

A Criminal Psychological Approach to Immigration Resilience

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Introduction: Managing migration is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century, in the public, social, political, economic and legal spheres. Research on the psychological effects of migration is a highly complex phenomenon, but scholars have mostly focused on the psychology of immigration, looking at psychological processes only from the perspective of the migrants themselves.

Aims: This study seeks to find a link between the lack of resilience of admissions and the criminality of immigrants, by examining the transpersonal dimensions of the psychology of migration.

Methods: The authors explore the social conditions for successful integration and the deviant behaviours that may be associated with failure to integrate by analysing the intersection of migration and criminal psychology. They also attempt to adapt the concept of resilience to the factors of migration in order to achieve the research objectives.

Results: Immigration, settlement and ultimately citizenship acquisition of people from different cultures requires a high degree of resilience from all private and public actors involved in migration. Effective integration is a guarantee of peace, security and prosperity, while lack of integration tends towards criminalisation.

Conclusions: The key to successful integration is the ability to adapt to changing circumstances through multiple actors.

Keywords: migration, resilience, adaptation, criminal psychology, integration

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Introduction

Many areas of social sciences are concerned with the issue of migration. In addition to classical migration theory, this study also attaches particular importance to psychology and criminology. The research on migration in these two disciplines and the conclusions drawn at their intersection contribute greatly to identifying the key points of success in immigrant integration and the deviant and delinquent behaviour that may be associated with failure. In order to achieve this goal, we will try to adapt the concept of social resilience, which has become fashionable today, to the factors of migration, since we have tentatively hypothesised that the successful integration of an immigrant depends on the resilience of all parties involved in migration (the migrant, the state, law enforcement and immigration authorities, the host society, the employer, etc.). This study has been written in a generic way, while being aware of the diversity of people with the right to migrate and their different statuses as aliens. Although different aliens' and refugees' statuses imply – may imply different willingness and possibilities for integration, we aim here to provide comprehensive conclusions for persons who are not nationals of the host country, and to look at the process of immigration broadly, from the perspective of foreignness only.

In psychology, resilience is, in short, the ability to adapt flexibly to a changed situation (ERDÉLYI 2023). If we examine the concept in detail, we can say that resilience is nothing other than the flexible mental resistance to aversive, unpleasant influences and stimuli. “According to some authors, resilience refers to the set of protective factors and processes that contribute to adaptation despite the individual’s exposure to significant risk factors” (KNAPEK – KURITÁRNÉ SZABÓ 2015: 253). Primary resilience research has emerged in the academic community in the context of the study of coping with (psychological) trauma (HÁRDI et al. 2021; KARAŞAR–CANLI 2020; FRIEDBERG–MALEFAKIS 2018; AGAIBI–WILSON 2005); from this interpretative framework, migration can also be understood as a form of trauma, especially when the migrant has been forced to migrate by some external circumstance, such as war. Considered in this context, resilience refers to migrants³ coping with trauma at the individual level, which can be either the migration process itself or negative events experienced during migration that can be treated as trauma, such as looting or sexual harassment.

Immigration, as the abandonment of one’s original place of birth and residence, creates an intrinsically changed situation in one’s life. During the period spent in the country of immigration, the immigrant initially deals with the experience of leaving his or her country of origin and then tries to assimilate fully into the foreign society. The coping strategies and socio-psychological processes used to integrate vary from one individual to another. However, the success of integration also depends on a number of factors outside the individual. In what follows, we will argue for the need for resilience on the part of the three factors most involved in immigration (immigrant, host society, law enforcement) in order to prevent the foreigner from becoming a criminal and, hence, radicalised.

³ In the following sections of our study, we will also take the individual contexts of resilience as the default.

The resilience of immigrants

Let us assume that a person with the right to migrate is a rational being who will only relocate for a longer period of time if it is definitely advantageous for them. Thus, if their housing, employment or social welfare is not guaranteed, they would rather not take on the burden of migration (NAGY 2012). The catalysts for mass illegal migration are of course different, but here we will ignore undocumented irregular migration and forced migration for the purpose of analysis, and only consider the life events associated with the psychological strain of legal migration.

Gathering information about the destination country is therefore the starting point for legal migration. Once information has been gathered, the individual evaluates the situation and, if it is advantageous for him or her to move, sets off. Organising information at this level leads the individual to effective coping and thus to stable resilience (FRIEDBERG–MALEFAKIS 2018). The migrant sets up coping strategies after leaving the home country. First, they have to cope with the experience of loss, which in many cases means not only the loss of the original place of residence but also the absence of proximity to relatives. At the same time, he or she must start to learn the language, since the greater the knowledge of the local language, the greater the degree of social integration. Nowadays, of course, the use of English can become an intermediate solution between work and private life. However, unlike in aliens' proceedings, intermediate language skills are not sufficient for a successful naturalisation procedure, since in the citizenship procedure, states invariably require knowledge of the official language of the country.

The more time an immigrant spends in a foreign destination country, the more he or she becomes distanced from his or her home country, its culture and customs. But if they do not seek to assimilate into the host society, they can easily become rootless. Long-lasting rootlessness can lead to loneliness and, in extreme cases, to identity loss and dissociation disorders (OSVÁTH et al. 2021), which pose a serious therapeutic challenge.

