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Doctor James Brussel and his method of offender profiling

Summary

James Brussel is considered the creator of the first modern characteristics of an unknown crime perpetrator and the founding father of criminal profiling. In literature of the subject this individual is usually reduced to the story of buttoned up double-breasted suit worn by “the Mad Bomber”, George Metesky, which is considered the evidence of the genius shrewdness of this New York psychiatrist and criminologist and the potential lying in criminal profiling. The method used by Brussel has not yet been systematically described. The present article fills this gap and demonstrates that the views of the American psychiatrist, based on Kretschmer’s constitutional theory, psychoanalysis and intuition, have influenced and continue to influence his followers who elaborate characteristics of unknown crime perpetrators around the world, including Poland. The article also points to possible benefits and threats to criminal proceedings that using the above method may bring about.

Key words: criminal profiling, characteristics of unknown crime perpetrator, crime scene analysis

Everyone who has come into contact with criminal profiling knows the name of New York criminologist and psychiatrist, Dr. James Brussel widely recognized as the founding father of modern criminal profiling. The character of George Metesky – “the Mad Bomber”, who terrorized the inhabitants of New York in the 1940s and 1950s became legendary. Although the account of Brussel’s spectacular success is found in nearly every work devoted to offender profiling (e.g. Ainsworth, 2001; Jackson, Bekerian, 1997; Geberth, 2006), the character of the psychiatrist and especially the method used by him have not yet been studied in greater detail. Meanwhile, as Gradoń rightly notes (2010), one can find some elements of the approach used by Brussel in methods used by the creators of profiling as adopted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States of America, which has its supporters and followers in various countries, including Poland.

The objective of this article is to find out based on the analysis of the literature on the subject who Dr. James Brussel was, what his method consisted in, whether it was as spectacular as the media reported and which of its element can be found in the contemporary profiling. A closer look into the profile of the New York psychiatrist and an analysis of his work aiming at creating profiles of unknown criminals, as well as and pinpointing references to it in the works of his followers will provide reliable knowledge about this tool to people who deal with such profiling in their profession, and allow them

using it in a conscious manner. The issue of profiling is very complex and not easy to define, which is why it contains a lot of ambiguities and understatements. All the more worth making efforts to analyse, describe and organise it.

James A. Brussel lived in 1905–1982. He was an American psychiatrist and criminologist. He graduated from the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania. In the early 1930s, he was a psychiatric resident at Pilgrim State Hospital on Long Island. During World War II, he took care of criminals at Fort Dix in New Jersey, initially as Chief of the military Neuropsychiatric Service, and then as a psychiatrist responsible for the psychiatric ward in the Greenhaven Barracks in New York. After the War, he worked as a Deputy Director in a psychiatric hospital, a lecturer in college and a consultant in the field of criminology. He was again called up for military service during the Korean War. He was the Chief of the Neuropsychiatric Center in El Paso, Texas. He eventually returned to Manhattan, where he worked as Deputy Commissioner of the New York Department of Mental Hygiene¹. In his memoirs he claimed that during his military and civil career he worked on hundreds of cases.

¹ Dr. James A. Brussel, criminologist, is dead (1982). *The New York Times*, 23 October, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/10/23/obituaries/dr-james-a-brussel-criminologist-is-dead.html> [accessed: November, 2019].

„The Mad Bomber” case

Brussel's adventure with investigative work began from an acquaintance with the Head of the New York State Missing Persons Clearing House, who recommended the psychiatrist to inspector Finney who had been working “the Mad Bomber” case (Brussel, 1970).

In the 1940s and 1950s, a series of bomb explosions horrified the New York City. Over several years, dozens of primitive pipe bombs were planted and over half of them went off. According to various sources, as a result of the explosions from a dozen to over twenty persons sustained mostly light injuries. The bombs were planted in public places, near buildings occupied by the Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc., as well as in libraries, theatres, at train and bus stations, and in telephone booths². They were accompanied by messages left by the perpetrator along with the bombs or sent to the police, New York newspapers³ and the Company mentioned. The communications indicated deep resentment of the bomber against Consolidated Edison, and thus it was assumed that bombs were planted by a former employee of that Company.

As Brussel reports in his memoirs (1970), Finney was so frustrated by the lack of progress in the sixteen-year-long investigation that he was willing to reach out and try unusual methods and therefore he contacted the psychiatrist.

