



Criminal Psychology and its importance : A Review

Dr. Dinesh Singh

Associate Professor of Psychology

Pt. NRS Govt. College , Rohtak

Abstract

Criminal psychologists seek to understand the motivations of criminals and develop a psychological profile to understand or apprehend them. They examine individual criminal behaviors and diagnose any mental health conditions. They frequently step into the courtroom to provide expert testimony. Other duties include counseling individuals who have committed crimes or evaluating their risk of recidivism. Becoming a criminal psychologist requires a doctorate in psychology and a license to practice. These professionals have usually completed postdoctoral study or research in criminal behavior or profiling. Criminal psychologists often come from a law enforcement background, bringing skills learned in the field to graduate programs, where they refine their psychological profiling abilities. There are many other positions in this field, however, and many who study criminal psychology go on to work in social service or in a field related to law enforcement, often as corrections and probation officers, or as police, fire, emergency, and ambulance dispatchers.

ISSN 2454-308X



Key words: Criminal, psychological, enforcement, social etc.

Introduction

The term “criminal psychology” has been defined in a numerous ways. Even today it has no accepted definition. It can be defined as a science, which helps investigative institutions in fulfilling their mission more effectively by applying a psychological knowledge to it. In this field psychologists mainly focus on offenders. They can engage in a number of activities related to investigation, ranging from profile creation process to conduction of psychological testing of people for courts/trials for various crimes. People with this profession are also trying to find out why do people commit offence, what are their motives, what made them do so. The research of cause-effect relationship



ranges from a serial killer's childhood environment to psychological stress, which leads them to rob a bank in order to deal with financial problems.

Criminal psychologists can be profilers, helping agencies create a psychological profile to help apprehend suspects. Unlike what you see on TV, however, a psychologist is unlikely to go with police to confront suspects and a high profile serial murderer only comes along once in a blue moon. Although a criminal psychologist may visit a crime scene, they are more likely to spend time in an office with case files or in a record room poring over analyses of possible suspects. A large part of criminal psychology is looking over research and data relevant to cases. It can almost feel academic. Further, criminal profiling is only one possible aspect of their many duties.

Criminal vs. Forensic Psychology

Many people use the terms criminal and forensic psychologist interchangeably. People can identify as one or the other and engage in the same duties. However, there are some relevant distinctions. If you are talking about profiling a criminal that is likely the realm of criminal psychology. Most assessment is done by a forensic psychologist but it is not impossible for someone who identifies as a criminal psychologist to perform testing. Criminal psychologists review a lot of research and data in determining the psychological makeup of criminals but many people who conduct experimental research identify as forensic psychologists. Another distinction is that forensic psychologists deal with all types of legal matters, including civil cases, while criminal psychologists focus on criminal matters.

The Importance of Criminal Psychology

Crime is like a pebble in a pond, affecting a swath of people whenever it is perpetrated. Finding those responsible and ensuring an accurate and ethical legal process has never been more critical. Through their invaluable work, criminal psychologists assist law enforcement in apprehending responsible parties and help further educate about the criminal mind.

Famous People In The Field Of Criminal Psychology

Although most criminal psychologists work behind the scenes, a few have gained notoriety for their role in apprehending high profile criminals or their contributions to



criminal psychology. It should be noted that although not all of the following people are criminal psychologists by education, they all have performed or currently perform work consistent with a criminal psychologist.

- **Hugo Munsterberg**

Munsterberg was an early pioneer in the field of criminal psychology. At the turn of the 20th century, Munsterberg published *On The Witness Stand*, a collection of essays which pointed out the inherent lack of reliability in witness testimony. Munsterberg revealed how psychological variables can interfere with people providing evidence in trials. The study of eyewitness testimony has continued in psychology with the work of noted researcher Elizabeth Loftus, among others. Munsterberg is also credited as one of the first people to study the importance of jury selection.

- **Thomas Bond**

Thomas Bond is widely believed to be the first criminal profiler. He was a physician who examined the evidence of victims believed to be killed by Jack the Ripper. Based on his investigation, he made certain conclusions about the psychological and physical makeup of the murderer.

- **David Canter**

David Canter helped British police solve the famous Railway Rapist case in the 1980s. He is believed to be the first person to use profiling to solve murders in England. He is also credited with creating investigative psychology, which combines psychological profiling with evidence derived from empirical scientific study.

- **Saul Kassin**

Kassin's scientific studies of false confessions are now used internationally to determine the validity of police interrogation and the confession process. He is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Massachusetts Professor Emeritus at Williams College, in Williamstown, MA.

- **John Douglas**



John Douglas became famous working in the FBI's serial crime unit. He was a profiler who worked on several high profile serial killer cases, including the Atlanta Child Murders and the Green River Killer. He was the model for Jack Crawford in *Silence of the Lambs*, a movie that spurred tremendous interest in criminal psychology. The current Netflix series *Mindhunter* is based upon his work.

Conclusion

Criminal psychology as an academic discipline was established not so long ago. It was late 19th century when universities started to teach it. But actually methods of offender profiling was used earlier by the investigators. German psychologist Hugo Munsterberg is considered to truly start the criminal psychology, his works from 19th-20th centuries still are very useful for psychologists. Since early 20th century criminal psychologists role in the whole process of fighting criminal has been increasing rapidly and nowadays their work is highly appreciated in every developed country of the world. Criminal Psychologists may be employed in a number of settings. Some work as a private consultant, some may be employed full-time in governmental, usually in law enforcement organs, some of them prefer to work part-time at universities or other educational facilities. They work closely with police officers and federal agents helping them solve crimes by developing profiles of various kinds, usually of violent offenders, such as murderers, kidnappers, rapists and so on... They can also work with private lawyers, state attorneys and the public defender's office. Most of criminal psychologists spend the majority of their time in court or office settings.

Bibliography

- [1] Dror, I. and Charlton, D. (2006) 'Why experts make errors', *Journal of Forensic Identification*, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 600–16.
- [2] Nijboer, H. (1995) 'Expert evidence' in Bull, R. and Carson, D. (eds) *Handbook of Psychology in Legal Contexts*, Chichester, Wiley, pp. 555–64.
- [3] Scheck, B., Neufeld, P. and Dwyer, J. (2000) *Actual Innocence: Five Days to Execution and Other Dispatches from the Wrongly Convicted*, New York, Random House.
- [4] Spencer, J. and Flin, R. (1993) *The Evidence of Children: The Law and the Psychology*, London, Blackstone Press.



- [5] Wells, G. (1978) ‘Applied eyewitness research: system variables and estimator variables’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 36, pp. 1546–57.
- [6] Block, R. (1978) ‘Remembered duration: effects of event and sequence complexity’, *Memory and Cognition*, vol. 6, pp. 320–26.
- [7] Ceci, S. and Bruck, M. (1993) ‘Suggestibility of the child witness: a historical review and synthesis’, *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 113, pp. 403–39.
- [8] Clifford, B. and Scott, J. (1978) ‘Individual and situational factors in eyewitness testimony’, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 63, pp. 352–9.
- [9] Ellis, H., Davies, G. and Shepherd, J. (1977) ‘Experimental studies of face identification’, *National Journal of Criminal Defense*, vol. 3, pp. 219–34.
- [10] Flin, R. and Shepherd, J. (1986) ‘Tall stories: eyewitnesses’ ability to estimate height and weight characteristics’, *Human Learning*, vol. 5, pp. 29–38.