identification, contact, and recruitment of all other participants in this study.

Instrumentation

The data collection tools used to complete this study comprised a semi-structured interview protocol, a reflexive journal, field notes, legal documents, as well as audio recordings. The interview protocol was researcher produced, as were the reflexive journal and field notes. Legal documents in this study will be obtained from online open-source databases, while the audios collected will be acquired using communication devices like that of the telephone, Zoom or Teams meetings, dependent upon participant preference.

The legal documents sourced as part of the data collected in this study was done so for objectivity purposes and to offer further evidence that could support disclosures made regarding participants' lived experiences. Historical documents reviewed included where possible, arrest records and any further case file information available by way of the courts, prisons, and or any other applicable statutory entities. The aforesaid documents were considered reputable as qualitative studies have used such documents to illustrate a pragmatic approach to mapping crime series and related criminal events that may not have resulted in conviction data (see Campana & Varese, 2022). The documents reviewed in this study represent the best sources of data because such documents are factual accounts of historical criminal behaviors acknowledged by the criminal justice system. Alike, Khoshnood and Fritz (2017) similarly also relied upon such documents in previous studies of offending behaviors assessed to establish effective criminal profiles.

The data collection instruments used in this study were adequate, as each facilitated answers to the research questions and sufficiently explored the phenomena of interest. Namely, international methods of offender profile construction, opportunities for the standardization of profiling practices, and related effective criminal investigative processes were examined by speaking with the professionals that had direct experience engaging with these topics. Equally, accessing documents that could corroborate offender profiles, the keeping of notes, and audio recordings were all tools that aided the collection of data used to answer the research questions in this study. Strategies that ensured the validity of this study were built into the research design, as data collection was congruent with the qualitative tradition, and facilitated data saturation in this study (Cypress, 2017).

Researcher-Developed Instrument

Confirming content validity in this study was essential, as the outcome of a valid study proves that the methods used to measure the phenomena of interest, effectively measured the intended variables (Ahlin, 2019). Hence, several approaches were taken to guarantee content validity. First, was use of an interpretivist approach, as such is known to increase validity (Cypress, 2017); therefore, an interpretative phenomenological research design was chosen. This type of design functioned to allow for an inductive approach to the study, as the focus was on the interpretation of participants' lived experiences, relative to the phenomena of interest. Participants were encouraged to explore the topics of interest, as follow up questions were incorporated within the interview protocol. The reflexive nature of this study often seen in interpretative phenomenological studies was significant, as it increased the validity of the data collected and provided concept clarification (see Miner-Romanoff, 2012). Further, the gathering of data directly from knowledgeable sources was facilitated by semi-structured interviews, which also increased validity, as did participants' consistent responses (see Ahlin, 2019).

One of the data collection instruments developed in this study was done following recognition of the previous use of semi-structured interviews within the assessment of offender profile construction methods studied by Yokota et al. (2017). Equally, work by Yaksic et al. (2019) was also referenced in terms of the authors' completion of semi-structured interviews with experts. Thereafter, my thoughts were recorded in a journal, as this has been shown to be a useful reflexive practice and method of ensuring that an audit trail exists throughout the study (see Nowell et al., 2017). Subsequently, data within the

legal documents collected in this study was included based upon awareness of prior research in the *Coals to Newcastle* project undertaken by the British Home Office, in which offenders' conviction records were compared with offender profiles (Copson, 1995). Similarly, Khoshnood and Fritz (2017) also used conviction records during analysis of offender profiles. Finally, audio recordings were implemented due to Miner-Romanoff (2012), as the author noted that this data collection method is useful when re-immersing oneself in the data and understanding the lived experience of the participant. Equally, audio recordings were used for transcription purposes (Moran & Asquith, 2020).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Data in this study were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted between criminal profile authors and myself, as the sole researcher I compiled the data via audio recordings. Following, researcher observations were recorded within a reflexive journal (Stutey et al., 2020), and in field notes (Johnson et al., 2020). Given the minimal number of interviews required based upon the qualitative research design selected (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), each participant was interviewed one time, with participant led interview durations (Mullan et al., 2018) expected to range between one hour (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012) and 90 minutes. Legal documents were collected from public records, court, probation, law enforcement, or any other open-source database. Legal records were important to review in this study because such offered insight into criminal behavior, like that of offense type, location, and the offender's background, and or any other offender characteristics relevant to this study (Shoemaker & Ward, 2017).

The follow-up plan that would have been implemented if recruitment had resulted in less than the 10 participants proposed in this study, would have been to initially revisit the existing participants, as requests would have been made for further referrals in accordance with the snowball sampling approach (see Parker et al., 2019) instituted in this study. Next, if this strategy had proven to be unsuccessful, additional online research and networking efforts would have been made to contact qualifying criminal profile authors and request their participation. Thereafter, if this approach had also been fruitless, a smaller sample size than projected would have been accepted, as a minimum of six participants has been recognized as a satisfactory sample size within phenomenological research (see Ellis, 2016; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The most important factor that dictated the sufficiency of the sample size in this study, was saturation, which is argued to be the guiding principle in qualitative research, as saturation ensures validity and the collection of defensible data that can produce valuable research outcomes (Mason, 2010).

Interviews in this study commenced once participants were recruited and had agreed to the consent form (Alase, 2017), which was emailed during initial contact. The consent form disclosed details of the study, interviewer, institution, what's involved, potential benefits and risks to participants, the confidentiality of data collected, as well as the intended storage and destruction of data. The consent form noted who has access to the data, the voluntary participation procedures, publication details of the study, including confirmation that an executive summary will be sent to participants outlining the results of the study, and the contact details related to the ethical clearance obtained for this study

(see Byrne, 2001). While follow-up interviews were not anticipated, if necessary, participants could have been asked to engage in supplementary interviews.

Upon completion of interviews, the procedure for participants exiting the study included, the interviewees being debriefed verbally at the end of each interview (Fouracres & Nieuwerburgh, 2020). The consent form was referenced as participants were reminded that the results of this study, in the form of an executive summary, would be shared with them via email following the publication of this study. The consent form was an important feature of this study, as it presented a chance for participants to reflect on the particulars of the study and it provided details regarding how to email me with any queries or concerns that developed after being interviewed (see Reñosa et al., 2021).

Data Analysis Plan

Interpretative phenomenological analysis requires the evaluation of qualitative data to describe the experiential themes of participants according to the researcher's interpretation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). In this study, 10 participants were interviewed to determine the lived experiences and meaningful insights of profile authors, relative to the phenomena of interest. The data in this study was connected to the research questions and gained through interviews, which offered a deep understanding of international methods of profile construction and the rationale involved. As well, the data provided rich information about existing opportunities for practice standardization, and knowledge of how profiles contribute to effective criminal investigations. Interview data was transcribed using Zoom and Teams applications, and then also manually transcribed, followed by the application of NVivo during data analysis (see O'Toole, 2018).

Thematic coding was used to identify patterns in participants' descriptions of the phenomena of interest and the meaning associated with participants' lived experiences, relative to the research questions in this study (see Braun & Clarke, 2020). A bottom-up approach, or micro level data analysis was initially applied in the examination of each interview (see Braun & Clarke, 2006), until all interviews were completed, and then data was analyzed at a macro level to recognize thematic developments (see Love et al., 2020). Thereafter, my perceptions as the researcher in this study were reflected upon, as were the theoretical and conceptual frameworks proposed, to bracket off any preconceptions and to compare the theories to data (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Next, items were noted, with thematic categories created, and the meanings analyzed (Alase, 2017).

Discrepant cases, or those that offered data that contradicted common themes found within the research were presented, together with all cases, including those that corresponded to the common themes, as this holistic approach to studying the phenomena of interest increased the validity of the study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Additionally, alternative explanations for unusual findings were discussed (Maxwell, 2013), and the discrepant data were noted as suggested topics for future research (Booth et al., 2013). Acknowledgment of the discrepant data demonstrated research integrity (Coyne, 1997).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

A strategy applied to establish credibility, or the internal validity of this study, consisted of continued reflexivity (Stutey et al., 2020), illustrated through the documentation of researcher reflections within a reflexive journal during the collection and analysis of qualitative data in this study. Thereafter, data saturation was achieved in this study by means of a sufficient sample size, which also worked to increase internal validity (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Another strategy used to evidence the credibility of this study, was peer review, which this study received, as scholarly work undertaken was evaluated prior to publication by committee members who are subject matter experts (Kelly et al., 2014) in the fields of criminal psychology and criminal investigation.

Transferability

Given the qualitative nature of this study, external validity was limited as results were unable to be generalized to the larger population without contextual stipulations (see Stahl & King, 2020). Nevertheless, strategies used to increase the transferability of this study included the collection of comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena of interest (see Stahl & King, 2020) according to participants' lived experiences, as such findings may be transferable granting replication within comparable settings. The identification of participants' idiosyncratic perceptions (see Coy, 2019), and the recognition of patterns within the data (see Stahl & King, 2020) were also strategies used to increase the transferability of findings in this study, to both similar and diverse circumstances. As well, accurate data presented in this study increased transferability (see Randles, 2012).

Dependability

An appropriate strategy implemented to ensure dependability in this study included the use of audit trails, as these records documented the methodological and interpretative procedures followed to complete the study (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this same way, direct quotations from the data collected were shared as a strategy to signify dependability and display the quality of codes, explain the creation of themes, and the determination of findings (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Furthermore, intracoder reliability, or consistency in the approach taken to code the data across time series was also a strategy used to increase dependability in this study (see O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). As well, the scope of this study was outlined, and social implications identified, each of which acted as approaches contributing to dependability (see Nguyen et al., 2021).

Confirmability

Strategies used to illustrate the confirmability of this research, or the degree to which if replicated others could verify the interpretations of the data, included the use of audit trails, as previously noted these research records were kept, providing stepwise transparency throughout the study (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Alike, a reflexive journal as formerly discussed was also maintained to document my thoughts as the researcher in this study, and was used as a log that could be critically reflected upon to view my subjective positions during the research process (see Rose & Johnson, 2020). Given that auditing is one of the best ways to establish confirmability in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), such was applied in this study by way of field notes, which is a form of triangulation that reduced researcher bias and error (see Johnson et al., 2020).

Ethical Procedures

Agreement to gain access to participants in this study was facilitated through the implementation of snowball sampling (see Parker et al., 2019) and the confirmatory responses to consent forms by participating criminal profile authors in Europe and North America, following research approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board and the Office of International Compilation of Human Research Standards, approval number 03-31-23-1018549. Interview invitations were sent to participants, followed by the consent form, and those interested responded by email and agreed to join this study. Participants' human and civil rights were upheld, and all efforts were made to respond to participants' needs, such as the provision of a break(s) during interviews (American Psychological Association, 2017). The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2017) were adhered to during data collection, as publicly available data sources were accessed, with all data having been approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board prior to collection.

Despite the ethical guidelines observed in this study as noted above, an ethical concern related to recruitment was the potential for participants to have preexisting imbalances of power within relationships, as such was viewed as a factor that could influence participants' willingness to join this study, although given that participants' identities remained confidential throughout the study, this ethical concern was resolved. All ethical concerns related to partner organizations were also voided, given that no partner organizations were employed in the completion of this study, as participants were recruited from the personal networks of other participants and not from organizations.

Thereafter, an ethical concern related to data collection had to do with the fact that all data collected in this study, including participants' names and contact information was done so with the understanding that it would be confidential. Accordingly, to protect privacy, participants were asked before beginning interviews if they were in a private space, and I too confirmed that I was in a private location. Privacy was maintained in this study, as data collected were stored on my personal device, of which I as the researcher had sole control of, and all data were coded, with identifying data stored separately from codes. Precautions were also taken to ensure that my device and the data therein was not stolen, as my device remained locked and password secured when not in use, and it was not left unattended in public. I was the only person with the password to access my device, which had a screen lock that initiated after five minutes of inactivity and had an operating system and anti-virus software that were regularly updated. Any physical forms of the data were also only accessible to me, and thereafter disposed of in confidential waste. All electronic data will be destroyed 5 years after completion of this study.

While participants demographic details were shared within the results of this study, all identifying features were kept confidential. All participants' confirmatory emails responding to the consent form were filed in the research data. Minimal psychological risks existed for participants, but those that did, such as the potential difficulty associated with discussion of the phenomena of interest, were outweighed by the benefits of this study. No legal risks existed to participants, given the historical nature of the profiles examined. Results will be shared with participants at the end of this study, as an email will be sent to each participant with an executive summary of the findings.

Summary

This chapter reintroduced this study and thus restated the purpose, research questions, research tradition, and central phenomena of interest relevant to the applicable methodology. The role of the researcher was described, as were related ethical issues and procedures. Ensuing, the methodological design of this study was delineated and included the procedures for participant recruitment, such as participant selection logic and criteria. Instrumentation applied in this study was also noted and all data collection instruments discussed, like that of the consent form, audit trails, field notes, reflexive journal, and the interview protocol. The data collection process was also disclosed, as was the data analysis plan. Issues of trustworthiness were then considered, and the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of this study were highlighted.

With the foundation of this qualitative study now firmly established, chapter four will outline the data collection process undertaken and will introduce the setting in which this study occurred. The demographic and total number of participants interviewed will be noted. Further, characteristics of the data collected will be explained, like the duration of interviews and geographical origins of participants. Any variations in data collection will be clarified, as will any associated unusual circumstances. The data analysis section will report the stepwise process used to code the data, the categories, and the themes that emerged, as well, any discrepant cases will also be examined in this section. Evidence of the trustworthiness of this study will be reiterated, and the results detailing how this study addressed the research questions will be presented, followed by a chapter summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore international methods of offender profile construction, identify opportunities for standardization, and describe how profiles may support effective criminal investigative processes, in accordance with the lived experiences of profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America. This chapter features the setting in which this research was conducted, the participant demographics, data collection, and analysis procedures, and it further evidences the trustworthiness of the methodology applied in this study. Thereafter, the results, including the evolving themes, and a summary are provided. The lived experiences of participants were examined in this study, relevant to the phenomena of interest. Namely, participants' experiences authoring criminal profiles internationally were explored, by way of insights gleaned pertinent to the research questions in this study, listed below.

RQ1: How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles, and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?

RQ2: According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?

RQ3: What is an offender profiler's experience of if and/or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?

Setting

Approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board was received, after which participant recruitment commenced, and interviews were conducted remotely using Zoom or Teams. Personal conditions that influenced data collection included, the fact that all participants were in varying geographical locations from myself, and associated differences likely influenced our interactions. Specifically, there was a difference in dialect noted, as two participants were Spanish speaking, and one participant was French speaking, however, I, as the interviewer, was English speaking, and all interviews were completed in English. Consequently, there may have been linguistic discrepancies that had the potential to influence participants' experiences of the study. This factor may have also impacted the interpretation and results of the final study. Likewise, given the sensitive nature of this research and interviewees' associations with related governing bodies, it is likely that organizational obligations linked to data protection laws may have influenced participants' disclosures and overall experiences.

Demographics

Ten participants were interviewed for this qualitative study and ranged in age between 51 and 69 years old, with interviewees having a minimum of 10 and maximum of 40 years of experience authoring criminal profiles. There were seven male and three female participants, each professionally based in Europe or North America, including profile authors from France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. All participants had completed extensive training related to criminal profiling, and each had academic credentials, with two participants having a college and/or

bachelor's degree, four participants had master's degrees, and four had doctoral degrees. Each participant was publicly recognized as a subject matter expert and had taught content related to criminal profiling. Likewise, all but two participants in this study had authored publicly accessible peer reviewed literature. The two practitioners who had not, were unable to provide publications, though it was noted that these profile authors had published internally accessible works within government organizations. These participants had been practicing criminal profile authors for a combined 29 years and were Board Certified and or instructors with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The experience offered by these practitioners was necessary, due to the comprehensive nature of their lived experiences, and their accreditation by the aforesaid professional bodies was deemed as sufficient and outweighed the absence of accessible publications.

Most criminal profile authors interviewed in this study were either currently retired practitioners and or primary academics, while others were presently employed as psychology professionals and or multidisciplinary consultants. Participants disclosed having authored criminal profiles supplied to such law enforcement agencies as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, MI5, MI6, New Scotland Yard, the National Crime Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the French Military, the Spanish National Police, and the South African Police Service. Accordingly, participants described having been commissioned to author criminal profiles in such countries as Italy, Spain, Mexico, Peru, Panama, Ecuador, Colombia, Romania, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Aruba, Russia, and Vietnam.

Table 1 shows the demographics and employment background of participants.

Table 1

Demographics and Employment Background

Participant	Gender	Years authoring profiles	Professional base	Education	Employment background
P1	M	15	Europe	Master's degree	LEO
P2	M	27	Europe	PhD	Academic
P3	F	40	Europe	Master's degree	Psychologist
P4	M	10	Europe	PhD	Academic
P5	F	13	Europe	PhD	Academic
P6	M	29	North America	Master's degree	LEO
P7	M	27	North America	PhD	LEO
P8	M	10	North America	Master's degree	LEO
P9	M	19	North America	College degree	LEO
P10	F	20	Europe	Bachelor's degree	Academic

Note. LEO = Law enforcement officer.

Data Collection

The 10 participants in this study were contacted via email and direct message following networking efforts and online research. A copy of the interview invitation and consent form were emailed, and interviews were scheduled. Semi-structured interviews were completed between May and August of 2023. All interviews were conducted using Zoom, except for one, which was completed using Teams, in accordance with participant preference. As the researcher, I completed all interviews from my home office, and all participants confirmed that they were in a private location at the start of each interview.

Qualitative data were collected, as semi-structured interviews were completed using the interview protocol created, and each was documented using the transcription and audio recording functions on Zoom and/or Teams. Participant consent was confirmed prior to interviews, and each participant was interviewed one time, with the duration

participant led. The shortest interview lasted approximately 53 minutes, and the longest was 2 hours and 11 minutes. Data were also collected in a reflexive journal and field notes were updated regularly for the duration of this study. Legal documents were accessed from open-source databases in the example cases provided, specifically those able to be cross-referenced. The related documents collected, included court reports and recommendations (see Casetext Inc., 2024), sentencing details, previous convictions (see Reuters, 2024), and event timelines (see Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2024a). Alike, mental health records and the cultural backgrounds of offenders within cases referenced were also reviewed (see Gunn, 2002), as were inferred offender motivations (see Piccotti, 2023), characteristics, and the victimological data noted (see Innes & Doncaster, 2024).