On a December day, inspector Finney and two police detectives paid a visit to Brussel to talk about his thoughts on “the Mad Bomber” and obtain some directions that might be helpful in the investigation. The policemen felt pressure from their superiors who expected results and badly needed a breakthrough in the proceedings. When the psychiatrist expressed a doubt whether his help could be useful he heard in reply that sometimes a new thought may turn a failure into success. Encouraged by the policemen he stares at the photographs of explosive devices that they have brought and begins to ponder. When analysing his process of thought it is possible to reach a conclusion that the suppositions were based on the following assumptions: the perpetrator was a paranoid, a foreigner and had the Oedipus complex. Further elements of the profile were developed upon these basic assumptions. Brussel mentioned that some of the conclusions were based on the police's

suppositions as to the circumstances of the case, for example, information provided by the policemen that the explosives had been very carefully made and that the bomber had been constantly improving them. The psychiatrist used that knowledge combined with the neat handwriting of the perpetrator and his obsession with an alleged harm done by Consolidated Edison to diagnose paranoia in the attacker (Brussel admits that inspector Finney previously reached the same conclusion). The assumption that the perpetrator suffered from paranoia allowed Brussel to formulate the majority of conclusions contained in the profile published by *The New York Times* referring, among others, to age, body built, personality type and motivation. The data concerning construction of the explosive devices were used for determining a possible profession, education and manual skills of the attacker. The hypothesis that the assassin had the Oedipus complex formed the basis for the idea that he was a bachelor living with an older female relative. That conclusion seemed to have been confirmed by the Police findings that the process of constructing explosive devices had generated noise and it was more likely that the criminal lived in a detached house, which provided grounds for the suspicion there was a woman taking care of the home (Brussel, 1970).

The anonymous letters sent by the bomber to newspapers and other institutions provided foundations to a conclusion that he was of foreign origin. Brussel (1970) observed that the expressions in letters seemed as if they had been translated from a foreign language into English. Besides, they did not contain typical colloquialisms or abbreviations. However, there were phrases in the letters that were more typical for Victorian novels than the language used by New Yorkers. The psychiatrist brought up such phrases as „dastardly deeds” and „ghoulish acts” (Brussel, 1970, p. 28) as examples.

In his autobiography, Brussel presented the scene that took place shortly before the detectives left his office. The psychiatrist closed his eyes and saw an impeccably tidy man who did not appear to follow the latest fashion trends:

- „I saw him clearly – much more clearly than the facts really warranted. I knew I was letting my imagination get the better of me but I couldn't help it.
- “One more thing”, I said, my eyes closed tight. “When you catch him-and I have no doubt you will – he'll be wearing a double-breasted suit.”
- “Jesus!”, one of the detectives whispered.
- “And it will be buttoned”, I said. (Brussel, 1970, p. 57)”

On 25 December, 1956 r. *The New York Times* published the characteristics of „the Mad Bomber” proposed by Brussel: “Single man, between 40 and 50 years old, introvert. Unsocial but not anti-social. Skilled mechanic. Cunning. Neat with tools. Egotistical of mechanical skill. Contemptuous of other people.

² 15 were injured by bomb blasts; 33 devices, of which 22 went off, were planted here over 16-year period two hurt at terminal list of bomb sites (1957). *The New York Times*, 23 January, <https://www.nytimes.com/1957/01/23/archives/15-were-injured-by-bomb-blasts-33-devices-of-which-22-went-off-were.html> [accessed: November, 2019].

³ “Bomber” presses threat on utility; paper makes public a letter sent from Mt. Vernon – writer won't give up police stress safety (1957). *The New York Times*, 11 January, <https://www.nytimes.com/1957/01/11/archives/bomber-presses-threat-on-utility-paper-makes-public-a-letter-sent.html> [accessed: November, 2019].

Resentful of criticism of his work but probably conceals resentment. Moral. Honest. Not interested in women. High school graduate. Expert in civil or military ordnance. Religious. Might flare up violently at work when criticized. Possible motive: discharge or reprimand. Feels superior to critics. Resentment keeps growing. Present or former Consolidated Edison worker. Probably case of progressive paranoia." (Brussel, 1970, p. 58).

Brussel (1970) claims that in addition to the quoted profile, he also gave the police other suggestions about the characteristics of "the Mad Bomber," including a reference to his Slavic origin, physique, Oedipus complex, living in Connecticut with an older relative, probably a maternal aunt, Catholic, a chronic cardiac disease.

Brussel devotes particularly much space in his memories to the symptoms that in his opinion proved the occurrence of the Oedipus complex in the bomber. That would be indicated by the rounded shape of the letter 'W' in anonymous letters sent to newspapers (allegedly associated by Metesky with female breasts) and the use of a knife to cut the seat upholstery in the theatre (symbolising penetration of mother or father castration). At the same time, the psychiatrist himself admitted that these conclusions may seem far-fetched to an average person. Perhaps this was the reason why they did not appear in the published profile. Brussel also maintains that he encouraged the police to forward the profile to the press, radio and television in order to provoke the bomber to react and thereby disclose information that could be used for detection (Brussel, 1970). The criminal actually entered a dialogue with the media and in letters addressed to them began to reveal some details about his biography, which led to finding of his personal file by a Consolidated Edison employee and consequently selecting him as a suspect⁴. Policemen were directed to his place of residence to make a routine inquiry. During a conversation, the suspect stated that he was "the Mad Bomber" wanted for many years. The perpetrator turned out to be fifty-four-year-old George Metesky, a former employee of Consolidated Edison Inc., who in 1931 had suffered a serious accident at work and despite placing a claim had not received a satisfactory compensation⁵.