The resilience of an inclusive society

The Bogardus Scale (BOGARDUS 1933) is the most commonly used measure of xenophobia in a society. The social distance scale is calculated by asking the respondent to answer 7 different questions. Whether they would like foreigners to be excluded from their country or to be allowed to stay as tourists, whether they would like to be granted citizenship, and whether they would accept them as a colleague, neighbour, friend or relative. Research conducted before the turn of the century shows that people in Central Europe, including the Visegrád countries, are not receptive to immigrants, with four out of five people in all four countries believing that their country does not need immigrants (BERNÁT 2010). Rejectionist attitudes in themselves make assimilation more difficult and hinder integration. The most visible form of xenophobia (GULYÁS 2016), is racism. "In linking migration and xenophobia, we must take into account that migration (the movement of a significant population across established political forms in search of new places to settle) is usually associated with xenophobia, although historically there are cases where this does

not occur or the problem is theoretically negligible, and vice versa: xenophobia is not only a characteristic of migration, but also has relatively independent forms and cases. People often treat not only the newcomer as a “stranger”, but also the “oldcomer”, and can even create “strangers” for themselves if they need one for some reason (GULYÁS 2016: 33). It is in this context that the terms ingroup and outgroup are discussed in sociology and social psychology. An ingroup is a group of individuals who belong to the same group as the observer, while an outgroup is a group of individuals outside the individual’s group. Along the dimensions thus obtained, we can examine the degree of prejudice and racism towards outgroups (SIK–SZEITL 2015), such as “groups of deviance, different ethnicity or religion compared to the majority of the population, or groups of foreign nationals” (GULYÁS 2016: 34).

The resilience of an inclusive society is also reflected in the labour market. Those who can find a job in the primary, well-paid labour market have a much better chance of integration, but most of them need language skills and a degree. However, the low wages in the secondary labour market, which is more accessible to immigrants, are often insufficient to cover even rent and living costs. The emergence of immigrant ghettos, or immigrant neighbourhoods, also reduces the chances of integration, as they create a parallel social structure to the majority society. Foreigners who are on the economic periphery of society help each other through difficulties, which may be beneficial for recent immigrants, but precludes long-term financial stability.

Social inequalities are exacerbated by religious and cultural differences. While religion as a cultural or civilisational fault line may not in itself be a direct cause of the conflicts and violence that occur (TÓTH 2021), it can be argued that religious differences and non-acceptance may in itself increase crime.

It can be concluded that coexistence or tolerated together-living is not integration at all (TEKE 2020: 298). It would be important for European societies to integrate people from a migrant background to a greater extent and at a higher rate, as people who are integrated into society, have a stable financial background and a positive outlook are less likely to become criminals and less likely to be radicalised. In today’s war-torn world, the need for respectful and peaceful coexistence, i.e. respectful behaviour, is becoming increasingly important.

Resilience of law enforcement agencies

Culture is generally defined as the sum total of material and intellectual goods produced and created by people and humanity (BERDE 2022). Organisational culture is a complex phenomenon, made up of specific norms, rules, procedures, values, symbols and belief systems that are most characteristic of a particular grouping. These norms and systems – preferred by the organisation – become embedded over time in the cognitive and affective behaviour of the newcomer, who gradually internalises the cultural conventions, written and unwritten rules of the organisation (FARKAS et al. 2018). Of course, it is not only the organisation that influences the individual, but also the individuality of the person that influences and is influenced by the organisation and the change and development of the

organisational culture. Mutual cooperation continues until the individual either internalises all aspects of the organisational culture or breaks the link with the organisation due to the stress and burnout caused by failed attempts. One of the reasons for failure may be the impact of generational differences: “Currently, in addition to the small number of ‘baby boomers’, generations X, Y and Z are also present in the organisation (these generations can be addressed and motivated in different ways, and have different needs), but they are already actively interacting with the current ‘alphas’ and forming their image of the organisation” (FARKAS et al. 2018: 75). According to another view (KOVÁCS 2022), the role of organisational culture is to provide a cultural basis for the organisation’s sense of belonging and its ideals, and through this to endow the organisation with its distinctive characteristics. The sources of an organisation’s culture include social perceptions, the history and origins of the organisation’s formation, external factors that influence the organisation, and last but not least the behaviour, will and manifestations of the organisation’s leaders.

If we look at the issue of organisational culture in the context of the police, we have to emphasise that the individuals who make up the organisation need to be resilient to the challenges of subordinate status, as well as having adaptive coping strategies to deal with unequal opportunities, social perceptions and work–life balance (FARKAS et al. 2018). By the organisational culture of migration management, we mean the established procedural mechanisms of a systematic set of persons and bodies implementing EU and national migration legislation. Like all law enforcement agencies, the immigration authorities are obliged to be humane, tolerant, helpful and non-discriminatory in their approach to foreigners. The employment of staff who do not fit in with the organisational culture of the aliens policing body may sooner or later lead to the organisation becoming preoccupied with its own internal problems instead of carrying out its task, with the most harmful consequence being the intensification of the negative phenomenon of the treatment of foreigners (HORVÁTH 2010: 179).