There were some variations observed between the initial data collection plan presented in chapter three and data collected in the final study. Primarily, the length of interviews, as a minimum of one hour and maximum of 90 minutes was initially proposed, although not all interviews followed this timescale. Equally, the telephone was not used as a data collection instrument in this study, as all interviews were conducted via Zoom or Teams according to participant preference. Next, despite all participants being asked to provide an example criminal profile, only three profile authors were able to accommodate. However, one interviewee was able to advise on a publicly accessible resource that contained a criminal profile, and yet another provided a theoretical resource with stepwise processes, which was reported to currently be implemented by some European law enforcement agencies. Likewise, in terms of discussing profiles that each author had published, in an effort to cross-reference for objectivity purposes, only six of

the 10 participants interviewed were able to disclose cases in which they had composed a criminal profile. Notwithstanding most profile authors being unable to legally send me the profiles discussed, the cases that were divulged were already in the public domain, so confidentiality was maintained. Thus, criminal profiles for the following were mentioned during interviews, and even though profiles were not provided, open-source research was conducted for the cases of Juana Barraza the Old Lady Killer, Peter Sutcliffe the Yorkshire Ripper, Theodore Kaczynski the Unabomber, David Copeland the Nail Bomber, John Muhammed and Lee Malvo, The Beltway Snipers, and Stephen Bryant.

There were some unusual circumstances encountered during the data collection process. Specifically, as was previously described, there was a language barrier between me as the researcher, and some participants. This challenge was overcome, as two participants spoke English in addition to their native languages and completed interviews in English. However, one participant required an interpreter, and recruited his adult daughter to translate. As such, in essence a translator thus also was present and/or participated in this study by proxy. Thereafter, while several participants agreed during interviews to send documentation post interview, there were some who did not send any supplemental data, such as example criminal profiles. Lastly, it was also unexpected that some participants in this study would not have accessible peer-reviewed publications. While two aforementioned participants in this study disclosed having contributed to peer-reviewed literature published internally within government organizations, it was not considered prior to designing this study and the participant criteria, that participants potentially could be professional criminal profile authors and not also published authors.

Data Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data in this study was guided by the recommended steps outlined by Smith and Nizza (2022), and the stages described by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012). Following, a systematic analysis of the qualitative data, an inductive approach was taken to identify and organize coded units of data into larger representations, like that of categories and themes. Ensuing, raw data in the form of audio recordings and transcripts were automatically produced following the completion of 10 semi-structured interviews that were conducted using the online communication platforms, Teams (1 interview) and Zoom (9 interviews). Afterwards, each interview was transcribed manually, and open codes were created. During the generation of codes, participants were allocated unique identification numbers to ensure their identity remained confidential. Codes were established after each interview was read multiple times and exploratory comments were written within field notes and a reflexive journal.

Following the manual coding of interviews, NVivo v. 14 software was employed as a secondary means of evaluating and interpreting the data. Upon review of the content within each code, categories of emergent themes, including thematic relationships and cluster themes were revealed (see Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), and represented by way of a Mind Map (see Appendix A). All themes were developed based upon their relevance to the research questions, including experiential statements, such as master themes or group experiential themes, and superordinate themes, or personal experiential themes. Themes were found by identifying patterns of converging and or diverging experiences amongst participants as a group, and personal experiences in single cases (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

The data collected from interviews was initially separated into categories using open codes, which were assigned as a way of structuring the data and later assisted in clustering themes. The codes included criminal profile methods & reasoning, criminal investigative processes, and practice standardization. Themes were clustered based on abstraction and subsumption (Willig, 2013), with data analysis revealing that within Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods and reasoning, the group experiential theme described by participants included, taking a case-by-case approach, while personal experiential themes consisted of the theories and models referenced by profile authors, and the subsequent profile characteristics implemented. Thereafter, Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization, grouped master themes related to professional collaboration and succession planning, with a personal experiential theme related to practice standards. Finally, Theme Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes encompassed the group experiential theme, practices and procedures, with an additional personal experiential theme outlining participants' investigative recommendations based on lived experiences.

The above themes are elaborated upon within the results section of this study. After coding and identifying emergent themes within the first six interviews, it was clear that data saturation had occurred, as no further insights were recognized, and participants' responses became repetitive. Data saturation was essential in this study, as it signified that the sample size was sufficient for the phenomena, and that valid data collection had been achieved using the chosen methodology (see Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Although data saturation was accomplished and group experiential themes were identified, some cases in this study demonstrated discrepant qualities, which were

considered when analyzing the data. Discrepant qualities were illustrated within personal experiential themes, namely when profile authors described methods applied to establish profile characteristics and within the theories and models used to justify profile claims. Similarly, practice standards were also acknowledged as a personal experiential theme that displayed discrepant qualities, as profile authors' views of the appropriateness of practice standardization varied, as did associated investigative recommendations. All relevant discrepant cases were included within the data analysis and results, to effectively interpret participants' lived experiences and produce a corresponding accurate narrative.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The participants in this study offered comprehensive descriptions of their lived experiences authoring criminal profiles. Accounts included the methods involved and the reasoning that underwrites decision making processes. Criminal profile authors discussed the extent to which they viewed, in accordance with their experience, the degree to which offender profiling can become an internationally standardized practice, and how expertise provided by profile authors contributes to effective criminal investigative procedures.

Credibility

The recording of researcher thoughts, in terms of my experiences interviewing participants during the research process, were noted in a reflexive journal, which encouraged continued reflection and increased validity (see Stutey et al., 2020). Comparably, data saturation was achieved, which reinforced internal validity, while overlapping themes offered additional evidence of the credibility of the collection and analysis of data (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). This study was also peer reviewed, which

further increased credibility, as committee members are experts in criminal investigation and psychology, and feedback was implemented prior to the publication of this study.

Transferability

Even though the results of this qualitative study have limited generalizability without contextual specifications (Stahl & King, 2020), external validity was attained by way of gathering detailed descriptions regarding the lived experiences of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interview protocol was applied, and supplementary clarification questions were asked during interviews to provoke in-depth responses and participants' idiosyncratic perceptions (Coy, 2019), while thematic patterns in the data were highlighted (Stahl & King, 2020) to increase the transferability of findings to relevant circumstances. Moreover, the data were represented accurately, which increased transferability (Randles, 2012), and inclusion criteria for participants was clearly defined. Thus, the population can be replicated and is transferable to corresponding future studies.

Dependability

The application of audit trails throughout this study, including the use of a reflexive journal, field notes, and other legal documents assured dependability, as these records traced the procedural and interpretative rationale employed within data analysis (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Likewise, quotes from participants were revealed to denote dependability and to stress the value of codes and concluding themes, as well as to further offer transparency regarding the interpretation of results (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Intracoder reliability was also utilized to ensure the dependability of this study, as methods used to code the data were consistent (see O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

Confirmability

Like the techniques used to bolster dependability, audit trails were used in this study because providing documented step-by-step processes is one of the most effective approaches to guarantee confirmability (Creswell, 2007). In this way, audit trails were a method of data triangulation, offering various data sources to illustrate confirmability and guard against researcher bias and or error (Johnson et al., 2020). Investigator triangulation was also used, as the data in this study were analyzed by faculty, and their expertise was incorporated during data analysis (see Bans-Akutey & Timub, 2021).

Results

The results of this study are discussed below and structured in a hierarchical fashion, beginning with the research questions, followed by the corresponding group experiential and then personal experiential themes. The group and personal experiential themes are interpreted via the application of double hermeneutics (Montague et al., 2020) and analyzed based on their relevance to the research questions. Thereafter, data in the discrepant cases are examined, as are relationships amongst the overarching themes.

Upon review of the data outlined within the group experiential themes in this study, patterns amongst participants' experiences emerged and themes were identified. Fundamentally, all participants described the importance of each criminal profile being unique and suggested that a case-by-case approach be taken to profile construction. Next, all participants highlighted the importance of creating a criminal profile that draws upon various sources of information, as such supports professional collaboration. Challenges related to succession planning and linked practices and procedures were further noted.

Following on from the master themes above, there were also divergent qualities displayed in the personal experiential themes discovered in this study. Specifically, discrepant qualities were found in the methods participants described using to construct criminal profiles internationally, this was seen in the profile characteristics included within criminal profiles, and participants reliance upon associated theories and models in the justification of profile claims. In this same way, practice standards and investigative recommendations were also themes that exhibited discrepant qualities, of which were described in the personal experiential statements about participants' lived experiences.

RQ1: How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles, and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?

Theme Cluster 1: Criminal Profile Methods and Reasoning

The first master theme, or group experiential theme (see Smith & Nizza, 2022) in this study was titled a case-by-case approach and it was identified within Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods and reasoning. Participants stressed the importance of assessing each criminal investigation separately and creating a corresponding custom profile. All participants had experience creating criminal profiles for violent and sexual offenders and described their practices accordingly. Participants shared their lived experiences creating profiles, and the distinctive methods and reasoning implemented to produce the most valuable profile of an unknown criminal offender. Hence, the practice of taking a case-by-case approach in the evaluation of criminal behavior and profile construction was revealed by participants as being integral, as it was argued that this technique is consistently employed regardless of the approach taken in profile creation.

Table 2 outlines the case-by-case approach theme.

Table 2

Case-by-Case Approach

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?	P1's translator		"To observe knowledge, different things can be helpful to evolve ...he integrates different methodologies, from different schools, that take elements that can be functional in one case."
	P2		"...each case is unique, and I never use information from other cases in the analysis of a case, because each case is unique and is determined by a dynamic that is unique." and "That is why the VERA Method is a case method. It is qualitative research, and it can only be applied to the case being investigated."
	P3		"You have to go into each one [investigation] with a completely open mind and process, because each perpetrator you know the end product perhaps is a murder right, or serial rapist, or something like this, so the end product is the same, but each one [offender] will go about it in a different way."
	P4		"The crime scenes are consistent in that it; they happen inside their space that they typically operate in, they don't venture out of that to go and commit those crimes, but very different in, in terms of the typology of the offender."
	P5		"...every offense is kind of completely different... but it depends on the nuances of the, of the case..." and "It's really difficult, you have to sort of do it [create a profile] exactly for that individual offense. So, we would always say, you know, if you have one stranger rape, and then you have another, you can't use the same profile, because it would be totally different potentially."
	P6		"...also don't be afraid to adapt when new evidence presents itself, and that happens all the time when you have multiple crime scenes, and it can strengthen what you've already said, or it can deviate it, you know, to a certain degree, and take it and do perhaps a different angle and there's nothing wrong with that, because you can only deal with the evidence you have at each and every crime scene..."
	P7		"...when you start looking at other crimes... are there selection criteria, or just anybody will do, and so those types of assessments need to be made and based upon the case facts..." and "I think that it's, there's a series of logical processes we... go through, to analyze the information" and "...we look at the case by case..."
	P8		"You have to look at each case individually. That's why I said it was a... it's a stupid, I come up with stupid analogies, but it's like you buy your, you buy your dinner à la carte, everything is à la carte, when you do, when you do a profile, it's à la carte, you don't order, and it comes with a tea and a side, and a salad." and "Why would you just take a stock profile and say, here's your offender, here it is, you're not, you want a custom fit, a custom fit ...you need a custom fit to that offender and to that particular crime."

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
	P9		“So, each offender has different motivations and different fantasies.” and “...each offender is different than the next offender or the previous one...” and “...each one of those murders there's different ways to do a link analysis, but each one of those murders... could be somewhat different.” and “Okay, because... each criminal is different, just because they kill, doesn't make them alike, okay, they kill for different reasons. They kill different ways, and any of that.”
	P10		“So, there is not a special form or a special you know, plan written of the way I am working, because, as each profile, each case also is unique...” and “Usually, this is the things we can be similar with, some of murderers, for me it's difficult once again, because each profile is different.” and “...what is more important is to detect the special action, what is not usual, or what is incongruent in the cases, and this gives the answer of what is special in this criminal.”

The above experiential statements outline a common method applied internationally to the construction of criminal profiles by participants in this study, that being a case-by-case approach. Primarily, participants shared their lived experiences identifying and analyzing crime scene evidence to create individualized profiles of the likely responsible offender(s). Profile authors noted that it was necessary to reference various data sources and assessment types when creating a criminal profile, as P1's translator explained that diverse approaches are considered when creating a profile, saying “he integrates different methodologies, from different schools, that take elements that can be functional in one case.” P7 later suggested that victimology assessments are crucial to review when generating a criminal profile, noting that, “when you start looking at other crimes, you know, are there selection criteria [for victims], or just anybody will do, and so those types of assessments need to be made and based upon the case facts.” P2 similarly disclosed the importance of applying a tailored approach to each criminal investigation using qualitative inquiry and saying, “That is why the VERA Method is a case method. It is qualitative research, and it can only be applied to the case being

investigated.” P2 further suggested that a case-by-case approach was crucial as, “each case is unique, and I never use information from other cases in the analysis of a case, because each case is unique and is determined by a dynamic that is unique.”

Next, an emphasis was placed on the value of acknowledging nuances in offending behavior displayed in each criminal investigation, as P5 described that a criminal profile used in one case, likely could not be used in another, saying,

It's really difficult, you have to sort of do it [create a profile] exactly for that individual offense... if you have one stranger rape, and then you have another, you can't use the same profile, because it would be totally different potentially.

Similarly, P3 and P9 suggested a case-by-case approach, as it was emphasized that individuals' offending styles differ, despite similarities in offense type. Accordingly, P3 said, “The end product perhaps is a murder right, or serial rapist, or something like this, so the end product is the same, but each one [offender] will go about it in a different way.” Likewise, P9 also commented on offending styles when the participant said, “Okay, because... each criminal is different, just because they kill, doesn't make them alike, okay, they kill for different reasons. They kill different ways, and any of that.”

Following, P10 explained that it is only by viewing cases independently that profile authors are able to recognize distinctive features of an offender that aid in profile formulation and an overall successful investigation saying, “What is more important is to detect the special action, what is not usual, or what is incongruent in the cases, and this gives the answer of what is special in this criminal.” Subsequently, P3 disclosed that to create a useful criminal profile, the author is required to be open minded, while P4 noted

the need for a profile author to be detail oriented and to synthesize available information. The ability to demonstrate flexible thinking when producing a criminal profile was also suggested by P6 as essential, with the reason being that without this skill, a criminal profile author could overlook vital new evidence necessary to provide an accurate profile.

Hence, one of the overarching group experiential themes shared amongst participants, was that each criminal profile is distinctive, given the evidence considered from each crime. P7 advised that the facts of each case should be thoroughly examined, and critical thought applied when creating a profile, saying, “I think that it's, there's a series of logical processes... that we would go through to analyze the information.” P8 then shared that creating a criminal profile is analogous to ordering a meal à la carte, as it was advised, “You have to look at each case individually... when you do a profile, it's à la carte, you don't order, and it comes with a tea and a side, and a salad.” Further, P8 stressed the importance of creating a profile that fits the crime and offender saying, “Why would you just take a stock profile and say, here's your offender... you're not, you want a custom fit ...you need a custom fit to that offender and to that particular crime.” In this study, all participants described taking a case-by-case approach to profile formulation.

The next theme recognized amongst participants was a personal experiential theme that embodied discrepant qualities. The theme outlined profile characteristics and was categorized within Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods and reasoning and it provided an overview of the methods used by profile authors to create criminal profiles. Namely, profile authors disclosed the elements contained within the criminal profiles that they have produced. While there were wide ranging differences between participants'

experiences, it was noteworthy that all participants shared that they generally included victimological and crime scene features within the profiles that they have devised.

Table 3 denotes the profile characteristics theme.

Table 3

Profile Characteristics

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?	P1's translator		"The ritual patterns of behavior from the offender, that are not specifically necessary to complete the crime, and also very important, all the information that the victim can provide us. Like in a direct form if he has survived the crime, and also, in a direct way through multiple sources, the family, professionals, environment, medical history, courts, psychiatric reports, psychological reports, like police reports also, prison records." and "In conclusion, the behavior between during and after the crime, that would allow us to make a profile, in a psychological way, and that would unite with the forensic information at the crime scene..."
	P2		"...profilers always go to using the VERA Method..." "...the VERA Method arises from the practice of what works and what does not work."
	P3		"Well, obviously the crime scene. I mean, before we used to do all things more or less together, but now they do things differently, because they've got so much more computerized data and things like this, you're actually looking at this whole process, profile of the person, you're looking at a geographical profile as well..." and "Then you've got the criminal profile from, a lot from the crime scenes that you're putting all the analytical data together."
	P4		"I would then map, physically map the crime sites, and using either CrimeStat 3, which is the last one that I used, I have also worked with other software like ArcGIS, with the criminology component in it, and I would basically get in and map all the crime scenes and using the mathematics and algorithms and computational formula behind the software, we would start developing hotspots, which would start indicating patterns that would point towards an offender's anchor point." and "...the psychological profile might build up a gender, it might start pointing to a space of age, it might start pointing to a space of a sort of social economic space, it could all start pointing into those areas, and that becomes important in the profile that you build up..."
	P5		"Okay, so in relation to creating an offender profile, that aspect of it, you would go and collect your data from the crime scene and from the investigation. So that may be, statements, photographs, visits to the crime scene, get a briefing from the officers, and so forth, and then you would take that away and sort of read and analyze all of that data, and you would pick out what you thought were the salient variables. So, for example, you'd pick out things that you thought may be salient about the offense in relation to the victimology." and "So, from getting all that data and kind of analysing what you think are the, the significant features and variables

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
	P6		<p>in the offense, you'd utilize a combination really, of academic research. So, you may look as an academic, to see what has been done in the area, on Google Scholar or whatever, to see what research had been done in the area. You would use the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database." and "...you could plug all of those variables into the database, and you could look at all cases like that, that have been detected, and you then could look at what you knew about those offenders." and "So maybe, you know, age parameters, ethnicity, previous convictions, and so forth." and "You can see it [ViCAP], it's got all of the questions, like; location, geographic location, physical features, vehicle description, victim information..."</p> <p>"...police reports, which is ideal, or direct witness testimony, which is ideal..." and "...have official police or investigative information, so ideally, a profile should come from a careful and very meticulous review of all the evidence of one or more crime scenes..." and "...I looked at every single crime scene picture, witness interviews, victim interviews..." and "...there should always be evidence within a profile." and "...I couldn't imagine doing a profile without evidence, and without some statistical elements involved."</p>
	P7		<p>"I think it's done [creating a criminal profile] in a process of what I would call <i>Structured Professional Judgment</i>, which is fairly common in threat assessment and risk assessment..." and "...as you wade through the case and collect information, you apply deductive logic and inductive processes, testing each other, to test your hypotheses, and then start developing theories, and keep refining it in this recursive process, until eventually you can come out with your written profile..." and "So as much as we come up with our age you know, the sex, race, height, weight, you know, which really, it's pretty impossible, but you know, we can come up with notions about the build, and the, you know, the physical strength of the individual, depending upon what we see in the scene..."</p>
	P8		<p>"I need your entire case file, I need your entire crime scene file..." and "So, you start at the crime scene, the most important for me." and "Those are the two biggest parts, or for me, for doing the profile, is victimology and crime scene." and "The last section of every one of my profiles always had to do with, the investigative suggestions." and "I was massive on statistics, my profiles all, if you read one of my profiles, it was always, you always read two things... I'd have a paragraph, at least a paragraph, if not two or three paragraphs on each personality trait, and I would talk about it, the two things I would talk about is, crime scene and statistics."</p>
	P9		<p>"Serial behavior, we're need driven, we're need driven, we're need driven." and "So, the first thing we would do to develop a profile would be to understand and to analyze the subject and the victim interaction..." and "<i>List of firsts</i>. He'd never been late for work, right? He was late for work because, he was cleaning the crime scene..." and "Okay, these are all <i>lists of firsts</i> that go into the assessment... this is more of an assessment of his personality, of what to talk about during the interview..." and "...we talk to the detectives, and then we start putting together a strategy, as to who they're looking for... and how to best approach that person in an interview, which is always going to be non-accusatory, non-judgmental, and non-threatening."</p>
	P10		<p>"...this is the way I do a profile, without any information, just the analysis of the cases." and "So, I say, this kind of person, they live in this kind of area, they work this kind of job, they wear these kind of dresses, they are single or not, around the age, and so on..." and "Everything is included, anything, the environment, where they were born, who educated the person, the culture..."</p>

Participants in this study described divergent accounts of the methods applied to create a criminal profile, expressly variations in profile contents. Although there were mainly differences noted within the lived experiences described by participants regarding what is encompassed within a criminal profile, there were also some similarities. In particular, a profile characteristic described by P1's translator was the need driven offending behaviors observed at a crime scene, as it was underscored that such combined with victimological data should always be integrated into a profile, saying, "The ritual patterns of behavior from the offender, that are not specifically necessary to complete the crime and also very important, all the information that the victim can provide us." Like P1, P9 described the importance of recognizing and including information concerning the need driven actions of offenders, when P9 said, "Serial behavior, we're need driven, we're need driven, we're need driven." P9 then commented that need driven behaviors include those that can be categorized as, a list of firsts, when saying, "Okay, these are all *lists of firsts* that go into the assessment." Like P1, P9 stressed that it is imperative to include victimological information, saying, "So, the first thing we would do to develop a profile would be to understand and to analyze the subject and the victim interaction."