⁴ Edison employee shuns rewards; clerk who found Metesky's name in files renounces any claim to \$26,000 (1957). *The New York Times*, 9 February, <https://www.nytimes.com/1957/02/09/archives/edison-employee-shuns-rewards-clerk-who-found-meteskys-name-in-files.html> [accessed: 27.11.2019].

⁵ 2D "bomber" note cites old injury; compensation files checked for clue to victim of Edison accident 20 years ago got "lifetime of misery" expect to identify suspect (1957). *The New York Times*, 16 January, <https://www.nytimes.com/1957/01/16/archives/2d-bomber-note-cites-old-injury-compensation-files-checked-for-clue.html>

The case referred to above, despite contributing to Brussel popularity and giving the beginning of modern profiling, was not the only one that the New York psychiatrist dealt with on request of the Police. He reports in his memoirs that law enforcement officers asked for his advice in a few cases a year. Six such cases, including the most famous ones: "the Mad Bomber" and "Boston Strangler" are described in the book mentioned above (Brussel, 1970).

James Brussel method of offender profiling

In the Introduction to his autobiography under the meaningful title "The Psychiatrist as Sherlock Holmes" Brussel (1970) briefly characterizes the method he uses. He declares the procedure consisted in using some general psychiatric principles in a reverse order. He used his mix of science, intuition and hope to help the police solve "bizarre" cases and act as an expert in famous criminal trials. Brussel (1970) notes that, based on examination of a person, a psychiatrist can make some reasonable predictions as to how this person will respond in certain specific situations. His procedure was the reverse of this process. By studying someone's conduct, he tried to "deduce"⁶ what type of man he could behave in this way.

The pages of the autobiography contain more information about the method used by Brussel (1970). He notes that it is difficult to determine what part of his "deductive" conclusions is based on science and which on imagination. He further admits that generating a profile begins on the basis of a solid scientific foundation, but during this process intuition and imagination begin to prevail (cf. Verde, Nurra, 2010)⁷. When he thinks about an unknown offender long enough, when he gathers all the known facts about him, and then combines them in different ways in his mind, he begins to picture the man. He sees him clearer and clearer. He forms an image of his face, can hear his voice and just like in the Metesky's case he can even learn what the perpetrator wears. According to Brussel it is more thanks to intuition than to imagination. According to New York psychiatrist, intuition is a science, even though it does not seem so. It develops over the years as a result of the enormous storage of data

[accessed: 27.11.2019]; Suspect is held as "Mad Bomber"; he admits role; files of Edison Co. lead to ex-employee in Waterbury – extradition is planned no evidence in home worker quoted as saying he was "gassed" at plant, contracted tuberculosis 30 bombs in 16 years suspect is held as "Mad Bomber" a switch in strategy (1957). *The New York Times*, 22 January, <https://www.nytimes.com/1957/01/22/archives/suspect-is-held-as-mad-bomber-he-admits-role-files-of-edison-co.html> [accessed: 27.11.2019].

⁶ Brussel uses the term: „deduction" in the sense given to that word by Arthur Conan Doyle in Sherlock Holmes stories, 3 x *Sherlock Holmes*, Warsaw 1969, pp. 25–29.

⁷ Verde and Nurra are of an opinion that this kind of inference is typical for criminal profiling and refer to it as „abduction".

resources by the mind. Not all of this data is available during the conscious thinking process. Sometimes, however, the knowledge is felt when it triggers a sudden and mysterious flash – a premonition. Brussel describes it in the following way: “You don’t know where it came from and you aren’t sure you can trust it, but it is there in your mind, insistently demanding to be considered. What do you do with it? Throw it out, or use it? This is the choice you must make” (Brussel, 1970, p. 90). He admits to using such intuitive flashes if they match the data he already has.

In another place we find further guidelines on how Brussel compiles the characteristics of an unknown offender. He frequently used the Kretschmer typology theory (1921/1944) as the foundation for determining the external appearance of the criminal. First, basing on police findings, he tried to attribute the perpetrator to a mental disorder. It was referred to above how he came to the conclusion that Metesky was paranoid. In another of the described cases involving “Christmas Eve Killer”, in the light of the circumstances Brussel (1970) stated that the criminal was a schizophrenic. The fact of inflicting several stab wounds to the victim was supposed to indicate the hatred of the perpetrator towards his mother, while the taking of personal belongings and storing them at home – a feeling of love. Coexistence of ambivalent feelings of love and hate and committing a crime on a surrogate victim resembling a mother, according to a New York psychiatrist, showed that the perpetrator suffered from schizophrenia. In the case of the Sunday Bomber planting explosives in Times Square, Brussel (1970) also believed that the perpetrator was a schizophrenic trying to retaliate against the society for some undefined guilt. He imagined him as a loner who could not fulfil his sexual needs, which caused frustration. He thought the perpetrator would stop his activities when his bombs caused fatalities. In this way he would have succeeded to carry out a symbolic revenge on humanity. Indeed, after an explosion, which resulted in the death of a young woman the wanted criminal ceased his terrorist activities and was never detected. Therefore, it was not possible to verify the accuracy of the profile created by Brussel. In the murderer of Janice Wylie and her roommate Emily Hoffert⁸ (Messing, 2016) and in “Boston Strangler” the psychiatrist identified ambivalent feelings just like as in the case of “Christmas Eve Killer”. However, that time he „diagnosed” the perpetrators with paranoid schizophrenia.

