

## **ОПТИМІЗАЦІЯ НАВЧАЛЬНО-МЕТОДИЧНОГО ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ ПОЛІЦЕЙСЬКИХ**

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**DECLAN DONNELLY,**

PhD Researcher, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK

### **AN EXAMINATION OF TACIT AND EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE IN THE DECISION MAKING OF SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICERS IN STRANGER MURDER**

The objective of this research is to understand how the decision making of senior investigating officers (SIOs) is influenced by their explicit and tacit knowledge when investigating cases of stranger murder. By stranger murder I refer to those investigations where ostensibly the victim and the suspect are not known to each other. These are usually the most difficult and challenging investigations for an SIO. As opposed to the more frequent types of murder that are referred to as, 'domestic', or inter-familial where the parties for example, might be related through marriage, or association. This study is confined to the 43 police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport Police.

The methods used in this study comprise:

- 1) Attending the four-week National SIO course,
- 2) The interview of SIOs who have investigated a stranger murder,
- 3) The analysis of the decision logs kept by the SIOs during their murder investigation.

#### **The SIO course.**

There are two main reasons for attending the National SIO course. The first was to gain an understanding of how and what student SIOs are taught. My primary focus was on the explicit knowledge that was imparted to them during their four weeks training. For example, how is decision making dealt with during their study and is it linked to any theoretical frameworks? This includes any training that the SIO receives in relation to previous investigations that have failed due to flaws in investigative thinking. I wanted to know if the outcomes from those cases are discussed and process by which this is then fed into their own learning with regard to decision making. Whilst undertaking my observational study I was able to interview several of the students as to their understanding of decision making.

The second reason comes from my own background as a former SIO and is to do with culture. One of my research questions is to determine if there is a detective culture, and does it influence SIO decision making? Since completing the SIO course I have begun a thematic analysis of my observational data.

#### **The SIO interviews and analysis of their decision logs.**

The interviews of the eleven SIOs have been undertaken over a period of fifteen months. They comprise interviews with senior investigating officers from a range of different police forces based in rural, semi-rural and metropolitan locations. Each interview has been preceded by letters and documents setting out the purpose of the research, confidentiality of material and anonymity of the participant. All interviews have been digitally recorded and conducted at the premises of the participant. A key purpose of the interviews was to elicit the tacit knowledge that SIOs utilised in determining how they would investigate the circumstances presented to them. After the interview concluded I was given access to the documents (referred to as daybooks and decision logs) that must be kept by the SIO during their investigation<sup>1</sup>. From these documents I made notes of the time and dates of the decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> ACPO Crime Committee 1999. Revised Instructions for the use of Policy Files. And ACPO Murder Investigation Manual, 2006.

At present I am analysing the data from the SIO interviews using thematic analysis. My approach to analysing the decision logs kept by the SIOs is different. I am trying to identify the key decisions that are undertaken by the SIO during the course of their enquiry. Other researchers (Dando and Ormerod, 2017) have analysed the decision logs of SIOs across a range of serious offences that include murder. Their focus has been on decisions in relation to hypotheses made by SIOs. My analysis seeks to understand the decisions that feature prominently within investigative thinking and how this relates to the explicit and tacit knowledge of the SIO.

One outcome of this research is to assist in the professionalisation of the SIO and make suggestions as to how this research may be able to assist that process. The following is an extract from a chapter written by myself, and Dr. Adrian West, my external supervisor.

**What is required to be an effective SIO for a 21st century role?<sup>1</sup>**

From our preliminary and ongoing analysis, in a very basic way, we see an effective SIO as an individual leader with good intellectual abilities who is able to demonstrate consistently that he or she can provide firm direction, supervision and guidance to their team, which may include external resources. Under significant and often enduring high pressure, they are able to quickly evaluate emerging and often complex information and shape the immediate investigative environment based on sound and transparent decision making. In this way, they demonstrate “grip”. If necessary, they are able to shift the investigative emphasis whilst maintaining control. This will include being receptive to different ideas, rather than focussing on one investigative theory to the detriment of others. This involves the flexibility of mind to remain objective when considering alternative explanations that may not initially align with their own and is underpinned by the requirement to work increasingly in a multidisciplinary team of other relevant investigative specialists. In that multidisciplinary context, ownership of ‘turf’ is an outmoded and disadvantageous attitude for the complexity of today’s challenges. At the same time, they will maintain independence of thought and not be unduly influenced by internal or external influences. It is a given that within the ambit of homicide investigation, an effective SIO will also have developed specialist theoretical and evidence based knowledge about decision making and the interpretation of other sources of relevant complex information (including, for example, Forensic Pathology, Forensic Science, Forensic Psychology and Psychiatry) as it applies to types of homicide and homicide offenders.

Whilst experience is required, we suggest that it is investigative expertise that is essential to the task. Research differentiating experience and expertise has described experience as that which may be learnt from undertaking an activity or being involved in an event; alternatively, it may be acquired over a period of time. In a previous study, Alison et. al (2013) found that when aggravated by debilitating, time dependent pressures, experience did not assist decision-makers in a simulated rape scenario. That which distinguishes experience from expertise, and the novice from the expert, is in the domain of deliberate practice. Expertise includes greater familiarity with aspects of a situation that assists in memory retrieval; enhanced images that capture the salient features of the domain; access to previous solutions and well-practiced component skills (Klein, 1998). These elements also assist in distinguishing the expert from the novice (Ericsson, 2006). Taken further, expertise requires extensive periods of education and deliberate practice or a combination of both. Mere passive acquisition is not enough (Fahsing and Ask, 2016). In contrast to short courses and short-term deployments as investigators, we propose that the Police Service can only achieve the necessary remedy by committing to the development of the investigator role as a career specialism: Most areas of expertise require an estimate of either 10 years experience, or 10000 hours of deliberate practice as a minimum (Ericsson et al., 2007).

Consequently, we believe that the complexity and scope of this investigative and evidential task, with its attendant responsibility and accountability, must be supported by training and career

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<sup>1</sup> Donnelly, D. and West, A., 2019. The Task is Greater Than the Title: Professionalising the Role of the Senior Investigating Officer in Homicide Investigations.

development pathways that are relevant to the SIO in 21<sup>st</sup> century criminal investigation. Without demeaning the commitment and best efforts of many SIOs currently, our discussion and review indicates that the training of detectives and thereby SIO's continues to fall short of what is required for the current and future operational milieux.

The extract from the above chapter identifies the themes of culture, knowledge and experience that impact upon the role undertaken by the SIO. We argue that the continued professionalisation of the SIO should be supported by a curriculum of training that includes "an appropriate corpus of professional knowledge". This multi-disciplinary approach incorporates an investigative practice founded upon inclusion of both the traditional and social sciences. Impliedly these would be linked to a continuing emphasis on both academic and vocational training that is "mediated by the reality of immersion in live enquiries (Donnelly and West, 2019: 124).

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