

Specific Criminal Profiling and Interrogation Techniques as Forensic Psychology Methods in Hungarian Law Enforcement

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One of the applied areas of criminal psychology, the forensic psychology presents how the knowledge of psychology can be applied in the most optimal way in order to effectively detect individual crimes. A trend has appeared in law enforcement agencies for psychologists to carry out special activities in the criminal field. One specific activity is criminal profiling and the other is the development of the most effective interrogation techniques. Now I attempt to present these two specific criminal tasks of psychology. I present a literature review on how forensic psychology can be used during profiling and the planning of special interrogations. Despite the fact that offender profiling is not new for law enforcement agencies, its clinical trend has begun to appear and spread independently in recent years. The application of psychology in the planning of individual interrogations is a much more researched field and used during weekday work.

Keywords: forensic psychology, criminal profiling, interrogation techniques, sexual crimes

Introduction

In relation to psychology, first of all we have to state that it is a multidisciplinary science: aspects of both natural and social sciences can be found. Its goal is the most accurate and complex understanding of human behaviour and establishing connections between human behaviour, reactions and personality.² It is also related to psychiatry, sociology, policing, criminology and law, as it has many aspects that can enrich the knowledge of these scientific fields.³

At the same time, it is not only the diversity of any scientific field that should be mentioned, but also the diversity within psychology, which would be almost impossible to list in its entirety. We are talking about clinical psychology, counselling

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² FARKAS 2018: 13–22.

³ BOROS 2004: 5–19; VISONTAI-SZABÓ 2017: 291–302.

psychology, school psychology and other applied fields such as sports psychology, organisational psychology or work psychology. Among these applied fields there is criminal psychology, too, which has already been discussed by several Hungarian authors.⁴ In 2009, a summary professional protocol⁵ was created in the spirit of this diversity and in order to include it in a system-level framework, which tried to provide a framework for law enforcement psychological activity. In this protocol, among other things, the professional protocol of criminal psychology activity was recorded,⁶ too.

The professional protocol of criminal psychology activity

The focus of criminal psychological investigations is very complex: it analyses the relationship between the offender and the victim; researches the issue of crime; becoming a criminal and the reasons for becoming a victim – all in a psychological context. When specifying qualifications, the protocol⁷ sets very specific limits: the ideal person to perform criminal psychology tasks has a psychologist/clinical psychologist qualification.

Its forms of activity are very diverse. In order to psychologically support investigative work, you can use many tools. Criminal or offender profiling is such a special tool, which is essentially the acquisition, organisation and analysis of known evidence of a crime committed by an unknown perpetrator. The result of the profiling process is the offender profile, which includes and summarises the most characteristic behavioural and personality characteristics of the unknown offender.⁸

In addition to profiling, the field of application includes participation in the interrogation/hearing of witnesses and victims within the scope of the reconnaissance and investigation phase. The list of competences is significantly expanded by the authors of the professional protocol:⁹ a psychologist/clinical psychologist qualification is not sufficient, but the psychologist should have experience in psychological tasks related to both children and adults, be familiar with general and pathological psychopathological processes, and be familiar with the criminal psychology aspects of all of these.

⁴ CSERNYIKNÉ PÓTH – FOGARASI 2006; VILICS 2020: 219–239; HALLER 2020.

⁵ VAJGER–VIRÁG 2009.

⁶ PÁSZTOR et al. 2009: 251–255.

⁷ PÁSZTOR et al. 2009.

⁸ PÁSZTOR et al. 2009; NAGY – ELEKESNÉ LENHARDT 2004: 51–65; IVASKEVICS 2020: 111–148; LEHOCZKI 2021; TURVEY 2022; CANTER 2000: 23–46; CANTER–YOUNGS 2009.

⁹ PÁSZTOR et al. 2009.

Criminal psychology as an applied psychological field

Before going into any further detail about the procedures mentioned in the third section, it is important to clarify how much criminal psychology is a multidisciplinary field, with three known areas¹⁰ – although it should be noted that there are other typifications as well.¹¹

The task of *criminological psychology* is to examine the individual and social psychological factors of becoming a criminal. The focus of *forensic psychology* is the psychological support of certain stages of criminal proceedings. This includes procedures such as profiling, planning interrogation/interrogation strategies and sometimes polygraph testing. *Prison psychology* or *resocialisation psychology* focuses on the inmates and the enforcement staff at the same time. Its purpose is to support the resocialisation of prisoners and promote reintegration.¹²

The subject, applicability and place of forensic psychology in criminal proceedings

Forensic psychology is built from both clinical psychological and general psychological elements. Its methodology includes profiling, the development of interrogation techniques based on memory, and the use of methods that investigate psychophysiological changes, such as the polygraph procedure. In the following, I present the two most significant of the forensic psychological methods used: the offender profiling and the possibilities of planning interrogation tactics.