Attributing some disorder to an unknown perpetrator, the New York psychiatrist attempts to determine his appearance. After Kretschmer (1921/1944) he assumes that paranoid people are well and proportionately built, while schizophrenics are characterized by short

stature and slim physique. He often does not stop at these general conclusions, but tries to give more details. In the “Christmas Eve Killer” case mentioned, Brussel imagines the perpetrator as a shy teenager with an appearance of a weakling and is convinced that he suffers from acne, as schizophrenics often have low blood pressure and oily skin. When asked for a description of the “Sunday Bomber”, he thinks that it is very likely he has asthenic physique and a slim, angular physique, being schizophrenic. He has sallow complexion, looks sour, his face is emaciated and bitter, and hatred lurks in his eyes (Brussel, 1970).

Brussel almost always makes use of psychoanalysis to create an offender profile. Its purpose is usually to determine the motive for the crime or to infer family relations of the perpetrator. In Metesky he diagnoses the Oedipus complex, in “Christmas Eve Killer” he indicates rejection by an overprotective mother as a motive for crime. In the case of Wylie and Hoffert, the psychiatrist speculates that Wylie’s resistance may have brought the perpetrator back to the memory of something his mother had done. Maybe she left him or sent him to a boarding school for boys to stay only with his father, perceived by the criminal as a competitor in rivalry for his mother’s favour. In the case of Boston Strangler, he suspects that the perpetrator, by murdering victims, symbolically punished his mother for having given him no love (Brussel, 1970).

By analysing the way Brussel arrived at his conclusions, it can be inferred that on more than one occasion one element which gave the impulse to his imagination or, as he claims, intuition made the basis of the entire characteristics of an unknown offender. The case of “the Mad Bomber” had the most reliable factual basis, because Metesky conducted his terrorist activity for several years and contacted the police and the media quite regularly, sending anonymous letters in which he explained his motives. In the remaining cases, the evidence was much scarcer and therefore the ease with which Brussel created images of the perpetrators and their activities is surprising. For example, in the case of “Christmas Eve Killer” all the characteristics are based on two assumptions: the first concerns the young age of the perpetrator, which is to be evidenced by the fact that he used a penknife as the implement of crime; the second assumes that the killer was a schizophrenic, which the psychiatrist “deduces” based on the fact that he stole the driver’s license. Brussel claims that while thinking about this case (he built the profile ad hoc during a telephone conversation with a policeman), he saw the perpetrator carrying a driving license in his pocket. In this image, the killer would take the document out of his pocket every now and then look at it. The psychiatrist reports that he could also hear in his mind the perpetrator whisper: “You are now mine, Mary⁹. You

⁸ On 28 August, 1963 two brutal murders of two young women: Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert were committed in New York. Richard Robles was sentenced for those crimes.

⁹ Name of „Christmas Eve Killer” victim.

belong to me.” These two main assumptions and a few further details resulted in creation of the image of the killer and his family; solving the case by phone, without leaving the office, without visiting the crime scene or reading the evidence (Brussel, 1970).

In the case of the murders of Janice Wylie and Emily Hoffert, the impulse to create the portrait of the perpetrator was the fact that Wylie, who was not only stabbed many times, but also probably raped (Raab, 1993), had been harassed with intrusive calls at work before her death. An unknown man used obscene language during these conversations and threatened to hurt her family. Basing on that Brussel (1970) assumes that it was the mysterious persecutor who committed this gruesome crime. She assumes that the killer knew Wylie who was the main target of the attack but was unknown to her. He suspects that he came from the same social circles, which allowed him to imperceptibly get into her apartment. This gives the psychiatrist an incentive to let his imagination run wild and attempt to reconstruct the whole event in detail. As a result, we obtain a story of a young, well-off man making a career in public relations. His passion for order is so great that after taking the robe off the victim he hangs it back in the right place in the closet. During the process of committing the crime he keeps mumbling that he loves the women he murders and hates them and afterwards he removes all traces that could lead to his identification. Finally, he slips out onto the busy street via escape stairs and mixes with the crowd. Brussel (1970) describes his suppositions extremely pedantically, but they turn out to be contrary to the findings of the police, who, however, make a number of mistakes in the investigation. Among others, they force George Falmore to confess he is guilty, even though he is eventually cleared of all charges. Therefore, when another suspect Richard Robles emerges in the investigation and claims he is the murderer, Brussel supposes that a wrong man has been charged also that time. Robles does not match the portrait created by the psychiatrist. He is not a successful, well-groomed man, but a heroin-addicted burglar who got out of prison two months earlier (Raab, 1993). Moreover, he pleads guilty and presents a different course of events than that reconstructed by the profiler. Brussel's conviction of the Police making a mistake is so strong that he contacts the accused's lawyer and shares his doubts (Brussel, 1970). Robles cancels his confession and, until pending a request for conditional release from prison in 1986, maintains that he is innocent. He is currently among offenders who have served the longest imprisonment sentences in the United States (Reakes, 2017).