In times of increased migratory pressure or the recent crisis situation caused by illegal migration, law enforcement agencies are under increased pressure as well. Staff are under increased stress due to the higher workload. Stress is most often defined by János Selye (SELYE 1956; ÁDÁM–SALAVECZ 2010), who argues that stress is a non-specific response of the human organism to any kind of stress. Stress is part of our everyday life and it is a phenomenon that is familiar to everyone. However, in everyday speech, stress is most often used in a negative sense and associated with a negative emotional state. It is often used to explain our bad moods, illness, unexpected reactions, poor performance and damaged relationships (URBÁN 2006). Too much pressure at work has a negative impact not only on personal life but also on work itself. Different tasks, direct contact with people, communication difficulties and overtime clearly have frustrating consequences (Borbély et al. 2017: 294). A frustrated employee is dissatisfied, underperforms, makes mistake after mistake, or worse, leaves the organisation. However, it is also important to point out that stress can have more than just a negative impact on our lives: stress mobilises and organises our behaviour, focuses our thinking and motivates us to tackle an aversive, unpleasant situation or task (URBÁN 2006).

In our view, periodic training and development is essential for the creation and maintenance of a stable, effective and responsive police force. These training and development opportunities should include time for language training, improving work–life balance, planning individual career paths and improving the mental health of the force. It would therefore be necessary for law enforcement personnel to undergo training in migration psychology, intercultural awareness and improving their own psychological well-being, in order to help them to cope with stressful situations, situations requiring extreme workloads or, where appropriate, culturally different situations, from a moral, physical and psychological point of view (SCHILD 2016: 271).

A criminal psychological approach to the lack of resilience

The research on resilience has become a popular topic in recent years (decade now), and a deeper understanding of the phenomenon can be found mainly in the field of positive psychology (AFEK et al. 2021; VELA–PAI 2019; LEMAY–GHAZAL 2001). However, the interpretation of resilience in criminal psychology is not yet a common feature in the international research literature, as Hungarian criminal psychology research has neglected the study of the relationship between resilience and offending. At the same time, there is no doubt that from a criminal psychology point of view, valuable results could be obtained from the study of the resilience of offenders, just think of the question of the harms of criminalisation in prisons: To what extent does resilience as a personality trait contribute to the effective coping of individual prisoners with these harms? And this is just one of many questions.

An empirical analysis of the impact of the resilience and/or lack of resilience of the host society and the public authorities involved in immigration on the change in the immigrant's psychological state would be essential. Although the psychological underpinnings of terrorism and radicalisation are well known (FARKAS 2023, 2016; ERDÉLYI 2022; DOOSJE et al. 2016; KRUGLANSKI et al. 2014), the role of resilience, mental flexibility and resilience is less explored. We argue that resilience tests have or can have relevance for criminal psychology. For example, in the context of sexual offences, either a single or repeated act of violence can have a major impact on the mental well-being of the victim – mainly in a negative direction. The victim's resilience and ability to cope effectively and adaptively is reduced, and he or she may develop serious psychopathological pathologies (ERDÉLYI 2023).

The importance of research on resilience is also an important issue in the context of law enforcement organisational culture. The phenomenon of vicarious traumatisation, as used in psychology, is also a major threat to police personnel. The term itself refers to situations where professionals working in the field of psychotherapy, first and foremost psychotherapists, become traumatised themselves while working with traumatised individuals (SZEMEREY 2016). It is important and urgent to develop a therapeutic option that focuses on the mental health and stability of personnel who are subject to increased traumatic, highly vulnerable situations, whether it is road traffic accidents, sexual abuse or migration-related offences.

Summary

While there is a long tradition of scientific studies on integration in the United States, it is new in Europe. The available empirical studies (see for example FACCHINI et al. 2015; SCOTT–CARTLEDGE 2009; HOESCH 2018), which are few in number, make it difficult to draw clear conclusions about the factors of integration that clearly and unequivocally determine social relations. However, it is possible to conclude that states whose inhabitants and institutions are open to immigrants of foreign origin and accepting of different cultures and languages are more successful in terms of integration.

Accepting the former, in our study we tried to argue that resilience, which is gaining ground in positive psychology and is increasingly present in therapeutic situations, is of great importance not only in general psychological terms, but also from the point of view of criminal psychology. We have tried to point out that, whether we are talking about law enforcement personnel or offenders, the phenomenon has serious theoretical and practical questions, the answers to which may open up new possibilities and perspectives for research in criminal psychology.

The relevance of immigration today is constantly growing, both globally and in our immediate environment (KOUDELA 2022). Once a migrant leaves his or her country of origin, he or she is exposed to loneliness, loses his or her roots and is subject to a heavy mental burden of assimilation in the destination country. Optimally, they integrate successfully, but in extreme cases, the psychological burden of migration generates deviant behaviour, which can manifest itself in radicalisation and terrorism. In the context of migration, it may therefore be necessary to develop specific training, group and/or individual sessions that can facilitate successful integration into society and prevent individuals from embarking on a path of deviance.

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