A criminal profile was later defined by P9 as a "personality assessment," and it was explained that interview strategies are typically provided in a profile when P9 said, "We talk to the detectives, and then we start putting together a strategy, as to who they're looking for... and how to best approach that person in an interview, which is always going to be non-accusatory, non-judgmental, and non-threatening." P1's translator suggested that gathering evidence from various sources was vital when generating a

profile, including accessing records held by statutory agencies that could offer insight into an offender's physical or mental health, geographical location, and known interactions with the criminal justice system, as P1 advised referencing, "...the family, professionals, environment, medical history, courts, psychiatric reports, psychological reports, like police reports, also prison records." The importance of having multiple evidence sources was echoed by P6, when the participant noted that data gleaned from a criminal investigation was essential, saying "...have official police or investigative information, so ideally, a profile should come from a careful and very meticulous review of all the evidence of one or more crime scenes." P6 then highlighted the need for statistical data related to national crime statistics in a profile, saying, "I couldn't imagine doing a profile without evidence, and without some statistical elements involved."

In contrast, P2 disclosed use of the VERA method, which recommends including crime scene reconstruction and hypothesis development within a criminal profile. P2 later submitted that the VERA method is commonly used in Latin America, and explained that, "profilers always go to using the VERA method...". Similarly, P2 noted that "the VERA method arises from the practice of what works and what does not work."

Corresponding research suggests that the VERA method is a stepwise process used to create the profile of an unknown offender during a criminal investigation, with the name of the method being representative of a Spanish acronym outlining the four pillars of a criminal investigation. As such, VERA represents the victim, the crime scene, the perpetrator, and crime reconstruction (Calaf, 2022). Therefore, the VERA method

signifies investigative stages, with the method functioning to collect data, and the focus being on the victim, offender, and crime scene interactions (Evidentia University, 2024).

A similar, albeit distinctively different approach to criminal profiling was explained by P4, when the participant outlined their lived experience using computer software, such as CrimeStat 3 and ArcGIS to construct geographical profiles. P4 said,

I would then map, physically map the crime sites, and using either CrimeStat 3, which is the last one that I used, I have also worked with other software like ArcGIS, with the criminology component in it, and I would basically get in and map all the crime scenes and using the mathematics and algorithms and computational formula behind the software, we would start developing hotspots, which would start indicating patterns that would point towards an offender's anchor point.

P4 later also disclosed that gender, age, and socioeconomic status are factors that can be included within a psychological profile, saying,

The psychological profile might build up a gender, it might start pointing to a space of age, it might start pointing to a space of sort of social economic space, it could all start pointing into those areas, and that becomes important in the profile that you build up.

Equally, P5 described having included such features as the likely ethnicity and the previous convictions of an unknown offender within a profile when P5 said,

Okay, so in relation to creating an offender profile, that aspect of it, you would go and collect your data from the crime scene and from the investigation. So that

may be, statements, photographs, visits to the crime scene, get a briefing from the officers, and so forth, and then... read and analyze... that data, and you would pick out what you thought were the salient variables... you'd pick out things that you thought may be salient about the offense in relation to the victimology.

Additionally, P5 also shared experiences accessing the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database to input salient variables of a crime, simply saying, "You would use the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database." With, P5 going on to explain, "So maybe, you know, age parameters, ethnicity, previous convictions, and so forth." P5 further detailed that, "...you could plug all of those variables into the database, and you could look at all cases like that, that have been detected, and you then could look at what you knew about those offenders." This step was recognized as important to create a profile.

Following, P5 confirmed that the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP), a law enforcement repository established in the United States, which offers behavioral and investigative violent crime information, is referenced when creating a criminal profile, and that the required features of a profile are listed in ViCAP. P5 noted that items listed in ViCAP include geographical information, the physical features of an offender, and or a vehicle description. Thereafter, P2 like P7 noted that creating a profile is a form of hypothesis testing and explained that elements included in a profile can comprise an offender's age, sex, race, height, and potential weight. Later, P8 described constructing a paragraph or more about each personality trait of an unknown offender, alongside statistical information, and investigative suggestions. Lastly, P4 and P10 both

described that data provided in a profile could involve ideas about the home base of an offender, with P10 including details of employment, lifestyle, age, and relationship status.

Referencing the criminal profiles mentioned by participants during interviews in this study, the following cases were described as having been those in which participants contributed to authoring profiles. Profiles were unable to be shared by participants due to data protection laws. Thus, information below was gleaned via open-source databases.

In the case of Juana Barraza, the offender was one of the first female serial killers in Mexico, and was convicted of murdering elderly women (Cervantes, 2022). Research on this case indicated the implementation of criminal profiles from the United States and France, with profiles described as being inaccurate due to the misidentified gender of the offender (Cervantes, 2022). Articles delineating the case, suggested that investigators made erroneous profile claims regarding the sexual motivation of the offender and that ultimately, physical evidence in the form of fingerprints solved the case (Redd, 2018).

Next is the case of Peter Sutcliffe, a serial killer operating in the United Kingdom between 1975 and 1980 (Piccotti, 2023). A profile was created for the unknown offender by local criminal profile authors, and amongst the characteristics listed, was information anticipating future victim targeting, specifically the victimisation of sex workers (Piccotti, 2023). Police later captured Sutcliffe in the vicinity of the murders, in the company of a sex worker (Strunck, 2023). Weapons were found at the scene and Sutcliffe confessed to the killings (Strunck, 2023). It is unclear all profile characteristics provided to law enforcement during the course of this criminal investigation, however in a related book that outlined this case, a “typical” criminal profile was described as containing the

offender's ethnicity, sex, relationship status, home life circumstances, and occupation, in addition to the likely values and beliefs of an offender (Innes & Doncaster, 2024).

Similarly, other publications discussed the criminal profile that was formulated in the case of Theodore Kaczynski, a man convicted of a string of bombings in the United States, spanning a 17-year period, beginning in 1978 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2024a). Profile characteristics noted as being included within the criminal profile in this case, were details of the offender's education, age, temperament, and ethnicity (Times Publishing Company, 2005). It was noteworthy that the profile was described as having changed with the introduction of new evidence (Times Publishing Company, 2005).

Thereafter, David Copeland was convicted of killing three people and injuring numerous others when he detonated bombs in London, United Kingdom in 1999 (Slade, 2014). It was discovered that Copeland viewed the world through a cultural lens that supported his hatred of black and or homosexual people, with reports later confirming that he had a diagnosed personality disorder and that he experienced severe psychosis and delusional thinking (Gunn, 2002). The criminal profile generated for this offender was noted as comprising the offender's motivations, including his alliance with right-wing extremists and his homophobic beliefs, while other profile characteristics described his relational problems and documented substance misuse issues (BBC News, 2000).

Ensuing, John Allen Muhammed and his stepson, Lee Boyd Malvo, were dubbed the The Beltway Snipers and were found guilty of killing 10 people across the United States in 2002 (CNN Editorial Research, 2023). Justification for the profile claims made within this investigation were explained as, the transposition of profile characteristics

from historical solved cases, onto this case (Turvey & McGrath, 2005). Analogous to the descriptions of previous criminal profiles discussed in this study, factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity were detailed, as was the home base of the offender(s) (Turvey & McGrath, 2005). Thereafter, inductive reasoning was highlighted, with the introduction of geographical profiling techniques used in this case (Turvey & McGrath, 2005).

Finally, the criminal profile established for the case of Stephen Corey Bryant was also cited by a participant in this study. Court documents indicated that in 2004, Bryant killed three people in South Carolina, United States (Reuters, 2024). Profile characteristics in this case were emphasized as being, the targeting of vulnerable victims and the demonstration of need driven offending behaviors, such as the burning of a victim's face with a cigarette and writing in blood on a wall (Reuters, 2024).

While many of the particulars relative to the criminal profiles disclosed by participants in this study were unable to be shared by law, references to such, and the associated open-source information available, offered some insight into the profile characteristics encompassed within regionally differing criminal profiles. While the profile characteristics mentioned by participants were limited, many commonalities were exhibited. Expressly, profile characteristics described included the age, ethnicity, gender, and motivation of an offender. As well, analysis of the victim and offender dynamic was included, to the extent of listing preferred victim groups and or the anticipated targeting of future victims. Moreover, the predicted geographical location of an offender, the relationship status, home life specifics, occupation, and the likely values and beliefs of an

offender were noted. Similarly, education, temperament, personality disorders, substance misuse, and the need driven behaviors of an offender were also considered in profiles.

Following, despite an example criminal profile being requested from all participants in this study, only three interviewees were able to share profiles. A total of four example criminal profiles were thus provided and illustrated differing approaches to assembling traits of an unknown offender. Each participant requested that the profile(s) supplied remain confidential, as such were shared strictly for the purposes of this study.

First, one participant supplied two example criminal profiles for two separate cases. These profiles were classed as psychological profiles and made up of several profile characteristics. Both profiles were formatted with a table of contents, and reports ranging between 12 and 30 pages. Among the information outlined in these criminal profiles was, the victim and offender relationship, analysis of offending motivations, methods of attack and control, and a review of the need driven behavior and/or signature behavior enacted. Further, there was also dialogue surrounding theoretical perspectives, including offender typologies. Crime scene locations, such as the primary, secondary, and intermediate crime scenes were documented, as was the offender's lifestyle in each case.

The third example criminal profile provided by a participant, was another psychological profile, albeit in the context of an academic article. The beginning of the report consisted of a summary of the offense for which the profile was based upon. Information about the victim and crime scene reconstruction was then listed, as were methods of hypothesis testing and assessed intimate and physical characteristics of the

offender. Intimate traits were noted as the psychological and or emotional needs of the offender, such as ritual or fantasy-based offending behaviors enacted for self-satisfaction.

The last profile offered was that of a seven-page forensic linguistic report. The profile characteristics included were as follows, the gender, ethnicity, geographic location, age, education, and emotional developmental level of an unknown offender. Traits representative of an offender's demeanor were also included, such as displays of shyness, anger, and or frustration, of which can be revealed in writing and or behavior.

Next are participants' explanations of the above methods used during their experiences creating criminal profiles, as the ensuing theories and models theme was identified as a personal experiential theme amongst participants, which contained discrepant qualities and was categorized within Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods and reasoning. The theme details much of the rationale employed by profile authors during decision making processes and emphasized the influence of specified psychological perspectives. Participants shared the logic that supported decision making when justifying profile claims, and gave examples based on lived experiences authoring profiles. Many participants had a law enforcement and or academic background, thus the reasoning models noted often included a mixture of psychological and policing insights.

Table 4 shows the theories and models theme.

Table 4

Theories and Models

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?	P1's translator		“There are a lot of methodologies now days, the most used methodology is the models, integrator models like, deductive, reason or logic, the crime scene, the victim, so from that information they make deductions about the possible offender.” and “...they are interested with studies or inductive studies, categories of offenders or criminals already established by empirical studies...” and “They use a model of reasoning, <i>Toulmin</i> it's the name.” and “So, they [Cuerpo de la Guardia Civil – Spanish Police] obtain the profile from an induction way, but also, they use that, they incorporate the deduction information within categories of... criminals, in order to see if their characteristic, if their deductive characteristics are similar...” and “The Canter school of thought is important, but it's just a part that can be complimentary with other typologies, deductive methodologies that analyze one case and they obtain conclusions, hypotheses, that are reinforced with these categories.”
	P2		“...the VERA Method is being studied, I believe by the majority of criminology undergraduate and postgraduate training programs in Spain and Latin America.” and “First, the method was useful to solve cases, and second, it had methodological rigor...” and “Of course, in Spain the VERA Method is used, it is systematically used. Systematically, every time you have to investigate... the profilers always go to using the VERA Method and this is absolutely standardized. Its use is systematic.”
	P3		“Yes, yeah, I mean, I don't think you will find any profiler that says no [to the application of Canter's <i>A -> C Theory</i>]” and “Obviously David Canter, you know he's the father of all.” and “All of this is being developed over the years, and as we get to know more and things like this, but you know his baseline is so relevant, and it, and it works well...”
	P4		“...in terms of geographic profiling, you look at a lot of the criminological theories like <i>Awareness and Activity Space</i> , <i>Journey to Crime</i> , <i>Distance Decay</i> , <i>Buffer Zones</i> , <i>Least Effort Principles</i> , the environmental <i>Circle</i> of range, which Canter talks about, or the <i>Convex Hull</i> , which Kim Rossmo talks about, so there's a host of theoretical standpoints that underpin basically the entire process of geographic profiling. So, you have <i>Crime Pattern Theory</i> ...” and “... <i>Routine Activity Theories</i> , offenders, serial offenders operate in the continuum of spaces that they know, that are familiar to them, that are spaces they routinely visit.” and “So, the only space where I sort of overlap with Canter, is on the environmental <i>Circle</i> of range, where we talk about offenders [operating in familiar environments].”
	P5		“...in our heads we would be, you know, I would be thinking, oh there may be issues here with attachment, or there may be, you know, or that might be a bit of <i>Social Learning Theory</i> , you wouldn't sort of articulate that as such, because the investigator would go, like who the hell is Bowlby, or you know, what's <i>Social Learning Theory</i> , or, so, you would, you would utilize sort of whatever theories you thought best fit the investigation, but you would also say, you would just apply that to the, to the actual crime. So, I think I wouldn't ever go ‘ahh right, actually what I'm thinking of is <i>Social Learning Theory</i> ’, but I think in my head I'd go, ‘God, someone's just really scripted that offense, have they seen that in a film or something like that.’ So, I think you would have it there in the back of your head,

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
			but I don't think you would actually overtly articulate that as such." and "...the one thing that sort of David Canter's work has taught us, is that people tend to have thematic similarities, they may not be exactly the same." and "...human beings don't fit into neat little types or typologies. So, you, have it in mind, but again, I don't think I've ever written a profile saying, this is a <i>power reassurance</i> rapist, or this is a <i>disorganized</i> offender..." and "So, the things that work well, offenders do again, and the things that don't work well, they change, but I guess if you're asking more about sort of family background and stuff, it's, we don't really go into sort of find that out afterwards. Like, unless we had a really big case... our role is more to try and identify who the offender is, and then we'd move on to the next case. We wouldn't then go back and go, 'Oh, let's look in depth at that offender', you know we probably should, but we'd leave that more to the theory and to the researchers."
	P6		"...in terms of a theory assigned to that [serial rapists and murderers] no, it's just all the information and all the knowledge possible to be gained in multiple genres and on multiple levels in terms of doing and undertaking the most accurate criminal profile that can be offered to the investigators..."
	P7		"Yeah, I mean, there's some theory behind it [profile construction], you know..." and "...I think we also start to use some environmental theories of criminology. You know... the <i>Rational Choice</i> , <i>Crime Pattern Theory</i> , and <i>Routine Activity</i> ." and "So yeah, those inform, that decision making process..." and "...I mean it's a, you know, it's a simplistic model that explains it. You know, I understand it [A -> C Equation]. Have I like applied it? I don't know that it's something to apply... it's an explanation of the thought process." and "...we're talking about <i>Occam's Razor</i> you know... and when we look at criminal behavior, we look at things that occur in life. More than likely that the simplest solution is the best solution..." and "The thing that, that everyone seems to forget is that the rationality that's required to use deduction or induction, requires a strict rationality, perfect rationality, and it doesn't exist. The problem with profiling inputs and crime scenes and crime behaviors, that it is terribly imperfect, and often times information is missing, it's incorrect, it is neglected for whatever reason..." and " <i>Meehl's Malignant Maxim</i> comes into play, I don't know if you're familiar with that, but the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, and so that you know, that's kind of the basis behind it [profiling]." and "...in the profile process, we don't specifically talk about that [theories/models]. We don't, and we certainly don't reference it, because the audience, those police officers, they're looking for offender behavior and characteristics... so to say, you know, to go and start explaining it [theories/models], you lose the audience."
	P8		"...if we're doing a serial rapist, there's rapist typologies that we use. There's not really a lot of formulas, I never liked, I never bought in to the whole formula, or theories with regards to things, because again, I want to be able to go back because you lock yourself into a theory, because then you just go down a checklist." and "... <i>Occam's Razor</i> I use that one a lot." and "A monk who dealt in philosophy, it's kind of ironic that it is used by law enforcement as much as it is, but <i>Occam's Razor</i> basically says, the simplest answer is usually the correct answer." and "There's my model, Sherlock Holmes. I was more about eliminating possibilities when I worked a profile."
	P9		"...I know there's models out there, and I know there's theories out there because we used to debate. I, we would have profilers that wanted to meet with us to discuss this, and I would read their work, I never met with them because it was just, it was a waste of time for me, but they would have these models, and we just don't do that." and "We go over the, I studied autopsy photos every single day, crime scene videos every single day, and that's what I would study, that was my model, to answer your question, the autopsy photographs, the autopsy report from the doctor, how do they die? We would study death because you're literally, you're studying death." and "So, the models and algorithms, I just didn't use them." and "...I don't use models, I never use models..." and "So that's another problem with models, is it doesn't include the personalities of the victim or the offender."
	P10		"Not really, some, some models I have is for instance, a criterion, if for instance what is a character? What is a kind of job?" and "They impose many frames

Research Question 1	Participant	Theme Cluster 1: Criminal profile methods & reasoning	Quotes
			[theories], they impose many models, and so on. This is good, but in the field, we are behind human, they are unique, so they [models] can't be... the most efficient."