The Wylie case is not the only one, in which Brussel initially assisted the police, then provided consultancy or even testified in court as a defence expert. It was the same in the case of Boston Strangler, in which, unlike other specialists, he was convinced that all the killings had been carried out by one perpetrator,

whose behaviour had been evolving. As Brussel (1970) puts it, the criminal's modus operandi indicated that by committing a series of rapes and killings, he had matured in terms of sexuality. How did the psychiatrist conclude that a single person was responsible for all the killings? Brussel (1970, p. 158) claims that during a meeting of the panel of experts he listened to their statements and a premonition arose, which he describes as “a strong feeling, perhaps based on evidence that was half-hidden in some dim lower level of my mind.” It was a similar feeling as in the case of Metesky's double-breasted suit or the meagre appearance of “Christmas Eve Killer”. Brussel (1970, p. 158) admits that this feeling cannot be explained in the light of hard, tangible evidence, but it was so strong that he could not get rid of it. “It was so strong that it felt almost like certainty: there was only one Boston Strangler.” Another wave of premonition allowed the psychiatrist to picture the murderer as a proportionally built athletic man of approximately 30 years of age suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Because he had not attracted anyone's attention at the crime scene, the psychiatrist concluded that he was of average appearance. Based on the fact he left no evidence that might identify him, Brussel concluded that he was neat and tidy, clean-shaven, with manicured hands and carefully dressed. One more premonition told him the killer had beautiful, well-groomed hair that many a girl could have envied him. Finally, he predicted that the “Strangler” was of Italian or Spanish ancestry, because in the South of Europe a common method of committing murder is suffocation with a garrot. In addition to that, the perpetrator was to have average or above average intelligence and be an unmarried loner. Brussel was also of the opinion that the “Strangler of Boston” would have not attacked again, because after committing the crimes he had “healed”: he had matured sexually and completed his revenge on women. He predicted that the perpetrator would be detained as a result of his need to confide his achievements in someone. The psychiatrist reports in his memoirs that he was the only person who believed all the killings had been committed by the same man (Brussel, 1970).

“Strangler” actually stopped attacking at some point. In the same period the police arrested a serial rapist Albert DeSalvo, who was nicknamed “Green Man” due to his green clothing. He boasted to his colleagues in custody that one day he would be famous because he had also committed more serious crimes. Brussel was invited to take part in the case as an expert by F. Lee Bailey, defender of DeSalvo. The psychiatrist supposed the attorney had learned from the minutes of the meetings of the specialist panel for the “Boston Strangler” case that Brussel considered the Strangler a schizophrenic and that meant the suspect was insane and therefore not punishable. He willingly agreed to examine DeSalvo and testify in his favour, particularly that in many respects the suspect fitted the profile he

created: a man a little over thirty years old, athletically built, well-groomed, with well-kept hair and hands. The main discrepancy was that the accused was not a lonely man but had a wife and children (Bartol, Bartol, 2013). DeSalvo confessed to a dozen of women murders, which were attributed to the “Boston Strangler,” however, on the condition that his confession would not have been used against him in court. That is why he was only accused of committing a series of rapes (Katic, 2013). Because there was a high probability that he would be sentenced to life imprisonment, the lawyer saw proving DeSalvo’s insanity as the only chance for his releasing from criminal liability. Brussel (1970) admits in his autobiography that his role was to provide arguments in support of that proposition, which was contrary to the stand of the prosecutor who tried to convince the jury that DeSalvo was a sociopath, and therefore he was able to recognise the meaning of his actions and control his conduct. Ultimately, despite divergent opinions of psychiatrists regarding DeSalvo’s sanity, he was sentenced for four rapes to life imprisonment and placed in Walpole State Prison, where a few years later he was killed by a fellow prisoner (Bartol, Bartol, 2013). However, the case of “Boston Strangler” had its continuation full of sudden twists and turns. A relative of Mary Sullivan, one of the victims attributed to “Strangler”, and the family of the alleged “Strangler” sought to clear DeSalvo of murder charges. His innocence was to be demonstrated, among others, by DNA tests and other circumstances which a relative of the victim, C. Sherman described in a book on the investigation (Sherman, 2013). However, in 2013, DNA from a sperm stain detected at Mary Sullivan murder scene was analysed again, and this time it was found to come from DeSalvo¹⁰.