Criminal profiling

Criminal profiling is a dynamically developing applied investigation support procedure that has been present since the second half of the 1900s, although it appeared as early as the 1880s, when attempts were made to describe the personality of Jack the Ripper.¹³ Since then, it has served as the basis for many researches, and many trends have been developed by specialists.¹⁴ At the same time, it should also be noted that profiling is not the same as criminal psychology, as the latter is a much more complex field, and profiling is only a type of investigation support procedure.

Criminal profiling is undoubtedly one of the most promising procedure in criminal psychology, which includes knowledge of psychology, psychiatry, psychopathology

¹⁰ POPPER 2014.

¹¹ CANTER–YOUNGS 2009.

¹² POPPER 2014; FLIEGAUF 2012: 45–62; KODAY 2019: 231–252; KORINEK–LÉVAY 2013: 23–44.

¹³ IVASKEVICS 2020.

¹⁴ LEHOCZKI 2021; INNES 2007.

and sociology. If we want to briefly grasp the essence of profiling, we can say that profiling is nothing more than a summary analysis of the personality, behavioural and sociodemographic data of the unknown offender.¹⁵ The method is basically an analytical-evaluative activity characterised by a multidisciplinary approach. Its purpose is to support the investigation by providing assistance in the detection and identification of the unknown perpetrators by helping to narrow down the circle of suspects, through the analysis of the behaviour of the unknown perpetrator.¹⁶

Among the individual trends, the two theoretical approaches to profiling that appear in the foundations of the method, the inductive and deductive approach, should be highlighted.

Psychologist professor David Canter prioritised the inductive approach, the development of which draws on the knowledge of experimental and social psychology, criminology and forensic psychiatry. The criminal profiling process moves from the general to the specific as more and more information becomes available. Followers of Canter's investigative psychology broaden the scope of the profile's usability: they examine the effectiveness of interrogation strategies and the possibilities of geographic profiling.¹⁷

Brent Turvey's method is the opposite of that of the FBI and David Canter. Turvey believed in the deductive method. During the profile analysis, the goal is to reduce the internal subjective aspects to a minimum and to base it only on the objective facts provided by the evidence (this is why he named his theory behaviourist analysis). Among the basic theses of the deductive method, it should be highlighted that no two cases are alike, no one commits a crime without a motive, each crime is characterised by a specific motivational background and behaviour of the perpetrator, but at the same time, different criminals can behave very similarly.¹⁸

The possibilities of using the profile are very wide. American authorities basically use it when investigating serial crimes;¹⁹ however, it is also effectively applicable in case of theft,²⁰ robbery,²¹ homicide,²² sexual crimes and sexual violence²³ and counter-terrorism.²⁴

The location of profiling at the organisational level – as well as the application of the method's trends – differs in each country.

In our country, the criminal profiling process is one of the activities of the Criminal Analysis and Evaluation Department of the National Police Headquarters,²⁵ and its

¹⁵ LEHOCZKI 2011.

¹⁶ ALFÖLDI 2012: 980–987; CSERNYIKNÉ PÓTH – FOGARASI 2006.

¹⁷ INNES 2007.

¹⁸ TURVEY 2022; INNES 2007.

¹⁹ INNES 2007.

²⁰ IVASKEVICS 2020.

²¹ PETRÉTEI 2020: 3–50.

²² BELLAVICS 2019: 24–30.

²³ PETRÉTEI 2020; ERDÉLYI 2022a: 155–171.

²⁴ SZIJÁRTÓ 2014: 1–19.

²⁵ VARGA 2022; *Belügyi Szemle Hírlevél*, 11–12 June 2022.

use ranges across a very wide spectrum. Among other things, the renewed procedure includes the narrowing of the circle of suspects, the planning of interrogation strategies and psychological analyses. In the Netherlands, a special unit called National Police Office National Criminal Investigation Department Offender Profiling Unit was created, which is based on the theoretical model of the FBI, supplemented with a multidisciplinary approach. At the unit, psychologist statuses have also been established, who perform psychological tasks specifically in the criminal field. In addition to practical activities, great emphasis is also placed on scientific research activities.²⁶ The French model has not incorporated profiling into its police organisation. The request for psychological profiling is submitted not by the investigative authority, but by a separate investigation committee, and they also collect the evidence, and then hand over the procedural documents to the contributing psychologist or psychiatric expert.²⁷

Interrogation strategies in the light of psychology

According to the professional protocol²⁸ the purpose of the interrogation is to clarify the facts as accurately as possible, through the narrative of the person being questioned. The result of the process is the confession, which is to be evaluated as a means of material evidence during the procedure.²⁹ Several strategies have been developed that can be effectively applied during interrogations – they will be presented below.