The above are personal experiential statements shared by participants regarding their reasoning processes when creating criminal profiles. It is clear given the volume of differing theories and models acknowledged, that a multitude of discrepant qualities exist between interviewees. Various approaches to criminal behavioral analysis were described by P1 as being supportive of profile authors' decision-making when constructing profiles. Namely, P1 said, "There are a lot of methodologies now days, the most used methodology is the models, integrator models like, deductive, reason or logic, the crime scene, the victim, so from that information they make deductions about the possible offender." P1 went on to say, "So, they [Cuerpo de la Guardia Civil – Spanish Police] obtain the profile from an induction way, but also... they incorporate the deduction information within categories of... criminals, in order to see if... their deductive characteristics are similar." P8 similarly described use of deductive reasoning methods applied by the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, when saying that such are useful in narrowing probable the outcomes within investigations, saying, "There's my model, Sherlock Holmes. I was more about eliminating possibilities when I worked a profile."

Thereafter, P1 described referencing Toulmin's model of reasoning, as well as David Canter's bottom-up philosophy as justification for the logic that is the basis of criminal profiling methods. P1 said, "They [Cuerpo de la Guardia Civil – Spanish Police]

use a model of reasoning, Toulmin it's the name." P1 suggested that this method of reasoning is also used by law enforcement in the United Kingdom. Toulmin's model explains that when substantiating a criminal profile, the following features must be present; the research to support details of the profile, the warrants or evidence, and the modality or probability of a claim, with all elements able to withstand criticism (Alison et al., 2003). Toulmin's framework is suggested as a method of professionalizing profiling practices, regardless of the use of an inductive or deductive approach, Toulmin stresses the deconstruction of profile claims (Alison et al., 2003). Next, application of a bottom-up method of profiling, also known as inductive reasoning, was a technique spearheaded by David Canter (Canter, 2000) and discussed by participants. P1 said, "The Canter school of thought is important, but it's just a part that can be complimentary with other typologies." Like Canter's inductive approach, P2 identified an inductive method of reasoning, the VERA method, as noted earlier, it is a profiling practice that concentrates on variable interactions and the narrowing of hypotheses (Evidentia University, 2024).

Following, discrepant qualities were revealed in the lived experiences shared by P4, as the participant disclosed using more theories to justify profile methods, than any other participant in this study. P4 proposed that geographic profiling is possible, largely because of associated theoretical frameworks, and that such are consequently necessary to be aware of and when appropriate implement as a criminal profile author. P4 said,

"In terms of geographic profiling, you look at a lot of the criminological theories like *Awareness and Activity Space*, *Journey to Crime*, *Distance Decay*, *Buffer Zones*, *Least Effort Principles*, the environmental *Circle of range*, which Canter

talks about, or the *Convex Hull*, which Kim Rossmo talks about, so there's a host of theoretical standpoints that underpin the entire process of geographic profiling. In addition, P4 suggested a method used to ascertain the anchor point of an offender, subsequent to the analyses of crime series, as the participant disclosed that, "*Routine Activity* theories, offenders, serial offenders operate in the continuum of spaces that they know, that are familiar to them, that are spaces they routinely visit." Correspondingly, each of the below theories and or models were noted by P4 as being important in the field of environmental criminology and when formulating geographic profiles.

Awareness Space is a concept that posits that there are locations which an individual retains advanced knowledge about, while Activity Space is understood as a space in which an individual generally operates within and is the environment in which most of their activities are undertaken (Clark, 1990). Accordingly, in terms of the analysis of crime patterns, offender's target selection behavior has been found to be influenced by their activity and awareness spaces (Frank et al., 2011). Alike, the premise of the Routine Activity Theory mentioned by both P4 and P7, is that crime occurs when three factors interact, that is, the presence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Schaefer, 2021). The Journey to Crime Model then noted by P4 examines the relationship between offending behavior and an offender's environment, including the beginning, the pathway, and the direction an offender selects, as well as crime site locations, with research suggesting that the journey to crime is consistently short, between one and two miles in cases of violent crime (Andresen, 2019).

Distance Decay Theory is one that conceives that statistically, crime frequency reduces, in proportion to the distance from an offender's home (Bernasco, 2022). Like Distance Decay, the idea of a Buffer Zone was also cited by P4 and is noted as a theoretical conclusion that offending behavior is less likely in a specified zone, such as close to an offender's home base (Bernasco & van Dijke, 2020). The Least Effort Principle in geographic profiling mentioned by P4 thus proposes that, criminals will always choose the path of least resistance, in terms of offending behavior (Knabe-Nicol & Alison, 2024). Lastly, Convex Hull, referenced by P4, is a mathematical equation used to construct a mean area where a criminal is likely to offend and reside (Paulsen, 2007).

The use of theoretical frameworks to support criminal profile construction was further noted by P5 when consideration of the application of Attachment Theory within criminal profiles was mentioned. Attachment Theory thus describes the emotional bond that humans initially establish with caregivers during the first years of life, with research suggesting that this attachment predicts the individual's future psychological development (Keller, 2021). Likewise, P5 also described being conscious of the Social Learning Theory when constructing profiles, with this theory postulating that humans learn and behave in ways modeled for them by others (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). As well, like P1 and P8, P5 similarly described referencing offender typologies in the justification of profile claims. However, P5 together with P7 made it clear that theoretical frameworks were not explicitly included in a profile, and that theories were identified for each case based upon the suitability of the theory and its relevance to evidence at a crime.

In line with the experiences of other participants, P7 described reflecting on theories that support decision making. A theory specified by P7 was the Rational Choice Theory, which posits that individuals will enact behaviors that are aligned with personal utility, in order to achieve the greatest benefit for the least cost (Rivers et al., 2017). Alike, P4 and P7 also noted incorporation of the Crime Pattern Theory when creating a profile, with the theory encompassing social, environmental, and temporal factors that contribute to crime, like that of the socioeconomic status of individuals, the geographic features of crime, such as the pathways to crime sites, and activity nodes, with the goal being to identify target areas for criminal activity (Brantingham & Brantingham, 2021). Meehl's Malignant Maxim was also a theory disclosed by P7 as the logical basis underlying profiling methods, as the theory proposes that predictions of future behavior, can best be made following the review of past behavior (Huey & Bull-Gil, 2024). The final principle described by P7, and also cited by P8, was Occam's Razor, a concept that denotes simplicity in problem solving, suggesting that the simplest solution is the correct one (Becchio, 2020). P8 explained that this theory is often used by law enforcement.

There was a noticeable pattern in the explanations of theories and models offered by participants in this study, as half of the participants referenced the British Psychologist David Canter's work within their decision-making processes. It started when P1 noted the importance of Canter's inductive approach to profile formulation, and it was suggested that such is referenced in conjunction with offender typologies when creating a profile. Next, P3 described that Canter's philosophy is valid, specifically application of the A -> C theory, as it was acknowledged that this theory offers a baseline for profiling and has

stood the test of time. In this same way P7 described the A -> C theory as “an explanation of the thought process” when creating a criminal profile. Likewise, P5 further delineated how Canter has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of thematic similarities in offending behavior. Finally, P4 described that in his experience creating geographic profiles, theoretical reasoning has overlapped with David Canter’s Circle theory of environmental range, which assumes that an offender’s anchor point will be at the midpoint between the two crime sites farthest from each other (Canter & Gregory, 1994).

Comparable to the patterns of logic outlined above, it is also noteworthy that P6, P8, P9, and P10 denounced the use of theories and/or models to support their decision-making processes. P6 explained that only relevant evidence from the crime and practitioner’s experiences should be used to construct a profile, while P8 suggested that his preference not to use theories was motivated by his view that such can act as a checklist, and when applied to criminal profiles, theories can be restrictive based on the limits of a theoretical framework. Ensuing, P9 disclosed foregoing the use of theories and models altogether, instead advocating for a focus on the crime scene evidence, including the autopsy, suggesting that such constitutes the theories and models implemented, and that as a profile author, he studies death. P10 however confirmed that theories and models could be useful, although the participant advised that because of the complex nature of humans, theories and models are not always accurate or effective when creating profiles.

RQ2: According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?

Theme Cluster 2: Practice Standardization

The next group experiential theme identified amongst participants in this study, was captured in Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization, which addressed research question two. The first theme in cluster two was that of professional collaboration. Participants shared their lived experiences related to professional collaboration, with some elaborating on the challenges of collaborating with multidisciplinary experts, while others detailed the criminal investigative benefits of information sharing. Approaches to information dissemination were disclosed, together with examples of how professional collaboration can improve the assessment of major crimes and subsequent profile creation, with this task encouraged as a standardized method, and one of best practice.

Table 5 details the theme of professional collaboration.

Table 5

Professional Collaboration

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?	P1's translator		"It is a very important aspect that, it is important to collaborate with other professionals, experts in criminal profiling and also in psychology, criminology, pathologies, so they can help because they are very specialized, in a specific element." and "It is important, to incorporate experience and intuition from the profiler and the investigator."
	P2		"The most difficult cases to investigate are sexual assault and those that are unfamiliar to us, when asking for collaboration, it is for those in which the aggressor [offender] is unknown to the victim." and "I can tell you that, every time an investigator requested our collaboration again for a case in the future." and "Systematically, every time you have to investigate, the usual thing is that the police use their usual techniques. When they use the usual techniques, they fail to clarify, then they request the collaboration of the profilers..."
	P3		"...I do think that we need to get better at communicating. As I say, you know, I made the joke earlier about the multi-agency meetings ...I mean, it should not be this difficult..." and "...I mean communication, we should, we should be able to be better, and yes, we do need, you know, internationally now, because criminals are moving from left, right, and centre, you know, and they're finding loopholes, because, you know, people don't communicate." and "...I think communication is your biggest thing... getting people to talk to each other, because people have details that they don't even realize they have..."
	P4		"I think we've got a lot more we need to do in terms of working together with law enforcement and I think in terms of gathering much more empirical data around, what we've gotten, I mean globally, because if you think about it, the research, most of it, is limited to developed countries. So, the US, Canada, the UK, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, that type of thing, but the bulk of the world's population and the bulk of crimes sit outside of developed countries. So, we need to expand research into these areas, and you'll find very, very different results where you talk about motivation of criminals, modus operandi, crime sites are very different in Africa, to what it is in a developed world."
	P5		"I think there should be greater collaboration with academia. So, they [profilers/BIA's] do collaborate with academia, but they're obviously really busy, and they're doing their day jobs. I don't think like having done it, I wish I'd have utilized Google Scholar more, and I wish I'd have utilized some of the academic research more than I did, because you didn't always have time to do that. So, I think yeah, they could utilize academia more." and "So, say you had something particularly bizarre or unusual, you would like talk to colleagues... So, what sort of things to look out for, and you'd utilize all of that really, in combination with one another, to produce a report back to the investigation, but before the report went to the investigation, it'd be peer reviewed by another BIA to say, yeah, this all makes sense, and that's ready to go."
	P6		"... International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship. They are international obviously, organization of criminal profilers." and "A colleague of mine... had done some research on rapes of older women, like you know, 65 and above, and it seems that you know, the statistics he gathered, it seems that the older the female victim, the younger the male offender ...but it is something, you know, if investigating the rape of an older woman, I would want to know

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
	P7		the statistics about the arrests made..." and "I think police, probation, parole, or prison administration, you know, correctional institution therapists... I think they, those folks who are sitting across the table and interviewing some of these people and get a lot of insight about how they're, literally the criminal mind works... can tell... the potential profiler a lot too." "Yeah, you know, so we had a lot of input from a lot of different sources participating in service training and seminars." and "When I talked about communities of interest, communities of practice, I think that there's a move for them to get together, and to certainly share information and work together, which I think is, is fabulous, it should happen, and I think that the vast majority of practitioners would agree with that." and "Many perspectives help make a good profile, and that's why Quantico uses the, a case consultation method." and "...that [a case consultation] is a good form of peer review, and it helps inform the process, and people come through and explain things, from their perspective and experience and it's like, 'oh, I get it now!' " and "...the people who are actually doing it [profiling], don't have time for that [to research the practice]."
	P8		"I always used to say, you could say anything you want as long as you find somebody else that agrees with you." and "So, you had to find somebody that wrote in a journal that you could say, 'hey they wrote this, and here's what they said' to agree with what, the point you were trying to make, and so that's what I always learned. I learned ...getting my master's... you want to make the most impact with people... show them why you say something, you know." and "There's a reason why we [profilers]... get called to help [law enforcement], it's because it works. I said, if it didn't work, they wouldn't be calling us. They're not doing it because they're checking off a list, they're doing it because it works."
	P9		"I would invite them [academics] to my consults, my consultations. I would invite them [academics], and every case was different." and "...I called four or five of my friends that are detectives around the country, and I explained the scenario [the crime] ... All five of my friends said the same thing."
	P10		"This is a way I would like to work in cases, the way I work with a team, with a team I integrate all people who are working in, in other cases..." and "We, we try to find solutions with the team, in order to have the best solution..."

The need for professionals to collaborate when formulating criminal profiles was first underscored by P1, as it was explained that when communicating with subject matter experts, new perspectives on the same crime and related evidence is available, by way of professionals' diverse expertise, as P1's translator said, "It is important to collaborate with other professionals, experts in criminal profiling and also in psychology, criminology, pathologies, so they can help, because they are very specialized, in a specific element." P5 and P7 supported this view, and described that when presented with unusual evidence, both liaised with colleagues to gain further insight, as P5 explained,

So, say you had something particularly bizarre or unusual, you would like talk to colleagues... So, what sort of things to look out for, and you'd utilize all of that, in combination with one another, to produce a report back to the investigation.

P7 also advocated for communication saying that, professional collaboration is "a good form of peer review, and it helps inform the process, and people come through and explain things, from their perspective and experience and it's like, 'oh, I get it now!'"

P5 then outlined that prior to the submission of a criminal profile to the customer, it was peer reviewed by colleagues, as it was described that, "before the report went to the investigation, it'd be peer reviewed by another BIA to say, yeah, this all makes sense, and that's ready to go." Comparable to P5's experience, P7 and P9 also disclosed their experiences engaging in case consultations with colleagues, as P7 explained that "many perspectives help make a good profile, and that's why Quantico uses the, a case consultation method." P7 went on to disclose that when creating profiles, additional input was received from training and seminar activities, of which P6 also described in terms of the support accessed via the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship.

Thereafter, P8 suggested that profile claims were substantiated by referencing peer reviewed literature, as did P6, when it was revealed that the profile author would reference a colleague's research to support statistical claims made in profiles. P5 confirmed a similar experience, albeit it was stressed that in practice there had been limited time to cross reference peer reviewed literature when constructing a profile, as P5 said, "Having done it, I wish I'd have utilized Google Scholar more, and I wish I'd have utilized some of the academic research more than I did, because you didn't always have

time to do that.” Finally, P10 reported working together with colleagues, as it was advised that professional collaboration produced the most informed criminal profiles.

Parallel to the aforementioned methods of professional collaboration, P1 described the most crucial collaboration as being, the rapport established between the profile author and criminal investigator, as such was considered to facilitate an effective working relationship and profile. P4 and P6 advocated for increased communication between profile authors and law enforcement, with P4 explicitly noting, “I think we've got a lot more we need to do in terms of working together with law enforcement.” P6 further posited that significant information can be gathered regarding an offender from sources such as, “probation, parole, or prison administration, you know, correctional institution therapists...”. Echoing the advice of P4, P5 recommended that there should be increased collaboration between profile authors and academics, as upon reflection, P5 postulated that due to heavy workloads, there was limited time to engage with scholars in the field, a view shared by P7. P2 opined that collaboration is key in the most challenging of investigations, if the case is to be successfully resolved, with a caveat included, remarking that a benefit of collaboration is future employment with the same customer.

It was stressed by P3 that communication between professionals must improve, as current international standards are insufficient and lack competence, which the participant acknowledged has created opportunities for criminals to avoid detection and apprehension. Like the recommendation made by P3 for international professional collaboration, P4 mentioned the need for profiling research to expand globally into developing countries, with the argument being that most of the world's population and

associated crimes are outside of the developed countries, and so the current data available is limited to that which has been determined within the confounds of developed countries.

Ensuing, the second group experiential theme discussed in Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization was that of succession planning. This concept was consistently recognized by participants in this study, as each described succession planning as being a barrier to standardizing the practice of criminal profiling. Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of regulating criminal profiling methods and clarified the location dependent requirements for becoming a qualified criminal profile author.

Table 6 illustrates the theme of succession planning.