Influence of James Brussel method on modern criminal profiling

Apparently, Brussel’s work fascinates Howard Teten, a lecturer in applied criminal psychology at the FBI Academy at Quantico. Using knowledge gained from Brussel, in collaboration with another lecturer, Pat Mullany, he gives advice to police officers who encounter problems in solving complicated cases. Like the New York psychiatrist, based on information about the crime scene and the victim, Teten and Mullany by means of an undefined method infer about the characteristics of the perpetrator of a crime. Profiles are usually communicated by phone with no records made (Douglas, Olshaker, 2017).

Over time, the FBI has attempted to give a more scientific nature to the profiling practice named “crime scene analysis”. However, the methods used by the

Bureau are, in essence, not much different from the process in which Brussel generates offender profiles. When presenting the principles of the procedure Douglas, Ressler, Burgess and Hartman (1986) explain that profiling is based on brainstorming, intuition and guesswork based on knowledge. They also believe that in order to become an expert in this field, apart from knowledge, you also need extensive experience and knowledge of a large number of previous cases. In his autobiography Douglas (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006, p. 151) describes the method of preparing a description of an unknown offender. We learn that when he examines the materials collected in the investigation a clear picture of the criminal and the dynamics of the crime begin to form in his mind. While working on the case, he tries to familiarize himself with all the available information, such as police reports, photos, testimonies of witnesses, and then “mentally and emotionally put himself in the place of the perpetrator.” Douglas admits that he does not fully understand the nature of this process. He does not exclude the possibility that there is a paranormal element in his work, although he believes that it is rather a “kind of creative thinking”, and describes the type of inference used in profiling as follows: “Though it is often referred to as deduction, what the fictional Dupin and Holmes and the real-life Brussel and those of us who followed, were doing was actually more inductive – that is, observing particular elements of a crime and drawing larger conclusions from them” (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006, p. 34).

Similarly to Brussel, FBI profilers apply Kretschmer’s theory. Robert Ressler used Kretschmer’s typology to create the profile of Richard Trenton Chase. He believed that the “senselessness” of murders showed that the perpetrator suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. On this basis, he concluded that the killer was thin and malnourished. Assuming that the said mental disorder manifested itself at a young age and needed about ten years to fully develop, he estimated that the killer was 25–27 years old. The assumption that the perpetrator was a paranoid schizophrenic also led Ressler to the conclusion that the killer’s place of residence was sloppy and neglected. That led to a belief that the offender was a loner, because “No one would want to live with such a person” (Ressler, Shachtman, 1993, p. 5).

Another common element in the views of Brussel and FBI profilers is the belief in the effectiveness of proactive work consisting in inspiring perpetrators to make contact with mass media or to make a mistake, resulting in the disclosure of information that will lead to their detection. According to Douglas, an active attitude leads to detaining the murderer: “The more important (...) was to begin going proactive, using police efforts and the media to try to lure the guy into a trap” (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006, p. 19). An example of this is the tactic proposed by the FBI agent in the murder of Karla

¹⁰ Boston Strangler DNA tests confirm Albert DeSalvo killed final victim (2013). *The Guardian*, 13 July, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/19/boston-strangler-dna-test-albert-desalvo> [accessed: November, 2019].

Lou Brown¹¹. Douglas assumed that the perpetrator might periodically feel guilt and remorse. Therefore, he advised policemen to encourage the local media to publish articles about how much loss Karla's death was to cause the killer to confide what he had done to another human being (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006).

Both the New York psychiatrist and his followers from the FBI share the view that researching already convicted criminals aids in criminal profiling. However, it seems that Brussel was more interested in getting to know the psyche of perpetrators, diagnosing them and preventing them from committing crimes (Brussel, 1970), while FBI agents focused on getting to know their past, motives of crime, fantasies, *modi operandi* (Ressler, Shachtman, 1993), empathizing with them and putting themselves in their place in order to achieve easier detection and apprehension (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006).

Stressing the strong influence of the mother's role on the formation of criminal instincts in perpetrators, especially sex offenders, deriving from psychoanalysis, is characteristic for the views of both Brussel and FBI profilers. As indicated above, Brussel saw the sources of killers hatred to women in the relationships between them and their mothers or wives. FBI agents expressed similar views. For example, Douglas was convinced that developing murderous inclinations by of Ed Kemper, one of the most notorious serial killers, was associated with cruel treatment by his dominant mother (Douglas, Olshaker, 2006). Also Ressler was of the opinion that if criminals had not been deprived of motherly love in early childhood, many people would have saved their lives (Ressler, Shachtman, 1993). This thread was also analyzed in a study of 41 serial rapists conducted by the FBI in the late 1980s with a team led by Dr. Ann Burgess from the University of Pennsylvania. Only in 36% of cases did the respondents characterize their relationship with their mother as warm and close (Burgess, Hazelwood, 1987; Hazelwood, Warren, 1989). Also interviews carried out by the FBI with 36 perpetrators of murders showed that the relationships of criminals with their mothers were cool, detached, characterized by lack of love and neglect of children (Ressler, Shachtman, 1993).