SAI – Self-Administered Interview

The Self-Administered Interview is based on cognitive psychology and strives for regular and accurate recall of information stored in memory during the interrogation. At the scenes of individual crimes, we can talk about several potential witnesses whose immediate questioning is not possible for some reason. The SAI is a paper-and-pencil-based interrogation technique, meaning that the eyewitness must fill out the SAI form on the spot after the event has occurred. These are collected after they are filled in, and after analysing and processing them, the person leading the investigation decides which witnesses and in what order it is necessary to question them personally.³⁰

²⁶ INNES 2007.

²⁷ INNES 2007.

²⁸ PÁSZTOR et al. 2009.

²⁹ BÁRÁNY 2015: 93–114.

³⁰ NYESTE 2017; SÁGI 2016: 305–324.

PEACE Model

PEACE is an acronym that includes:

- **P**reparation and Planning
- **E**ngage and Explain
- **A**ccount
- **C**losure
- **E**valuate

The PEACE model was developed in Great Britain in the 1990s with the involvement of psychological experts. It is basically used when questioning criminal offenders, in two steps.

The *first step* is the stage of preparation and precise planning of the interrogation. In this stage, the purpose of the interrogation is determined, the questions to be answered are created and the available evidence is listed. The *second step* is the interrogation itself. At this stage, mutual attunement takes place, when the interrogator and the interrogated establish contact and create the psychological atmosphere. The interrogator clarifies why the interrogation is taking place, then explains the legal status of the interrogated person, and at the same time assesses the interrogated person's mental state. Empathy and non-judgment-attitude are important at this stage; if the interrogated person feels sympathy, he will cooperate with the interrogator. Empathy should be displayed at all levels of meta-communication – be it verbal expression or non-verbal communication. Undoubtedly, all these things help the confession. At the end of the testimony, the literature notes that positive feedback should be given to the interrogated due to the cooperation and shared information, and at this point it is advisable to summarise what was said.³¹

SUE – Strategic Use of Evidence

The SUE interrogation technique is based on knowledge of the known and available evidence collected, and the questions to be clarified are determined by this evidence. It is important, however, that this evidence should not come to the knowledge of the interrogated. The interrogation starts with open questions, then gradually targeted questions are formulated.³²

³¹ NYESTE 2017.

³² SÁGI 2016.

CI – Cognitive Interview

Interrogations are focusing on bringing to consciousness information related to an act that took place in the past, or recalling it from memory. As with all cognitive functions in general, the temporality of memory must be taken into account here as well. The more time that passes between the event and the interrogation, the greater the risk that certain details about the event will disappear from memory or be recoded. Our memory tries to find a solution for those gaps that are lost, typically through confabulation: it fills in the missing parts with a created reality.³³ The negative atmosphere prevailing during the interrogation can worsen this confabulation, since the state of distress significantly impairs cognitive functions. To avoid this, professionals created the cognitive interview technique, which is based on four steps that stimulate cognitive functions.

As a first step, the emotional aspects experienced during the event must be reconstructed: situations must be created that recall the feelings and intuitions experienced at the time of the event. This is followed by the second step, when we ask the interviewed person to recall everything down to the smallest possible detail. This is followed by the third step, where the interviewee must establish a timeline of the events. The last step is a change of perspective, when the interviewee must reflect on what happened on the spot from another person's point of view. This change of perspective is necessary because an internal representation of why and how happened in the given situation appears during the cognitive processing of events. However, by changing the point of view, the internal representation expands, and thus new, relevant information can be brought to light.³⁴

Discussion

In this present study, I attempted to point out how complex psychology can be present in practical life as well. Criminal psychology, as an applied psychological field, is a multi-layered, complex applied field in terms of knowledge and methodology, which can be effectively involved in all arenas of justice. The same is true for forensic psychology: in the investigative profession, it can help with all investigative actions, as it is effective in detecting the unknown person by making use of the specific offender profile analysis, it helps in planning the interrogation strategy, media consulting, communication strategies and operational actions. With regard to the future, it may be appropriate to develop a comprehensive criminal psychology methodology that, beyond the protocol,³⁵ reflects on the role of psychology in intelligence gathering and specific operational activities. In my opinion, such a comprehensive protocol would

³³ ERDÉLYI 2022b: 1025–1038.

³⁴ CSERNYIKNÉ PÓTH – FOGARASI 2006; ERDÉLYI 2022b.

³⁵ VAJGER–VIRÁG 2009.

be effectively applied in all branches of law enforcement, especially in the detection of violent crimes.

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