Table 6

Succession Planning

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?	P1's translator		"All this [criminal profiling] has to be regulated by entities that regulate all these aspects [profiling practices] ... to reduce the interest of other people who say to be profiling, they have maybe some knowledge, but they are not professionals in that field, it's very important." and "...there must be training and training standards for profilers."
	P2		"That the analysts are sufficiently trained in the basic processes of psychology." and "Therefore, if a police investigator is able to combine the powerful knowledge that psychology provides, that is when he or she can detect better behaviors, analyze them better and arrive at better hypotheses, standardization, methodological control of the technique."
	P3		"I don't think there's an easy answer to any of it. You know, we need more staff. The staff that are there are so overworked..." and "...the right person doing it, because again, because there are no boundaries, and there's no governing body, you know, anybody with a psychology degree could tell us, you know, I can profile, and somebody who has no background in this, you know, somebody in the human resources office, 'oh, great, you know, bring someone and they go down a complete rabbit hole.' " and "You know, you have to keep updating, but there is no requirement, you know, like a doctor, the nurses, you have to have so much training each year to be able to renew your license. You know, we don't do, we don't have that, and it's incredibly wrong, especially with the amount of changes that have gone on, you know, even in in my lifetime of work..."
	P4		"I talked to the British Psychological Society, and I say to them, I asked them, and this was a couple of weeks ago, so you can be a chartered psychologist, you can be a chartered counselor, you can be a chartered this, a chartered that, chartered everything, why can you not be a criminal psychologist? Why have you not recognized that as a profession, accredited, because that's the pathway to becoming a profiler, right? Well, that should be the pathway." and "So, we don't even have that job professionalized yet, how are we creating the young people to go into that space? They don't even know how to get there. When I talk to the NCA and I said, how do you become a BIA? They said to me, well, there's no specific route. So, I said, well, how do you do succession planning? Well, you know, right time, right place, some experience in law enforcement, so that shouldn't be the world of profiling. If we are that haphazard about it, then it will remain an unscientific space."
	P5		"BIAs do have a certain level of expertise... examples of things that kind of a police officer, or someone with a little bit of knowledge may really focus on, and think is a really key variable, whereas actually a BIA would go no, that's, we wouldn't look at that, these things instead." and "...it's a very small number of people that kind of do it in the U.K., so,

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
	P6		there's lots of people sort of on the periphery, or who have done stuff historically, but if you want current stuff like the BIAs working at the NCA, those are the people that do it.”
	P7		“...I really think to be a good profiler, you know, a graduate degree in the social sciences” and “...anybody can call themselves a profiler, that's kind of scary in a way, and sad, but it's not against the law, but that person had better have some advanced degrees under their belt, as well as lots of experience...”
	P8		“...there is no credentialing process [criminal profiling].” and “Yeah, so you know, there's no standardization, there is no curricula, and I think that that's something that needs to change...”
	P9		“...I'm like, well, here's how you become a profiler, and they're like... I don't want to be a cop... I don't know how you're going to be a profiler, or at least, not in the United States... you're not going to be Board Certified [without being a police officer first].” and “When I went through the training program, [at ICIAF] it was seven years, a minimum of seven years violent crime, investigative experience.” and “...I think we need to identify people [profilers] earlier on. I don't know how, whether you take a college course where you can major in something like that, like criminal psychology...”
	P10		“I worked with a number of PhDs that were very heavy into algorithms and formulas and various matrix about how to catch an offender.” and “I work with the students who have not become FBI agents yet. Their goal is when they graduate, they are new FBI agents, that's who I teach.”
			“...I have what I call padawan and they are my students, will become future profiler...” and “...it's not easy to train, to give all the information to my padawan, for the transmission, for the teaching, but I give all of it I can for them, they are good.” and “I told to my padawan... a behavior analyst, it's before profiling, is someone who learns all the partitions [requirements], all the notes [elements], and they just have to recreate them, nothing else. The profiler is someone who realizes the partition and creates partitions [profiles]...”

Participants in this study identified the need for succession planning as vital to progress the field of offender profiling, and it was noted that individuals involved in the construction of criminal profiles should be required to undergo standardized training. The difference between a subject matter expert and a layperson was noted when P5 said,

BIAs do have a certain level of expertise... examples of things that kind of a police officer, or someone with a little bit of knowledge may really focus on, and

think is a really key variable, whereas actually a BIA would go no... we wouldn't look at that, these things instead.

Similarly, P2 shared that education is key to effective criminal profiling practices, suggesting, "Analysts are sufficiently trained in the basic processes of psychology." Likewise, P3 stressed that, "you have to keep updating, but there is no requirement... like a doctor, the nurses, you have to have so much training each year to be able to renew your license. ...we don't have that, and it's incredibly wrong." Finally, P7 summarized the need for a standardized approach to training when describing the current lack of oversight in the field, disclosing that "there is no credentialing process [in criminal profiling]."

Accordingly, participants expressed that the knowledge gained through training and education is necessary to become a successful criminal profile author. P2 and P6 agreed that profile authors must have a comprehensive understanding of human behavior to be effective, and P2 said, "If a police investigator is able to combine the powerful knowledge that psychology provides, that is when he or she can detect better behaviors, analyze them better and arrive at better hypotheses, standardization, methodological control of the technique [profiling]." Equally, P6 opined that a profile author, "better have some advanced degrees under their belt, as well as lots of experience."

In this same way, a governing system was also recognized by participants as a structure that could support practice standardization. Specifically, P1 described, "All this [criminal profiling] has to be regulated by entities that regulate all these aspects [profiling practices]", while P3 reiterated that "there are no boundaries, and there's no governing body, you know, anybody with a psychology degree could tell us, you know, I can

profile.” P7 reiterated this experience when explaining, “Yeah, so you know, there's no standardization, there is no curricula, and I think that that's something that needs to change.” Further, a lack of guidance regarding the route required to become a professional criminal profile author was pinpointed as a barrier to standardizing the practice, as P4 said, “We don't even have that job [profiling] professionalized yet, how are we creating the young people to go into that space? They don't even know how to get there.” P4 stressed that the lack of a formal pathway prevents regulation of the practice, saying, “If we are that haphazard about it, then it will remain an unscientific space.”

Thereafter, P4 referenced communications with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and proposed that like any other specialization, there should be the provision for the chartered membership of criminal psychologists, a discussion with the BPS was described and the question was asked, “Why have you [BPS] not recognized that [criminal psychology] as a profession, accredited... because that's the pathway to becoming a profiler, right? Well, that should be the pathway.” Likewise, when speaking with the National Crime Agency, P4 noted, “I said, how do you become a BIA [Behavioral Investigative Adviser]? They said to me, well, there's no specific route.” Later in the interview P4 recalled that it was confirmed that a BIA candidate did however require a background in law enforcement, as the NCA explained and P4 commented, “Well, you know, right time, right place, some experience in law enforcement, so that shouldn't be the world of profiling.” P4 advised that identifiable training pathways should be in place to guide applicants towards becoming profile authors if the occupation is to be standardized and succession planning is to be supported. P8 also shared a similar

experience when it was conceded that a background in law enforcement is a prerequisite for criminal profile authors practicing in North America, as P8 recalled describing the process of becoming a criminal profile author to an interested candidate, saying,

I'm like, well, here's how you become a profiler, and they're like... I don't want to be a cop... I don't know how you're going to be a profiler, or at least, not in the United States... you're not going to be Board Certified [without being a police officer first].

When discussing existing standardized training, P8 further disclosed, “When I went through the training program, it was seven years, a minimum of seven years violent crime investigative experience.” P8 also explained that training with the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship is compulsory to achieve Board Certification.

Next, teaching was identified as an activity that can assist with succession planning, as P9 revealed having instructed students who were training at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, while P10 described teaching students that the participant characterized as padawans. Accordingly, P9 shared, “I work with the students who have not become FBI agents yet. Their goal is when they graduate, they are new FBI agents, that's who I teach.” Likewise, P10 suggested, “I have what I call padawan and they are my students, will becoming future profiler.” While the transmission of knowledge in terms of teaching was recognized as an important aspect of succession planning, P8 recommended that within this remit, future criminal profile authors should be distinguished early in the training process, remarking, “I think we need to identify people [profilers] earlier on. I don't know how, whether you take a college course where you can

major in something like that, like criminal psychology.” P8 also suggested that a profile author is required to be intelligent and have a natural interest in the general discipline.

Ensuing, practice standards was a personal experiential theme and the last included within Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization. Practice standards was a personal experiential theme that demonstrated divergent qualities, as the profile authors interviewed shared contrasting lived experiences related to profiling practice standards. Profile authors noted issues influencing international practice standards and expressed both similar and opposing approaches to standardizing future criminal profiling practices.

Table 7 details the practice standards theme.

Table 7

Practice Standards

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?	P1's translator		"In his point of view again, it is not possible to standardize a technology and a unique methodology [criminal profiling methodology] within all the countries all over the world, because the context, the criminal context, social, demographic, religious, cultural, it's very different." and "He thinks that the basis of criminal profiling has to be the same in analysis area, same crime, modus operandi, signature, victims, geographical, the basis it has to be the same, it's the same, the methodologies have to be adapted to the context of different countries." and "It has to evolve in the professional standards, quality levels, training in the profiling... there has to be professional approaches to the technique..."
	P2		"I think it is very important that profilers around the world use the same or different techniques and use a common language. That we use the same raw material. Technology, I mean, sorry, the technique [profiling] may be different, because the cases are different and the approaches may be different, but we must all speak the same language, use the same language, terminology."
	P3		"...we [professional profile authors/BIAs] don't have a governing body, and I think with the amount of change... and the danger, and also you know the harm people can do, it should have this level of governance..."
	P4		"So, let's just bridge that gap of saying, well let's bring in the theoretical constructs in terms of the training. Don't isolate it to a select few people like the FBI do in terms of the model, you come to Quantico... we'll train you to be a profiler." and "One, its training, well, I think if you, if you step back it, it's getting the community that's already there into a more collective cohesive... thinking of profiling. So, where it's been spearheaded in the developed countries, for us to get more cohesive in terms of our standpoints on it and getting more empirical evidence and creating a much more of a scientific slant on it. Then I think it's deploying it into the world in terms of training and resources."
	P5		"Standardized in that you could have highly trained individuals doing it, standardized in that you could press a button and a computer does it, or lots of people could do it, I, I think not..." and "So, so no, I guess my short answer is, no [not able to be standardized]. I think that it is so nuanced, and you know, after 13 years doing it, I still was kind of learning every day, that I think you know, I still learn now, I've been doing it for a number of years, and I think it, it's very difficult to sort of simplify, because it's human behavior and there's lots to know about investigations, as well as behavior, and you need to know about both."
	P6		"Training and experience, books are great, but a person has to be out in the field somehow, dealing with violent offenders in a professional way." and "I believe it really has to be a combination of book knowledge, you know, formal training, as well as street level experience..." and "...they [International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship] do have standardization, they do have tests that have to be taken... new members have to go through a two-year training period, they go to different police agencies." and "...in terms of standardization, I believe organizations such as the ICIAF are invaluable to the field of profiling..."
	P7		"There needs to be a systematized process." and "Well, training, I think, first of all, training [should be standardized]." and "I think, I don't want to say regulation, but some standardization and consistent training... I think that this is something that needs to be customer driven, this is a product." and "So, professionalism, training, training standards, professionalism. I think that those are future issues that really need to be addressed." and "The practitioners transfer their information through mentorship, which is kind of the basis of the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship, which came out of the FBI's programs through

Research Question 2	Participant	Theme Cluster 2: Practice standardization	Quotes
	P8		bringing in understudies, and so that, it's actually the most efficient method of knowledge transfer that you can have..."
	P9		"...I mean, yeah, to me, you got to, if you don't have that [experience investigating violent crime], then the stuff they're [Behavioral Science Unit] teaching is, it's not going to be relevant." and "So, but if you want to do it right, and then you really want to affect the world, then you're going to have to be a cop, and you're going to have to have, you know the, the requirements."
	P10		"Each victim is going to react different. So, my problem with formulas and algorithms [standardization] is, I don't personally believe it takes that into consideration..." and "...the problem with formulas is, they don't take the human aspects [of crime] into consideration." "Oh, a standard, oh no, no, no, no, no! Oh, no, no! It's impossible. We are different. Each profiler is different, the way they are working... So, if there is a standard it's impossible to... we can modelize maybe some few behaviors of some criminals yes, but just modelize a kind of sample..."

The consensus amongst participants in this study was that criminal profiling is a practice that is not able to be standardized internationally, given the complexities involved and the specialized skills that a profile author requires. However, participants did describe some actions that could be taken to support future opportunities for standardization and underscored that such are necessary if the practice is to become professionalized. The following discrepant experiences of participants were observed.

P1 suggested that the techniques used in profiling to analyze crime should be the same internationally, with profiling methodologies adapted to diverse settings, of which consider regional differences. Specifically, P1 explained that "the basis of criminal profiling has to be the same in analysis area, same crime, modus operandi, signature, victims, geographical, the basis it has to be the same... methodologies have to be adapted to the context of different countries." In addition, P1 also cited circumstantial influences noting that "it is not possible to standardize a technology and a unique methodology within all the countries all over the world, because... the criminal context, social, demographic, religious, cultural, it's very different." Alike, P2 commented, "The

technique [profiling] may be different, because the cases are different and the approaches may be different, but we must all speak the same language, use the same... terminology.”

Ensuing, discrepant qualities were seen amongst participants’ experiences, as many shared criticisms of current international methods of criminal profiling and barriers to standardization. Notably, P5 emphasized the challenges of standardizing criminal behavior analysis as a profile author, when suggesting that, “it's very difficult to sort of simplify, because it's human behavior and there's lots to know about investigations, as well as behavior, and you need to know about both.” Alike, P9 advised that because of the intricacies of human nature, including the functions that dictate offender and victim interactions, standardized profiling practices are unable to capture such variance, stating, “The problem with formulas is, they don't take the human aspects [of crime] into consideration.” P10 then articulated a similar view to that of P5 and P9 in terms of the participant’s experience standardizing profiling practices, when P10 explained that standardization is not possible because of the diverging approaches implemented by profile authors, instead proposing, “We can modelize maybe some few behaviors of some criminals yes, but just modelize a kind of sample.” It is clear from participants’ disclosures that reservations exist regarding the potential for practice standardization.

Notwithstanding the challenges discussed, optimistic insights regarding opportunities for practice standardization were also offered. Namely, P4 advocated for a collective and empirical approach to profiling, suggesting that training and resources need to become more accessible to law enforcement, saying, “Don't isolate it to a select few people like the FBI do in terms of the model, you come to Quantico... we'll train you

to be a profiler.” Likewise, P1 described a recurrent opinion by participants in this study, that being, that the caliber of training required for the role must be enhanced, saying, “It has to evolve in the professional standards, quality levels, training in the profiling... there has to be professional approaches to the technique”. P3 also emphasized the importance of standardization, when saying, “We [professional profile authors/BIAs] don't have a governing body, and I think with the amount of change... and the danger, and also you know the harm people can do, it should have this level of governance.” P7 echoed this perspective and recommended that training should be systematic and reliable, saying, “I think, I don't want to say regulation, but some standardization and consistent training... I think that this is something that needs to be customer driven, this is a product.” Alike, P8 also spoke about the significance of training and the consequential skill sets developed by professional criminal profile authors when recounting that real world criminal investigative experience and standardized training is essential for practitioners, stating, “So... if you want to do it right... really want to affect the world, then you're going to have to be a cop, and you're going to have to have... the requirements.”

Thereafter, in comparison to other participants, P6 displayed discrepant qualities, as the participant described that standardized criminal profiling methods do in fact already exist within the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship, saying, “They do have standardization, they do have tests that have to be taken, they do, new members have to go through a two-year training period, they go to different police agencies.” Similarly, P7 and P8 also outlined added benefits of the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship in the standardization of criminal profiling, as P7

suggested that mentoring provided by the organization is an effective method of information sharing, while P8 asserted that participation in the organization is required to achieve Board Certification in North America. P6 summarized the influence of the organization for practice standardization when saying, “In terms of standardization, I believe organizations such as the ICIAF are invaluable to the field of profiling.”

Theme Cluster 3: Criminal Investigative Processes

The last group experiential theme identified in this study, was that which defined participants' practices and procedures. This theme emerged within the last theme cluster, Theme Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes. The profiling practices and procedures commonly implemented by the profile authors interviewed were examined, and responses analyzed in relation to how each addressed research question three. The practice of geographic profiling was often referenced, as was the application of case linkage analysis. Participants shared their lived experiences regarding the practices and procedures observed, including those that contribute to effective criminal investigations.

RQ3: What is an offender profiler’s experience of if and/or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?

Table 8 lists the practices and procedures theme.