Also a concept of ritual appears in the New York psychiatrist's autobiography. Brussel (1970) analyses in detail the marks left by the killer on Janice Wylie's body. There were bloody streaks located on both thighs of the victim from knee to pelvis. The psychiatrist reports that they had a wavy course and looked as if the perpetrator had painted them with the edge of his hand. Their shape was too regular to be accidentally created during

rape. In summary, Brussel (1970) states that repeated knife stabbing, evisceration and corrugation of blood stains was a killer ritual and testified that he spent a lot of time with the victim. The term "ritual" also appears in the views of FBI agents. Douglas and Munn (1992) observe that simply killing a victim is not enough for many perpetrators. In order to fulfil their desires they must perform additional activities that make up the ritual. When criminals carry out the rituals, they leave their "signatures" at the crime scene. The concept of activities that go beyond what is necessary to commit a crime is one of the basic theories of criminal profiling in general (e.g. Douglas, Munn, 1992; Douglas et al., 2006; Keppel, Birnes, 2009). It is usually combined with concepts such as ritual, signature or business card. It is often attributed a trait of uniqueness feature and is seen as the foundation for individual identification of an offender (Douglas, Munn, 1992).

Brussel's successful achievements in creating offender profiles, in particular "the Mad Bomber", are generally not questioned and have become the legend of criminal profiling. Critical voices are rare. The typical accusations include those that the psychiatrist's accomplishments were not as brilliant as it is commonly believed, because the famous double-breasted suit was a typical garment worn by men at the time. Some find further inaccuracies in the offender portraits and claim that Brussel himself contributed to the creation of his own legend by publishing his autobiography (Bartol, Bartol, 2013).

Some sceptics (Bartol, Bartol, 2013) point to the fact that the profile of "the Mad Bomber" developed by Brussel had not been recorded in writing, and the version provided twelve years later by the author differs from the fragments of the "portrait" published in New York newspapers in December 1956. This particularly refers to the most popular and frequently cited characteristics, i.e. the double-breasted suit. Critics also argue that the profile developed by Brussel did not contribute much to the investigation, as it contained the elements already known to the police and ultimately led to the detection of the offender (Canter, Youngs, 2009). Gladwell (2007, after: Foster, 2000) points to a number of errors which, in his opinion, were made by the psychiatrist, and which are not mentioned by neither himself nor in the profiling-related literature.

He claims that Brussel modified his first predictions for the purposes of writing the memoirs. In fact, he told the police to search the bomber in a different area than he actually lived, making the police unit idly search local registers in Westchester County. Brussel would also recommend looking for a man with a face scar that Metesky did not really have. According to Foster (2000), he would also advice the police to look for a man working on a night shift, while Metesky, since he left Consolidated Edison in 1931, remained unemployed most of the time. Also, the predictions about the bomber's age (40 to 50 years old) proved to be wrong, as Metesky was

¹¹ Karla Brown was murdered on 21 June, 1978 in Wood River. In 1983 John Prante was found guilty for her murder and sentenced for 75 years imprisonment (Opinion Filed October 3, 1986, The People of the State of Illinois, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. John n. Prante, Defendant-Appellant).

in his fifties. Additionally, Gladwell (2007) and Foster (2000) maintain that Brussel, despite what he wrote in his memoirs, had never actually said that the bomber was a Slav. In fact, he advised the police to look for someone “born or educated in Germany,” which was so far from reality that even the bomber himself protested. Metesky explained in the letter to *Journal American* that his only association with Germany was that his father had boarded a cruise liner in Hamburg to come to the US about 65 years earlier (Gladwell, 2007).

Due to the lapse of time and lack of access to source materials, it is currently difficult to conclude to what degree the profiles of various offenders developed by Brussel were accurate and helpful in investigations. Even when assuming that they were as exceptional as it is commonly accepted, this does not influence much the evaluation of method used by the psychiatrist and his followers. Undoubtedly premonitions, even if supported by a formal educational background and extensive professional experience, cannot constitute the basis for jurisdiction. The conviction of the judicial authority formed on the basis of free evaluation of all the evidence and taking into account the principles of non-contradictory reasoning as well as the knowledge and life experience is something different than the results of the intuitive flashes and “creative thinking” of the profiler, even if the latter do not contradict the collected evidence and refer to the elements of knowledge and professional practice¹².