Table 8

Practices and Procedures

Research Question 3	Participant	Theme Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes	Quotes
What is an offender profiler's experience of if, and or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?	P1's translator		"In this case it was essential, of a geographical profile, to establish strategies for investigation." and "In this case the geographical profile helped a lot because they [investigators] had a range of geographical space [to focus]..." and "It was synonymous proof... that it [geographic profile] linked the cases, to the same offender, and its methods, they were very similar... in the modus operandi, and also in some behaviors, not necessary to complete the crime."
	P2		"Another thing that maybe there could be... is the linking of cases, that's possible, that is, if we do have a case currently, we can analyze it to compare those behaviors with other cases, which are unresolved, so that we can attribute this case to the same offender as the others, if it is possible." and "I have encountered sexual aggressors [offenders] who have committed 10, 12, 20, 30 sexual assaults, with which, well, this linking work is carried out through the analysis of similarities and differences..."
	P3		"...you're looking at a geographical profile as well, because what you're looking at, the majority of times killers or habitual criminals will work in an area that is close to a base, whether it's their work base, whether it's their home base, or something like this." and "So, the geographical one you look at the place that it's in, you look at... time of day... location, is it out in the open? Is it away from people? Is it in a built-up area? Is it in a rural area? How did they get there? So, transport links, things like this. So, you know, who are the sort of people who are usually around there?" and "Yeah, and usually the base is the best way... going back to the very first crime that you've got. It might not be their first crime, but if it's the first one you've got, because usually as a perpetrator matures, their MO [modus operandi] matures as well, so the first one will give you probably more clues into the identity."
	P4		"So, [using a geographic profile] building up the patterns with the view to get a focus or gain insight into the offender's anchor point, which could be the home base, or their work base, or their social base, but essentially the base from which they move out to commit crime." and "So serial murder, serial rape right, you know, there's got to be linkage. So, the cases, the victims have to be linked to the same offender. So, there's got to be a lot of characteristics around the victims, around the crime scenes that need to be the same, to talk to the linkage back to one offender."
	P5		"Then I moved towards working more in offense linkage, so using the database that they have there to see if any offenses we thought were committed by the same person..." and "So, you would look at the behavior then and in series that we've known of, there certainly are some, you can tell, some consistencies. So, you know, people may be consistent in the way that they approach the victim, or in the, you know, the locations that they would, they would choose, and so forth..." and "So thematically that initial contact is the same. You're sort of using a rouse to engage in conversation with the victim, but the actual nature of that rouse may differ. So, what we tend to find is similarity, thematic similarity, rather than individual similarity." and "So, the investigator would phone in to say that they wanted advice from the National Crime Agency, and then usually a Detective Sergeant was deployed from the NCA, and then they would kind of assess the offense, and decide who they

Research Question 3	Participant	Theme Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes	Quotes
	P6		thought would assist the investigation, so who they could pull in to help the investigation, so that might be a Behavioral Adviser, or it may be a Geographic Profiler, it might be a Crime Analyst, it might be a Forensic Scientist.” “...I'm sticking with the US here, in terms of which, some element of profiling can be admitted in the courts, and that is Linkage Analysis...” and “Well strictly... we don't always know if that's the first offense, because there could be others unreported... but we'll go with the best estimation of what is the first offense, and usually from a geographic perspective, as well as a forensic perspective, that scene can offer the most evidence...”
	P7		“...I have seen crime linkage, often times I think geography is a good link indicator. Now, not necessarily from the standpoint of testimonial use, but investigative use and you know I mean look, if a small town has lots of, it has no fires, you know, for five years, and all of a sudden, they have a rash, geez what's the probability it's the same offender, you know, pretty high, you know.” and “So, you know, I think that... behaviors that are very unique are highly useful when it comes to linking crimes, the things that are excessive and unnecessary. The things that they do that... served no purpose, but it serves, very much serves personal needs and desires.” and “Your... temporal analysis and geographical analysis start coming in... giving you these notions of how the offender is behaving, yeah, I can see a linkage there.”
	P8		“That's where linkage helps you out, because the early cases tell you where they are from, and that's when they make their mistakes, early on.” and “...if you want to look at case linkage, arson is the one to look at, because geography, the Geographical Profilers, if you got an arson, you better have a Geographic Profiler with you, because I'm telling you those guys are good.”
	P9		“...each detective that called me, did not care about the big picture. I mean some would tell me... all I care about is, can you help me catch the person that's murdered four women, and each one of those murders there's different ways to do a link analysis, but each one of those murders... could be somewhat different.”
	P10		“Yes, I have seen this [behavioral consistency], but in cyber criminality, I'll explain you. I saw that there was a modus operandi, put on the dark web and taken by criminal and they reproduced, they reproduced it in the real world, in our world.”

Among the practices and procedures that several participants in this study disclosed, was the significant use of geographic profiles in crime linkage, sharing experiences of the successful criminal investigations in which they were involved. Initially when discussing the use of geographic profiles, P5 recalled that when working with the National Crime Agency, a Detective Sergeant would decide the type of specialist required to assist an investigation, and this could include that of a Geographic Profiler. P1 then noted that a geographic profile can be helpful in the generation of investigative approaches, with the participant outlining a case in which such a profile had narrowed the residential location of an offender. It was further suggested that a geographic profile

supplied, had aided law enforcement in the allocation of appropriate resources and the ultimate solving of the crime, saying, “In this case [solved] the geographical profile helped a lot because they [investigators] had a range of geographical space [to focus].”

Equally, P3 mentioned use of a geographic profile, as it was explained that in the participant’s experience working violent crime investigations, most offenders’ criminal activities had occurred in a geographic area where the criminal felt comfortable, saying,

You're looking at a geographical profile... because what you're looking at, the majority of times killers or habitual criminals will work in an area that is close to a base, whether it's their work base, whether it's their home base.

A similar experience was reiterated by P4 when considering the value of geographic profiling as an investigative support technique applied in criminal inquiries, saying,

[Using a geographic profile] ...building up the patterns... to... gain insight into the offender’s anchor point, which could be the home base, or their work base, or their social base... the base from which they move out to commit crime.

In line with the above accounts of participants having employed geographic profiles, others, such as P6 shared, “From a geographic perspective... that scene [the first crime scene] can offer the most evidence.” Alike, P8 reinforced this view, as did P3 who detailed the practice of “going back to the very first crime... because usually as a perpetrator matures, their MO [modus operandi] matures... the first one will give you probably more clues into the identity.” P7 then explained that geographic profiles have been used to map offenses, saying “Geographical analysis start... giving you these

notions of how the offender is behaving.” Finally, P8 detailed that in terms of expertise, Geographic Profilers are remarkably effective in the resolution of arson investigations.

Following on from the above geographic profiling methods divulged by participants in this study, case linkage analysis was another practice and procedure identified as being relevant within effective criminal investigations. P2 suggested that profile authors review the similarities and differences observed within crimes, to search for connecting features, while P4 elaborated on the use of case linkage analysis within criminal investigations when saying, “There's got to be a lot of characteristics around the victims, around the crime scenes that need to be the same, to talk to the linkage back to one offender.” P5 then noted that the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database is used to compare characteristics of crimes when creating a profile, highlighting that the focus of offense linkage was thematic resemblances, stating, “What we tend to find is... thematic similarity, rather than individual similarity.” P6 then described that case linkage analysis can be a valuable form of evidence, featured as an element of criminal profiling that is accepted in a court of law in North America. The prominent use of geographic profiles in the facilitation of case linkage was emphasized by P7 when it was stated, “I have seen crime linkage, often times I think geography is a good link indicator.” This experience was restated by P1 when the participant said, “It was synonymous proof... that it [geographic profile] linked the cases, to the same offender.” P8 also described the use of a geographic profile to support case linkage within criminal investigations when saying, “Your... temporal analysis and geographical analysis start coming in... giving you these

notions of how the offender is behaving, yeah, I can see a linkage there.” P3 elaborated by noting the features that a geographic profile pronounces in terms of linkage, saying,

So, the geographical one you look at the place that it's in, you look at... time of day... location, is it out in the open? Is it away from people? Is it in a built-up area? Is it in a rural area? How did they get there? So, transport links, things like this. So, you know, who are the sort of people who are usually around there?

Finally, P10 revealed that case linkage analysis, even without geographic profiling, can be used to connect online crimes with those committed both online and in the real world.

The last theme in this study was a superordinate theme titled investigative recommendations. This theme was categorized within the last theme cluster, that being, Theme Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes. Investigative recommendations was a personal experiential theme that demonstrated discrepant qualities, as participants in this study offered varying investigative recommendations according to their lived experiences producing criminal profiles. Akin to the earlier noted cluster three theme, investigative recommendations were examined in relation to research question three. Suggestions were thus made regarding profiling actions that contributed to effective criminal investigations.

Table 9 shows the investigative recommendations theme.

Table 9

Investigative Recommendations

Research Question	Participant	Theme	Quotes
3		Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes	
What is an offender profiler's experience of if, and or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?	P1's translator		"In his point of view, a profile has to be useful, and has to provide to the investigators, suggestions, operative suggestions that can be done in the investigation." and "He has learned by doing profiling that... it's important to have an open mentality."
	P2		"So, the important thing is, through the analysis of the behaviors that have occurred in the criminal act, that I can offer you a route of investigation." and "What type of victim, as specifically as possible, is this aggressor [offender] looking for in order to anticipate that decision. Those kinds of things, things that the researcher [investigator] can do." and "That is what the researcher [investigator] needs, things that he can do, not a diagnosis about what possible disorder a person may have or socio-demographic data that the researcher can already find out on his own."
	P3		"...I think ...the federal database in America has the advantage that you can go on from anywhere in the States and access information. Right? So, if you put something in, you can do a local search and national or a regional search, or a national search. That's something that we need to develop here." and "So, the law has to, and the resources have to change, to go with the changing crime."
	P4		"I mean, how are we going to move profiling into the digital space? ...we need to bring profiling into the digital space, we're so far behind in terms of saying it's all about physical evidence and that, what's happening in the digital space in terms of crime..." and "Linguistic profiling, that's just, I mean to me, that's a big part of our digital future... we need to do more."
	P5		"So, you know, they, if we gave someone age parameters, previous convictions, ethnicity, sex, whether or not they use the weapon or something, the location, then they could pull back from their databases, a number of individuals."
	P6		"I would just say in closing, be willing to adapt." and "...don't be afraid to adapt when new evidence presents itself, and that happens all the time when you have multiple crime scenes, and it can strengthen what you've already said, or it can deviate it, you know, to a certain degree, and take it and do perhaps a different angle and there's nothing wrong with that, because you can only deal with the evidence you have at each and every crime scene, but you'll have more evidence as time goes on, and that way you can make the profile even better."
	P7		"Yeah, you don't know everything, and you need to recognize your limitations. Be very cognizant of your limitations and recognize them." and "So, you have to, you have to recognize your limitations."
	P8		"So, I think that's the part that you should really focus on... we say this about an offender, we find these profile traits, so, where in your profile... where do we talk about investigative strategies? How do we use this information?" and "So, I think you got to really delve into if we get this information, what do we do with it? How do we use it?"
	P9		"You not only have to be able to articulate profile A, but you also have to be able to articulate why it's not B..." and "My one piece of advice, if you want to be a profiler... you sit down with detectives, give them something that's unique"

Research Question	Participant	Theme	Quotes
3		Cluster 3: Criminal investigative processes	
	P10		to their case..." and "My point to you is just don't give them [investigators] something that is going to fit, you know, a million people." "There is no judgment... you have to do your job very straight and in neutrality."

The first investigative recommendation in this study was proposed by P1 when the participant explained that, "a profile has to be useful, and has to provide to the investigators, suggestions, operative suggestions that can be done in the investigation." This advice was bolstered by P2 when the participant confirmed that a profile author needs to deliver specified investigative strategies, of which could comprise information to anticipate the targeting of future victims. P9 similarly recommended that guidance unique to a case should be provided in a profile and that it is important for the profile author to explain the content of the profile to the customer, saying, "You not only have to be able to articulate profile A, but you also have to be able to articulate why it's not B." In this same way, P8 advocated for the provision of tangible investigative advice to be included within a criminal profile, and a suggestion was made for profile authors to give further direction on how to go about actioning advice issued in a profile, as like P1 and P2, P8 explained, "Where in your profile... where do we talk about investigative strategies? How do we use this information?" The abovementioned investigative recommendations were put forward by participants with the aim of improving criminal profiling efficacy.

Thereafter, P6 outlined a significant skill necessary for professional profile authors, that being the ability to demonstrate flexible thinking and subsequent decision making, as the participant said, "Don't be afraid to adapt when new evidence presents

itself, and that happens all the time when you have multiple crime scenes.” Equally, P1 recommended that profile authors should have mental mobility, when saying, “It’s important to have an open mentality.” It thus also was noted that adaptable thinking is a requirement of a profile author, if an accurate and effective profile is to be produced.

Next, despite P5 mentioning use of the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database, P3 recommended that like its counterpart in the United States, the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, a similar database of which would cover regional and national jurisdictions needs to be accessible to law enforcement agencies internationally. P5 then recommended that to better assist criminal investigations, profiles should outline specified offender characteristics, saying, “So, you know, they, if we gave someone age parameters, previous convictions, ethnicity, sex, whether or not they use the weapon... the location, then they could pull back from their databases a number of individuals.” This investigative recommendation was offered to improve criminal investigations.

Following, P4 recommended, “We need to bring profiling into the digital space, we’re so far behind in terms of saying it’s all about physical evidence and that, what’s happening in the digital space in terms of crime.” Likewise, P4 advocated for the development of linguistic profiling and stated, “Linguistic profiling, that’s just, I mean to me that’s a big part of our digital future... we need to do more.” This view was also shared by P3 when discussing the current profiling methods used for online crimes, saying, “So, the law... and the resources have to change, to go with the changing crime.”

Finally, P10 suggested that the recognition of bias is crucial if criminal profile authors are to contribute their expertise to effective criminal investigative processes. The

importance of generating an accurate and well-informed profile, free from prejudice was denoted when P10 said, “There is no judgment... you have to do your job very straight and in neutrality.” P7 similarly called attention to the fundamental need of profiling professionals to be mindful of their abilities, saying, “Yeah, you don’t know everything, and you need to recognize your limitations. Be very cognizant of your limitations and recognize them.” The above suggestions were made as a means of disseminating profile authors’ lived experiences and were intended to improve criminal investigative processes.

The relationship between themes in this study was complex and shaped by both the similar and diverging experiences of participants. Primarily, comparing the case-by-case approach, with themes of profile characteristics and or theories and models in the first theme cluster, participants supplied similar responses and focused on parallel aspects of the overall case-by-case approach, which supported classification of the theme, as being a master theme, or one experienced by the group. In comparison, with the profile characteristics and or theories and models personal experiential themes, participants did not generally report similar lived experiences. Likewise, this was also a finding in the relationship between cluster themes two and three, professional collaboration, succession planning, and practices and procedures, which were all group experiential themes, in contrast to practice standards and investigative recommendations, which were identified as personal experiential themes in this study. These findings were likely due to the nature of the themes, in terms of the topics discussed and the differences between superordinate and or master themes. Patterned responses and or meaning was established within group

experiential themes (Fugard & Potts, 2014), while less cohesive patterns of meaning were noted in the personal experiential themes exhibited by participants' lived experiences.

Summary

The information assembled from the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data in this study sought to answer the research questions. Specifically, this study aimed to contribute to empirical literature in the field of offender profiling, by offering a deeper understanding of international methods of offender profile construction, opportunities for standardization, and describing how offender profiles may contribute to effective criminal investigative processes. The research in this study focused on criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America, and as such, the results of this study should be viewed within this geographical context. The data indicated that the experiences of profile authors vary according to location, experience, and education, and that culture also influences profiling methods. This study further denotes implications for future research and opportunities for the improvement of current profiling and investigative practices. Chapter five offers additional interpretation of the findings, disclosure of the limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study was conducted to contribute original research to the field of forensic psychology, by way of addressing gaps noted within existing criminal profiling literature. The gaps in research that were the focus of this study included, the lack of peer reviewed publications available outlining the methods and reasoning used to construct criminal profiles internationally (Fox & Farrington, 2018; Petherick & Brooks, 2020), the absence of practice standardization within criminal profiling practices (Kocsis & Palermo, 2016; Petherick & Brooks, 2020), and the scarceness of publicly accessible knowledge regarding the effectiveness of offender profiles within criminal investigations (Fox et al., 2020; Rossmo, 2021). Criminal profiling is an investigative tool that has not been standardized (Yaksic, 2020), and thus profiling practices are unable to be improved upon. Hence, this study was undertaken to address the missing data in the literature and to provide peer reviewed research that offers insight from the lived experiences of subject matter experts. This study aimed to develop international criminal profiling practices.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the methods and reasoning employed by international criminal profile authors when writing criminal profiles. The lived experiences of criminal profile authors professionally based in Europe and North America were examined to establish any opportunities for the standardization of international profiling practices. Moreover, a deeper understanding was sought regarding if, and or how criminal profiles support real life successful criminal investigative processes. This study was deemed necessary to investigate the phenomena of interest.

This dissertation applied interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore the phenomena of interest. Corresponding research questions were thus assessed by way of semi-structured interviews. A qualitative approach was taken in the collection and analysis of data in this study, in response to the qualitative nature of the gap in the literature. A phenomenological research tradition was further elected, because this technique can quadruple the benefits of qualitative studies, by virtue of the rapport established between researcher and participant (Alase, 2017). The data gleaned about participants' lived experiences was consequently examined using this methodology.

Key Findings

The key findings of this study were organized into three categories, relative to theme cluster. The results of this study constitute the themes that were identified, with these themes existing to address the research questions, and ultimately the phenomena of interest. Ensuing is a summary of the main outcomes of this research, arranged by theme.

RQ1: How do offender profilers describe their experiences of the methods used to construct criminal profiles, and what reasoning is employed that inspires these methods?

Theme Cluster 1: Criminal Profile Methods and Reasoning

Case-by-Case Approach

The first theme in cluster one was titled, a case-by-case approach, and it was recognized as being a group experiential theme. This theme represented a common method implemented by participants, that being the independent examination of each criminal investigation during profile construction. Participants noted that it was crucial to review diverse data sources, including victimology details, when creating a profile.

Next, a criminal investigation was described as a form of qualitative inquiry, or psychological research used to create the custom fit profile of an unknown offender. It was described as imperative to ensure that the correct distinctions in offending behavior are acknowledged if a case is to be resolved, and that such recognition is a skill specific to criminal profile authors, as a result of training and experience. The criminal profile authors in this study further advised that, according to their lived experiences, offending styles often differ, regardless of similarities in offense type, and that because of the unique nature of evidence presented in each crime, profiles should only be used for the case in which the profile was intended, with the profile not to be superimposed in other cases. Thereafter, participants went on to suggest that to be an effective profile author, one must be willing to be open minded and to consistently employ critical and flexible thinking in the systematic examination of the facts provided in each case. Finally, interviewees proposed that a detail-oriented approach must be taken in all investigations, as this process is required to ensure that all evidence is synthesized in the final profile.

Profile Characteristics

Following, the next theme was that of profile characteristics, a personal experiential theme documented throughout this study. This theme outlined the divergent qualities of participants' lived experiences and showcased the numerous features that interviewees have included within the criminal profiles that they have produced. Despite participants reporting varying characteristics, all interviewees did confirm that an analysis of victim and offender interaction is essential and always included in all profiles.

A criminal profile was described in this study as a form of personality assessment. Participants summarized the methods used to create a profile, and outlined that the case file, including statements and photographs from an investigation are reviewed, and that the crime scene(s) are attended, and discussions are had with relevant law enforcement agencies. Interviewees also advised that information required to inform the profile of an unknown offender(s) is gathered from one or more crime scenes, and from a mixture of all available facts, including those from personal and professional sources. Personal sources of information collected were noted as being, statements from close associates of the victim, while professional sources involved, data from statutory agencies. It was suggested that information from professional bodies also be included, like that of all available medical, psychiatric, and psychological reports, as well as court, prison, and police records. Statistical data regarding the similar features of relevant crimes was also confirmed as being included in a profile. Alike, valuable intelligence about comparable crime and offender types was proposed as being referenced from the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database and was cited by profile authors in the United Kingdom. Equally, the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program was also noted as being accessed for similar reasons by both profile authors in North America and some parts of Europe.

In addition, a participant confirmed that the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP) provided a list of required items to include within a criminal profile, but for the purposes of this study, participants delineated the following as necessary profile characteristics. The gender, age, ethnicity, height and potential weight of an offender, as well as the offender's likely socioeconomic and relationship status, and any

noteworthy lifestyle features. The assessed previous convictions of an offender were also described as being offered in a profile, alongside investigative recommendations, of which could include advice regarding interview, prosecution, and media strategies.

Like the methods of criminal profiling described by way of the lived experiences of participants throughout this study, the VERA method was noted as a means of constructing a criminal profile, and it was highlighted as being a common profiling technique applied in Spain and Latin America. The VERA method suggests that the focus of any criminal investigation should be on the victim, the crime scene, the perpetrator, and crime reconstruction, with the information gleaned, used to formulate hypotheses. The VERA method of profiling was proposed as being an effective approach used to solve crime, with the reason being, that the practice exhibits methodological rigor.

Finally, geographical profiling was an empirical method of criminal profiling that was discussed and advocated for by seven of the 10 participants in this study. It was explained that this method of criminal profiling is accomplished using computer programs, like that of CrimeStat 3 and ArcGIS to create mathematically based profiles. Geographic profiles were designated as investigative support measures for violent crime series, and considered to be effective, particularly when applied to arson investigations. Participants confirmed that data collected during criminal investigations, including information about the locations of crime scenes, are used to input into the aforementioned computer software, and that maps produced are then used to infer characteristics about an offender. It was recognized that geographic profiles map patterns of offending, or crime

hotspots, together with data concerning the likely home base of an offender. Geographic profiles were noted as offering insight into the cognitive functioning of serial offenders.

Theories and Models

The last theme in cluster one was theories and models, a personal experiential theme. This theme outlined much of the reasoning that the profile authors in this study disclosed as justification for the decisions made and or methods used when creating a criminal profile. A key finding within this theme, was that five of the 10 participants in this study referred to theories and models proposed by the British Psychologist, David Canter, as explanations for profiling claims. Included was discussion by two participants about the Circle theory of environmental range, with one of them additionally noting the importance of Canter's inductive approach to profile construction, combined with his use of typologies, as such were described as valuable signposts during decision-making processes. Another participant then suggested that Canter taught the profiling community that it is essential to recognize thematic similarities amongst offenders when formulating an effective profile. Referencing Canter's A -> C equation, yet another participant confirmed that this theory provides the foundation for criminal profiling, which remains valid over years of research, as it outlines the thinking that supports profiling practices. In this same way, the last participant to cite Canter in this study, summed up the views of participants regarding Canter's contributions, when opining that no professional in the field of criminal profiling would dismiss Canter's theoretical positions, as such are the empirically proven rationale for experts' judgements when composing a criminal profile.

Subsequently, other key findings in this study, were that criminal profiles provided to the Cuerpo de la Guardia Civil, or the Spanish Police, are assembled using both inductive and deductive methods. Profile authors professionally based in Spain also confirmed that Toulmin's model of reasoning is regarded as a philosophical basis for profile construction. Moreover, the VERA method was also a model that was noted as a standardized method of criminal profiling applied throughout Spain and Latin America.

Thereafter, geographic profiling was a method of criminal profiling consistently referenced in this study and was one which was described as inherently supported by a variety of theoretical frameworks. Associated theories and models described, included that of Awareness Space, Activity Space, Journey to Crime, Convex Hull, Crime Pattern Theory, Distance Decay Theory, Buffer Zone, the Least Effect Principle, and the Circle theory of environmental range. As well, other theories that were referred to as the logic underpinning profiling claims comprised Attachment Theory, Routine Activity Theory, Rational Choice Theory, the Social Learning Theory, Occam's Razor, and Meehl's Malignant Maxim. The above theories were pointed to as philosophical explanations that inspire the composition of criminal profiles and underwrite the thought processes involved. Notably, it is acknowledged that the theories and models in this study are not an exhaustive list of those that could be referenced when formulating a criminal profile.

In contrast to participants' admissions of the above theories and models, four of the 10 participants in this study denied incorporation of theoretical models in profiling practices. The use of theories and typologies were criticized, as it was suggested that such confine the contents of a profile and create an ineffective checklist system. Even still, two

of the interviewees were clear that, albeit theoretical frameworks were implemented during profile construction, such are not overtly disclosed within profiles, as it was recommended that the inclusion of theoretical perspectives are irrelevant to the customer.

RQ2: According to the experiences of offender profilers, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?

Theme Cluster 2: Practice Standardization

Professional Collaboration

The first theme within cluster two was termed, professional collaboration and was identified as a group experiential theme. A key finding in this study was that professional collaboration is essential if international criminal profiling practices are to become standardized. In particular, the professional collaboration between a criminal investigator and profile author was emphasized as crucial during the creation of an effective criminal profile. Interviewees outlined that when constructing a criminal profile, collaboration with multidisciplinary professionals and insights gained through numerous sources is vital, as it was disclosed that such data is used to support profile claims. Accordingly, participants described collaborating with statutory agencies, psychological services, and interdisciplinary specialists. Participants suggested that skill development and knowledge of profiling practices are further enhanced by way of standardized training, peer review, and evaluation of relevant literature in the field. Three of the four participants professional based in North America, confirmed professional collaboration as a standard practice, via oversight from the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship.

Subsequently, when faced with unusual evidence, professional collaboration was considered critical by participants, namely information sharing, which was recommended as a beneficial criminal investigative process. Unequivocally, professional collaboration was recognized as improving major crime investigations. From a practical standpoint, professional collaboration was deemed by one participant, as a method of ensuring repeat customers due to the provision of an effective product. One participant based in Europe also noted that professional collaboration is sought by way of peer review, as the examination and approval of a profile is required by a colleague, prior to submission of the profile to the customer. Other profile authors echoed this practise, as it was argued that an informed profile necessitates input from various professional perspectives.

Existing unstandardized profiling practices were described by participants, as one admitted to having had limited time available to reference peer reviewed literature because of workload, which was identified as unhelpful, as corresponding literature was recognized as informing the profile construction process and the resulting profile claims. Participants explained that it could be challenging to facilitate collaboration with other subject matter experts, because of a lack of standardized practices, and that improved communication between academics, profile authors, and law enforcement is advised. Increased professional collaboration was highlighted as an essential practice, as participants described that the prevailing lack of international collaboration, increases opportunities for offending. Further, it was noted that, professional collaboration in the form of profiling research needs to expand into developing countries, as existing research does not encompass the majority of the world's population and related criminal behavior.

Succession Planning

The group experiential theme of succession planning was the next to be discovered within cluster two, and it was the second theme that served to address research question two. A key finding in this theme was that participants portrayed succession planning as a task that should be implemented to facilitate the standardization of international profiling practices. It was conceded that at present, there is a significant lack of succession planning amongst profile authors, and that succession planning is vital for the progression of the profession. Interviewees explained that internationally, there are currently no standardized credentialing processes, nor are there training pathways advertised to guide incoming criminal profile authors. Most participants highlighted that standardized training, and education should be required for all profilers, to ensure the effective creation of psychologically informed profiles, and to support the criminal investigative advice provided. An identifiable pathway to becoming a professional profile author was stressed as necessary for future candidates, if the occupation is to become standardized. Early identification of suitable profilers was also said to be beneficial.

Next, training standards were found to be dependent upon location, as profile authors based in the United States of America noted that one must be a police officer prior to becoming a qualified profile author, while participants in the United Kingdom disclosed having to work with the National Crime Agency to have accreditation as a behavioral investigative adviser. Comparably, participants in France and Spain did not explicitly state that law enforcement experience was required to be a profile author. All participants did however attest to working with law enforcement to formulate a profile.

Practice Standards

Finally, practice standards was the last theme established within cluster two and was recognized as a personal experiential theme. Six of the 10 participants in this study agreed that criminal profiling could not become a standardized practice because of global, cultural, and environmental differences. Nevertheless, participants did offer recommendations to support future practice standardization. One interviewee noted that crime analysis techniques should be standardized internationally, with profiling methodologies modified according to region. Likewise, another participant opined that international practice standards should include the consistent use of terminology by profiler authors. It was further advised that practice standards should require all profile authors to have extensive knowledge of both criminal behavior and investigations.

Despite the suggestions offered regarding practice standards, the profile authors interviewed in this study expressed their reservations about the likelihood of criminal profiling becoming a standardized practice. Participants advised that, in order for criminal profiling to be a standardized practice, training and resources must be made accessible to law enforcement. Equally, training standards for qualified profile authors was identified as an area of practice that requires improvement, as currently there are no mandatory training practice standards. One participant in this study did however offer an alternative view, when emphasizing that at present, standardized profiling methods do exist, by way of training facilitated by the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship. In any event, practice standards were recognized as necessary for the standardization of profiling approaches and professionalization of the occupation.

RQ3: What is an offender profiler's experience of if and/or how criminal profiles contribute to effective criminal investigative processes?

Theme Cluster 3: Criminal Investigative Processes

Practices and Procedures

The first theme in cluster three is a group experiential theme, which responds to research question three and is titled practices and procedures. A key finding previously noted, was that a common practice and or procedure implemented by seven of the 10 participants in this study, was the use of geographic profiles. Participants emphasized that geographic profiles are essential, because such can produce investigative leads, including the anchor point of an offender and the identification of crime patterns. A geographic profile was described as capable of offering insight into an offender's behavior, specifically in terms of an individual's geographic range of movement, and that such can be used to supply information that contributes to determining an appropriate investigative approach by law enforcement. Participants confirmed that geographic profiles support the resolution of violent crime investigations, with one interviewee further positing that geographic profiles can be especially effective in the context of arson investigations.

Correspondingly, crime linkage analysis was also noted by participants as a valuable practice because this procedure was explained as providing data about a serial offender, via the analysis of linked crime series. Crime linkage analysis was underscored by a participant in this study as being a credible element of criminal profiling accepted within North American courts. Another participant went on to describe that commonly, offense linkage analysis promptly highlights the thematic resemblances amongst

offenders, with a different participant stipulating that it is the avoidable, excessive, and unnecessary offending behaviors that often link crimes. Finally, case linkage analysis was explained as being remarkably useful in the linkage of online and real-world crimes.

Investigative Recommendations

The last theme in this study is a personal experiential theme that summarizes investigative recommendations made by participants and responds to research question three. Interviewees in this study offered investigative recommendations based upon their lived experiences as criminal profile authors. A key finding was that it is crucial for a profile author to provide criminal investigators with operational investigative direction.

Ensuing, participants advocated for the provision of unique and case specific counsel within a profile, suggesting that such should consider the evidence in each case. Likewise, participants stressed the importance of explaining the contents of a profile to the customer, with profilers encouraged to elaborate on how to action profile advice. It was noted that if such information is not clarified, a profile is likely to be less effective. A linked investigative recommendation was made, that being, that profile authors, and all experts in the field of criminal investigation, acknowledge the influence of personal bias during profile formulation. Profile authors were advised to actively seek to guard against the incorporation of bias within profiles, and that despite being experts, criminal profile authors must be aware of their own limitations. A participant explained that the scope of a profile author's practice is restricted, and that this should be clearly communicated.

The next key finding discussed relative to investigative recommendations was the idea that criminal profile authors must consistently demonstrate open mindedness and or

have flexibility in their thinking and decision-making. One participant maintained that it is important to adjust a criminal profile where necessary, to incorporate the presentation of new evidence, as this is a common occurrence with the introduction of new crime scenes in a crime series. It was stressed that amending a profile can increase efficacy.

The remaining few investigative recommendations made by participants in this study, spoke to the globalization of criminal profiling. Participants discussed referencing the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database operating in the United Kingdom and the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, which was established in the United States of America. One participant recommended that additional databases should be formed to increase the sharing of information among international law enforcement agencies. Echoing earlier remarks by participants regarding the production of detailed profiles, another participant explained that when a profile is comprehensive, features such as the potential use of a weapon, the sex, and age parameters of an offender can be entered into a database to obtain intelligence related to parallel offenses, and or known offenders. The need for communication via technological advancements was further emphasized in this study, in terms of cybercrime. Participants shared that profiling in digital spaces could inform future legislation and offer insight into ever-changing criminal operations. Linguistic profiling was also referenced as a relevant practice in digital spaces, and it was noted that this approach may be the future of profiling. Finally, advice was offered, that profiling research be conducted in developing countries to increase the knowledge base.

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirmation of Preceding Literature

Several of the findings in this study confirmed knowledge outlined in the existing criminal profiling peer reviewed literature discussed in chapter two. Namely, most of the participants, approximately six of the 10 participants interviewed in this study, described that based upon their lived experiences authoring criminal profiles, they believed that without improvements to this tool, criminal profiling cannot become a standardized international investigative practice. This finding was consistent with research by Olszak-Häukler (2019), in which the author maintained that current profiling techniques are not standardized. Kocsis and Palermo (2016) also reiterated this conclusion, as the researchers posited that at present, profiling methods are unstandardized and offer unusable evidence in legal proceedings, because of elevated error rates and predictive inability. Kapardis (2017) further stressed a lack of profiling practice standardization, noting that this is due to the subjective nature of profiles, and variable author expertise.

Contributing to a lack of standardization, existing literature on the topic has underscored the inconsistent use of terminology within the field of criminal profiling (Davies & Woodhams, 2019; Yaksic et al., 2019), explaining that such is to blame for a lack of structured approaches. This observation was also a finding of this study, as consistent terminological use was a practice standard identified as imperative, despite regional differences. Interviewees described that while cases may differ internationally, the same language must be used if progress is to be made. Petherick and Brooks (2020) also contended that standardized profiling principles support reliable profile outcomes.

Ensuing, preceding research has suggested that the application of criminal profiling practices has steadily grown among international law enforcement agencies in recent years (Mittal & Singh, 2016), and this was a finding substantiated in this study. Given that participants were professionally based within Europe and or North America, there was a variety of countries represented within this research. Interviewees disclosed having regularly produced profiles for a multitude of international law enforcement agencies, including in the United States, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. In the United Kingdom, for MI5, MI6, New Scotland Yard, and the National Crime Agency. As well as in Canada, for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In France, for the French Military, and in Spain, for the Spanish National Police. Equally, also in Africa, for the South African Police Service. In addition, participants further confirmed having been commissioned during their careers, by other international law enforcement agencies based in Italy, Mexico, Peru, Panama, Ecuador, Colombia, Romania, Australia, New Zealand, Aruba, Russia, and Vietnam.

Research on the subject has established that criminal profiles provide support for law enforcement decision-making processes, including in terms of the allocation of resources and the narrowing of suspect pools (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019). The findings of this study parallel this research, as participants disclosed that feedback from law enforcement has been mainly positive, evidenced by repeat customers and the successful resolution of cases. Participants did however emphasize that for a profile to be effective, it should provide tangible investigative advice that can progress an inquiry, with the guidance specific to the available evidence gathered from the crime under investigation.

Research in the field of forensic psychology maintains that criminal profiling can support the successful resolution of unsolved crimes (Yaksic, 2020), with constructive practices contributing to decreased investigative costs (Lino et al., 2017). This view was restated by Gabor (2015), when it was suggested that a useful criminal profile facilitates the identification and capture of violent offenders, which results in reduced costs of crime. The findings in this study align with preceding research, as participants articulated that based upon their experiences composing criminal profiles, most have been accurate, and thus expedited the resolution of an investigation. Interviewees underscored that if profile authors explain a profile to investigators, this can further increase profile efficacy.

As previously detailed, investigative recommendations offered by participants in this study included the suggestion that, recognition of a profile author's personal biases displayed within a criminal profile are important, if a successful criminal investigation is to be achieved. Davies and Woodhams (2019) noted that erroneous profiles can obstruct investigative processes. Participants in this study encouraged professional profile authors to demonstrate flexible thinking, open mindedness, and to be reliant upon the evidence and technology available. That is to say that interviewees advocated for detailed profile characteristics to be listed within criminal profiles, so as to take advantage of such databases as that of ViCAP and the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database. Interviewees endorsed global research and the deployment of profiling into digital spaces. Participants also pointed out that profile authors should be aware of the limitations of criminal profiling as a practice, including the fact that profiling is not currently revered as a science, but more of an art, a finding also supported by Petherick and Brooks (2020).

Abreu et al. (2019) expressed that criminal profiling research is necessary, because such increases information sharing, which can reveal criminal behavior patterns. The findings of this study reinforced this advice, as participants disclosed that coinciding with their lived experiences, it was compulsory to review various data sources when constructing a profile, and to share information via group consultations with colleagues and specialists, to expand one's knowledge base and to improve the quality of a profile. Alike, participants in this study also subscribed to the idea that, increased communication between profile authors and law enforcement is needed, noting that this relationship is central to the professional collaboration required to compose effective criminal profiles.

Next, there has been a great deal of discussion within the peer reviewed literature regarding the typologies and motivations that underlie profiling practices, although such have historically been deemed as speculative (Shea, 2021). However, the findings of this study confirmed that, according to the lived experiences of many of the profile authors interviewed, it was noted that a diverse number of theories and models are in fact often considered by profile authors during profile formulation. Specifically, profile authors disclosed an extensive list of theories and models referenced during the analysis of crime and the subsequent generation of a criminal profile, with half of participants referring to David Canter's theoretical perspectives, suggesting that such shape the decisions made by profile authors. Correspondingly, the bulk of the theories and models shared in this study, were explained as being requirements of geographical profiling. Moreover, geographic profiling was the most commonly discussed practice and procedure in this study, with seven of the 10 participants interviewed, advocating for this method of criminal profiling.

In conversation with renowned expert, Dr Ann Burgess, methods of criminal profile construction, opportunities for standardization, and related criminal investigative processes were discussed, corresponding to her lived experiences studying violent crime. Dr Burgess is a long-time researcher, who worked as the methodologist in studies of serial offenders, investigating methods of psychological profiling applied by agents at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Douglas et al., 2008). This study was discussed with Dr Burgess, given her experience in the field, and the following insights were gleaned.

Dr Burgess echoed peer reviewed literature consistent with the findings of this study, as during her work with criminal profile authors (see Burgess et al., 2010; Douglas et al., 2008), Dr Burgess noted that special agents or profile authors at the Federal Bureau of Investigation mainly relied upon their investigative background to solve violent crimes, and that historically, there were limited psychological theories and or models implemented by investigators. The first step suggested by Dr Burgess when creating a profile was to review the victimology information in a case with the victim and offender relationship highlighted as significant in the progression of an investigation. Likewise, offending patterns were also deemed important, as this data supported effective profile outcomes. Characteristics identified as being included in a profile were employment, the home environment, relationship status, and or the motivations of an offender. Alike, predicted future victim groups were also confirmed to be incorporated within a profile.