Summary

The analysis of Brussel's activity leads to the following conclusions. First of all, his assistance was sought when traditional investigative methods failed. Secondly, due to the fact that the profiles developed by the psychiatrist were usually conveyed orally, it is not possible to verify their relevance and usefulness for ongoing investigations. Thirdly, although Brussel could demonstrate formal university medical background and extensive professional practice, his method was of a non-scientific nature. The results obtained via the application of the method were hardly verifiable, as Brussel was no able to explain how he had come to his conclusions. Fourthly, the perception of the characteristics of an offender resulting from this method was highly suggestive. Despite the fact that Brussel's “portraits” were mostly deprived of factual construction, he strongly believed that these were realistic profiles, even if the evidence collected by the police in the further investigation contradicted that conviction.

Brussel had many qualities that are attributable to an expert: a solid education and professional experience, cognitive curiosity and imagination, as well as a strong intention to contribute to solving the case. His example,

however, clearly demonstrates what benefits and threats may result from the application of his criminal profiling method in the investigation. The advantage lies in the presentation of a new approach to the case; drawing attention to the elements that may have been omitted by the investigators; suggesting possible proactive measures. On the other hand, the threat is connected to the non-scientific nature of the methods used by profilers and the high suggestibility of developed characteristics of unknown offenders. Similarly to the cases described by Brussel, developing a profile often entails the construction of a certain narrative, i.e. a story about the crime committed and people involved, which constitute *de facto* a reconstruction of the event. However, the basic difference between the profiler's opinion and the reconstruction of crime carried out by relevant authorities is that the description of crime, its dynamics, characteristics of persons involved, as developed by the profiler are complete and consistent, because any gaps are filled with the elements that more or less likely could have occurred. On the other hand, the reconstruction carried out by the authorities is regulated by much more stringent rules. It is the reliable evidence only, which can constitute the basis for determination of facts and the reconstruction of crime often lacks some of elements, thus making the impression of being incomplete, incoherent or hardly explainable. The reconstruction of the course of incident often resembles a puzzle. Judicial bodies perform evidential activities aiming at assembling it. It might happen however, that the “image” reconstructed in such a way is not complete. If lacking elements belong to the background and do not make the principle contents of the picture, it is usually possible to charge and sentence the offender. Sometimes, however the collation of elements remains impossible, with a key element needed for closing the chain of clues missing. In such a case, if the authorities act upon the opinion of the profiler who uses the method of Brussel and proposes filling in the unknown data the judicial decisions may be based on falsely admitted premises.

James Brussel is fundamental to criminal profiling not only because he is considered the father of the method. The New York psychiatrist and criminologist was an extremely outstanding and interesting person, and his autobiography, containing a description of criminal cases he contributed to solve, gained great popularity. Brussel was characterised by the charm of a private amateur detective, and his activity had a lot in common with the stories of fictional protagonists, such as Dupin and Holmes. It would be a mistake, however, to treat him only in anecdotal terms. Thanks to the openness in reporting his involvement in helping the police readers obtain an opportunity to recreate the process of developing the description of an unknown offender and thus gain the knowledge about the beginnings of the most classical method of criminal profiling. Psychoanalysis constituted the foundation

¹²Art. 7 in the Act of 6 June, 1997 – Code of criminal proceedings, Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1987, as amended.

of this method, in addition to Kretschmer theory and intuition, understood as unconscious concluding on the basis of professional and life experience. FBI profilers were natural propagators of this method. Some elements of Brussel's theory, popularized by the FBI, have spread even wider. The concept of a signature and trademark based on the criminal's ritual appears in most studies on profiling (e.g. Petherick 2014; Turvey, 2015; Woodhams, Bennell, 2015). A number of elements of the intuitive approach to the development of the portrait of unknown perpetrators or the inference referred to as 'deduction' by Brussel can be also found in profiling schools that have scientific aspirations and often turn away from the methods used by the FBI (e.g. Alison et al., 2010; Szaszkievicz, 2002; Turvey, 2015).

Regretfully, the structure of this paper does not allow for a detailed and in-depth presentation of all connections between Brussel's approach and other methods of developing the profiles of unknown perpetrators, including more scientific methods. The issue of *quasi* scientific elements in leading criminal profiling methods has been discussed in more detail in the paper *Czy profilowanie kryminalne ma podstawy naukowe? (Does criminal profiling have scientific foundation?)* (Olszak-Häußler 2014). The study clearly shows that even the application of advanced statistical analysis tools at this stage does not allow solving the problem of converting crime scene information into a reliable characterization of criminal offender that may be useful in the investigation.

In the criminal profiling literature, the character of James Brussel is often brought down to the story of the buttoned double-breasted suit of George Metesky, which is to prove the brilliant reasoning of the New York psychiatrist and criminologist and the potential behind the criminal profiling. The main purpose of this paper was to demystify James Brussel and present his method, views and factual contribution to criminal profiling.

The example of Brussel demonstrates that in the evaluation of a criminal profile, one should not stop at verifying profiler's specialist education, whether he or she is respected by the scientific community, or represents a reliable institution and is guided by the intention to solve the case. It is necessary to explore the content of the opinion itself by thorough analysis, as many methods and theories on the offender profiling appear to be scientific only on the surface.

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