Extension of Knowledge

Amongst the findings of this study recognized as extending knowledge in the field of criminal profiling, were some of the theories and models revealed. In particular, the

VERA method and Toulmin's model. The VERA method was suggested by a participant as being the predominant means of criminal profiling currently applied in Spain and Latin America. This profiling technique was noted as being a stepwise process used during profile creation (Calaf, 2022). Alike, Toulmin's model was identified as the theoretical premise that must be satisfied if profile claims are to be justified (Alison et al., 2003). Still, participants clarified that theories and models are not explicitly stated in profiles.

Peer reviewed publications have outlined gaps in the literature regarding a lack of information disclosed by profile authors about profiling practices and the associated reasonings for profile claims (Petherick & Brooks, 2020). Consequently, the findings of this study were able to extend the available knowledge concerning current international profiling practices, and the related decision-making procedures involved. Existing peer reviewed works have discussed the inclusion of victimology information within a criminal profile (Burgess et al., 2010), as well as lifestyle, physical, and psychosocial features of an offender (Sea et al., 2016). Following, profile characteristics established in this study, confirmed the aforementioned features and elaborated to include the implementation of statistical data in a profile, of which can offer investigative insight as a result of crime pattern analysis, using such international systems as, the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP), and the Serious Crime Analysis Section Database.

Thereafter, participants in this study outlined the importance of accessing multiple sources of information to develop useful profile characteristics. Interviewees shared that the crime scene, photographs, statements, and law enforcement briefings were among such data that is to be reviewed when formulating a criminal profile. Further, knowledge

of the practice was extended by the revelation that, while publications have argued offender motivations (Pecino-Latorre et al., 2019), the findings of this study encouraged the integration of the need driven behaviors demonstrated by offenders during the commission of a crime, with one participant underscoring the detection of a *list of firsts*. Participants explained that unnecessary offending behaviors can support case linkage.

Next, succession planning was a theme found in this study that worked to extend knowledge of the profession, as participants described that in terms of preparing future candidates to become a criminal profile author, currently there are no international training pathways in place, and that this is a barrier to the standardization of the vocation. Findings of this study have also detailed that, relative to professional collaboration, learning and development is provided by way of the International Criminal Investigative Analysis Fellowship. Another finding that extended knowledge of effective practices and procedures was that participants disclosed that geographic profiling is considered an empirical practice and able to clarify investigative leads, specifically in the context of arson investigations. Lastly, the findings of this study extended knowledge of criminal profiling methods, as participants explained that a case-by-case approach is essential in profiling, because a custom profile can focus on the nuances of offending behaviors, which aid in effective profile creation and subsequent successful criminal investigations.

Disconfirmation of Preceding Literature

Perhaps a finding of this study that most distinctively disconfirmed preceding literature, was that four of the 10 participants interviewed denounced the strict use of theories and models within profile formulations, as such were viewed as restrictive

checklists unable to capture all observed characteristics of an offender. Much of the peer reviewed literature delineating topics in profiling, however, have argued that theories and models offer an understanding of the psychological functioning used to explain criminality (Canter, 2000). While the particulars of each crime differ, as do the skill sets of each profile author, namely one's knowledge of relevant theories and models, participants in this study noted that it is crucial that a profile author be educated in the behavioral sciences, especially in the context of criminal psychology and investigation.

Following, historical research has posited that only 14% of detectives in the United Kingdom found profiling practices to be supportive of successful criminal investigations (Vettor et al., 2013). Equally, during the same timeframe, it was noted that 70% of North American police psychologists felt uncomfortable providing profiles, because of concerns related to the validity of the practice (Vettor et al., 2013, as cited in Bartol, 1996). The findings of this study markedly contradicted these publications, as the criminal profile authors interviewed, were representative of Europe and North American professionals, and interviewees shared their lived experiences having composed criminal profiles for between 10 and 40 years, with all emphasizing that the practice, as an investigative tool, regularly contributes to the solving of violent crimes. Participants further offered evidence of the efficacy of criminal profiling, by way of repeat customers.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Relative to the Findings

Previous research has suggested that offenders demonstrate behavioral consistency within offending styles across crime series, which is distinguishable from other offenders of the same crime type (Salfati & Bateman, 2005). The findings of this

study are in line with this research; although, it was noteworthy that when discussing theories and models relevant to behavioral consistency, a participant explained that according to their lived experiences, offending styles may differ for a single offender across crime series, but that thematic similarities in offending behavior remain the same. This disclosure was made when the interviewee gave the example of methods of attack, noting that thematic similarities were observed in the way that an offender had approached victims across crime series, though subsequent offending behaviors varied.

In addition, theories of behavioral consistency have maintained that a multitude of factors, such as interpersonal and routine activities, influence behavioral consistency, with five specific aspects being, an offender's maturity, responsiveness, development, learning and career, which combine to dictate the likelihood of behavioral consistency (Youngs & Canter, 2006). Findings of this study coincide with this research, as participants described referencing theories and models like that of Attachment Theory, which could speak to the maturity, development, and potential responsiveness of an offender (Keller, 2021), while Social Learning Theory was noted by participants and provides insight into learned criminal behaviors (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). In this same way, Activity Space was mentioned by a participant and relates to a continuum of spaces in which an offender operates, potentially being relevant to an offender's employment (Clark, 1990). Possibly the most pertinent theory shared by profile authors in this study and one which lends support to preceding literature, is that of the Crime Pattern Theory, as this theory advocates for the consideration of temporal, social, and environmental factors influencing criminal activity (Brantingham & Brantingham, 2021).

In turn, the profiling equation has proposed that consistent offending behaviors exist, as the result of the likeness of offender characteristics (Almond, 2018). Ensuing, the findings of this study supported this conceptual framework, as demonstrated when participants described the profiling equation, as the founding thought process used when establishing a profile. Participants also commented, suggesting that Canter's school of thought was complementary to other models and theoretical frameworks implemented within profiles. Perhaps the boldest confirmation of the profiling equation, apart from preceding literature, was noted in discussion of theories and models in this study, when a participant explicitly detailed that, there is no profile author that would disagree with the profiling equation. Further, half of the participants interviewed, conveyed theoretical perspectives guided by Canter, and acknowledged consideration of the profiling equation.

Following, the homology assumption, which is a crucial feature of the profiling equation, recommends that offenders' personalities and or background characteristics may be comparable, relative to associated offending behaviors (Almond et al., 2018), with offenders' life experiences assumed to often be similar (Doan & Snook, 2008). With this concept in mind, the findings of this study were not able to conclusively confirm the homology assumption, as one participant clarified that criminal profiles are created based upon existing evidence, and as such, profile authors do not generally investigate offender characteristics relative to an individual's early life experiences, which in essence would be required to confirm the theory. Even still, methods of profile construction, including profile characteristics disclosed by participants in this study, appear to confirm the homology assumption. This is seen in the frequent featuring of an offender's home life

circumstances, education, values, and beliefs noted in profiles, as when compared, these qualities could lend credibility to the application of the homology assumption as a conceptual framework used by profile authors, given that similarities in these traits could demonstrate the paralleled personalities and or backgrounds of serial offenders.

This study worked to explore the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed above, in an effort to incorporate the lived experiences of professional criminal profile authors, with the goal being, to build upon these models. It is hoped that the findings of this study may contribute to the future establishment of a standardized method of international criminal profiling. To that end, it is clear that the aforesaid principles offer a philosophical foundation for profiling practices, and it is understood that this study has provided the necessary data to further develop these frameworks in the future.

Limitations of the Study

This study was qualitative and thus lacked statistical generalizability and as a result, this study was limited to theoretical transferability. One of the primary limitations of qualitative research, is the fact that the researcher's viewpoint is internal, as opposed to external, like that of quantitative research (Queirós et al., 2017). Accordingly, as the sole researcher in this study, the findings were interpreted by my understanding of the subject, and as such, the potential for researcher bias existed, as Montague et al. (2020) described this as the concept of double hermeneutics, and "a process of intersubjective meaning-making" (p. 25). Relative to this, a language barrier was encountered between participants and the researcher in this study, while all interviews were conducted in English, the possibility exists that language differences may have impacted findings.

Following, only participants based in Europe and North America were interviewed, hence the lived experiences of profile authors from other regions were not accounted for within the scope of this study. Alike, six participants were based in Europe, while only four were based in North America, which may have influenced the findings. A further limitation was the sample size, as though 10 participants were interviewed and data saturation achieved (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022), an increased sample size likely would have increased the trustworthiness of this study. Yet another limitation of this study was that not all participants had produced peer reviewed literature, as two of the 10 participants noted that such was only available within internal publications, thus a lack of access to organizational publications may have reduced the validity of this study. Correspondingly, the criteria for this study restricted the participants available, and thus it was challenging to source participants, despite the use of snowball sampling. A further limitation was that many participants in this study, though not all, were retired, so it is possible that the methods discussed may not be contemporary. As well, there were more male than female participants in this study, which may have also impacted the findings.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made. First, recommendations grounded in the strengths of this study consist of those raised by participants and of which are applicable to practitioners. Namely, interviewees advocated for the development of standardized training for all profile authors and law enforcement personnel, of which would fuse together psychological knowledge and information relative to criminal investigative practices. Participants also suggested that profiling

methods should become more accessible to law enforcement agencies, given this sector's first-hand experience applying profiling practices. A further rationale being, that law enforcement should be familiar with this investigative technique, so that their experiences can contribute to improving the practice. Alike, a structured international pathway to becoming a criminal profile author was also recommended, if the practice is to become standardized. Moreover, profile authors also noted that methods should be adapted to accommodate regional differences, with terminology advised to remain consistent. These recommendations are consistent with Kocsis and Palermo (2020), noting that future studies should examine standardized profiling practices, as such may advance the field.

In a similar manner, participants in this study encouraged enhanced communication between profile authors and law enforcement, with further instruction recommended to be offered, regarding how investigators can action profile advice. Equally, improved communication among international law enforcement agencies was also recommended, as one profile author outlined how a lack of information sharing provides opportunities for criminal networks to exploit legislation and avoid capture. In addition, contact between profile authors and academics was also suggested, as was the referencing by profile authors of peer reviewed publications, with professional collaboration identified as enhancing the quality of profiles and investigative outcomes. Comparably, drawing on a limitation of this study, it was recommended that future criminal profiling research expand into developing countries, so that profiling practices may evolve with the supplementary knowledge gleaned about global offending behavior patterns. Another recommendation aligned with a limitation of this study, was that of bias

recognition, as participants highlighted the importance of guarding against bias when formulating a profile, as such can impact the effectiveness of investigative processes.

Like a recommendation made by Kapardis (2017), the findings of this research dictated that future research should concentrate on real world profiling applications. Such could include the establishment of additional databases dedicated to supporting the international formulation methods of criminal profiles. Following, such databases could offer a myriad of accessible data regarding international patterns of serial offending. To this extent, profile authors in this study recommended that profiling needs to expand into digital spaces, and that increased linguistic profiling practices should also be employed.

Implications

The implications of this research extend past the findings of this study, to include positive social changes on individual, organizational, and policymaking levels. On an individual level, the findings of this study may support international criminal profile authors and criminal investigators with the operational delivery of profiling practices. What is more, on an organizational level, the implications of this study offer insight into the lived experiences of profile authors in Europe and North America, and an increased understanding of changes that need to be made to profiling practices. While currently no international regulating body exists, this is a policy change that could be made to support standardization. Other methodological implications may include, required standardized international training for profile authors, compulsory multiagency information sharing, and from a theoretical perspective, an enhanced understanding of the reasoning, in terms of the psychological theories and models relied upon as justification for profile claims.

Further, positive social change brought about by this study may be realized, in an increased awareness of effective criminal investigative processes facilitated by profiling practices, of which endeavor to improve crime linkage and subsequent public protection. Accordingly, the qualitative findings of this study may inform future quantitative studies and contribute to the development of empirical practice frameworks. Furthermore, the positive social change implications consistent with the scope of this study, may comprise improved international criminal profile construction methods, of which offer the potential to advance effective criminal investigative processes that address serial offending, reduce current high rates of unsolved serious crime (Statista, 2022), and related human suffering.

Conclusion

This study underscored the complex lived experiences of criminal profile authors in Europe and North America, and the contributions of associated practices to effective criminal investigations. In response to the research questions posed in this study, findings have outlined how the methods used to construct criminal profiles differ internationally, with commonalities existing in the reasoning used to justify profile claims. Similarities were also observed within the opportunities for practice standardization identified, and the support provided by profile authors in criminal investigations. Nevertheless, there were discrepant qualities found within the themes identified in this study, in particular differences in profile characteristics, theories and models, practice standards, and the investigative recommendations shared by the subject matter experts interviewed.

While criminal profiling is not a science and remains a controversial practice, the lived experiences of the profile authors in this study demonstrated that this investigative

tool can support law enforcement with the successful resolution of violent crimes. The findings of this study make it clear that criminal profiling procedures and policies require ongoing research, as the practice should be customer driven and work to ultimately provide investigative guidance. Although this study proved that international criminal profile authors operate differently based upon experience, education, and location, it is hoped that this dissertation emphasized the need for improved multiagency communication, so that standardized profiling practices may develop, and further aid crime linkage. This study notes the potential of criminal profiling to increase public protection, reduce opportunities for serial offending, human suffering, and costs of crime.

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Appendix A: Mind Map



Appendix B: Interview Invitation

Dear (participant name)

Date:

It is a distinct pleasure to cordially invite you to participate in a study to research international methods of offender profile construction, practice standardization, and effective criminal investigative processes. This study aims to bring together some of the top international industry leaders, to shed light on current methods of offender profile construction, standards of best practice, and knowledge of associated effective criminal investigative processes. The researcher in this study, Savannah Peoples is a forensic psychology doctoral candidate at Walden University and would be thrilled to meet you and learn from your lived experiences. Interviews will take place in May - August 2023.

About the Study:

The study will comprise you taking part in one audio recorded interview, conducted virtually or by phone, ranging between 30-90 minutes.

Your privacy will be protected throughout the study, with all data collected encrypted, and your identity confidential, as the published study will only include coded data.

Volunteers must meet the following requirements:

- Be a professional and experienced offender profile author
- Have academic credentials
- Have taught subject matter related to criminal profiling
- Have authored peer reviewed literature
- Are publicly recognized as an expert
- Be professionally based in Europe and/or North America

Please email the researcher Savannah Peoples at XXX@waldenu.edu to confirm your interest in this study and further information will be sent to you via email. You are welcome to please forward this invitation to other qualified profile authors in your personal network, who you believe may be interested in participating in this study.

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Are you in a private location and comfortable to complete this interview? If at any time during this interview you need a break, please feel free to let me know.

Demographic Questions

- 1) What is your name, age, gender, and the location of your professional practice?
 - a. What is your highest level of education?
 - b. What is your occupation?
 - i. In what countries have you authored criminal profiles?
 - ii. How long have you authored criminal profiles?
 - c. What is your employment status and/or who is your employer?
 - i. What is your occupational background?
 - ii. Have you previously or currently authored profiles on behalf of an organization?
 - d. How are your services commissioned?
 - i. Do you receive remuneration for your services?
 - ii. What is the frequency of your commissioned services?

Interview

- 2) How would you describe offender profiling?
- 3) How do you create an offender profile?
 - a. Can you tell me about a criminal profile you've created?
 - i. Is a criminal profile available for reference?
 - ii. Are you able to share a criminal profile you've created with me?
 - iii. If no, do you know where I can access one for reference?
 - iv. Are public records available to analyze in a case example?
 - v. What information do you use/reference to create a criminal profile?
 - b. What are the steps taken and/or methods used to construct a profile?
 - c. What rationale do you apply during each decision as you create a profile?
 - d. What existing theories and or profile models do you reference and or have you built upon within the profiles you author?
 - e. According to your experience, what if any specified crime scene, victim, and/or other characteristics contribute to identifying an offender?
 - f. What if any similarities in victim, attack, and crime scene features, as well as offender type identifications have you experienced in your work?
 - g. What types of serial offending behaviors relative to crime series linkage have you observed?
 - h. How do the actions of an offender infer characteristics about the offender?
 - i. How would you describe the legitimacy of offender typologies?

- j. What if any sociodemographic features are included in a profile?
- 4) What is your experience of evidence-based methods of criminal profiling?
 - 5) How would you describe the function of a criminal profile?
 - 6) What is your experience of the utility of criminal profiles?
 - 7) How would you describe a criminal investigation?
 - 8) How are criminal profiles applied to real world criminal investigations?
 - a. What is your experience of profiles aiding criminal investigations?
 - b. What is your experience of profiles used in solved criminal investigations?
 - 9) In your experience, to what extent have you observed offenders illustrating consistent behaviors across crime series?
 - a. What is your experience of variance within versus between offenders?
 - 10) How do you describe the relationship between offenders' background experiences and offending styles, in terms of similarities or differences?
 - 11) What are the common motives of criminals observed within profiles?
 - 12) What is your understanding of the *A->C Equation* by Canter and or have you applied this theory within profiles you author/have authored?
 - 13) What influence if any do you think sociocultural factors have had on your experiences as a criminal profiler?
 - 14) Referencing your experience constructing criminal profiles, to what extent can offender profiling become a standardized practice?
 - a. What prevailing practices exist within criminal profiling?
 - b. What practice standards do you think could be initiated that would advance international methods of offender profiling?
 - 15) What actions do you think could be taken to improve criminal profiling practices?
 - 16) What other topics in offender profiling do you think are essential to consider?
 - a. What is the most important thing you have learned as a criminal profiler?
 - b. What other information do you think is necessary for me to know regarding offender profiling methods, opportunities for the standardization of profiling practices, and or the use of offender profiling in effective criminal investigations?
 - 17) What is your understanding of where profiles you've authored have been used?

Appendix D: Treatment of Human Participants

From: CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative)
Program No Reply noreply@citiprogram.org
Sent: January 22, 2023 4:48 PM
To: Savannah Peoples XXX@waldenu.edu
Subject: CITI Program - Course Completion for Savannah Peoples

CITI Program
Course Completion for Savannah Peoples

Congratulations on your recent course completion!
Name: Savannah Peoples
Institution: Walden University
Course: Doctoral Student Researchers
Stage: 1 - Basic Course
Completion Date: 22 Jan 2023
Expiration Date: N/A
Completion Record ID: 53821319

These links are permanent and may be used to access or share your Completion Report and Completion Certificate at any time.

We suggest you retain this email for your records.

CITI Program

This message was sent from an automated account that does not receive email. If you wish to reply, please contact support@citiprogram.org instead.