

CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY- A VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Criminal psychologists will often use their expertise to consult with law enforcement personnel on various aspects of a case. 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. One of the most common uses of forensic psychology is the psychological assessment and evaluation of people who are involved with or affected by the legal system. This requires forensic psychologists to be competent practitioners with superior clinical skills. Psychological evaluations are used when people are tried for criminal allegations, apply to become foster parents, are considered for fitness for public office or are considered for parole. Psychological evaluations are also part of determining the suitability of members of the military and private sectors for access to high-level confidential material and much more. The vast majority of forensic psychologists are not criminal investigators. Criminal psychology and forensic psychology have a great deal in common when it comes to the education, skills and training both disciplines use. The purpose and goal of each discipline is the most important. Criminal psychology always concerns situations where a crime has taken place. Criminal psychologists discover a perpetrator's motives, build a profile of that perpetrator and seek to serve the interests of the justice system, as relates to that specific crime and perpetrator.

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INTRODUCTION

Criminal psychology is the study of the thoughts and behavior of criminals. It answers the question: why do criminals do what they do?

The study of criminal psychology has been glorified in TV shows like Criminal Minds and CSI.

As we well know, what we see on TV does not always reflect the reality of life. Let's examine the study of criminal psychology and see what it entails.

What Does a Criminal Psychologist Do?

Profiling

Yes, 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.

Consultation

Criminal psychologists will often use their expertise to consult with law enforcement personnel on various aspects of a case. For example, they can help them ask appropriate questions during interrogation or give relevant information to help guide their investigation.

Assessment

Assessment is another critical aspect of criminal psychology. Performing psychological testing to determine a suspect's state of mind is an integral part of the adjudication process.

For instance, a psychologist may have to determine whether a suspect is in a stable mental state to stand trial or if they have the personality characteristics to fit the alleged crime.

Research

Criminal psychologists may conduct research that has far-reaching practical implications on the study of criminology and the legal process.

For example, psychologists have performed research on memory, eyewitness testimony, evidence collection, and confessions that have impacted how law enforcement professionals and lawyers proceed in criminal legal cases.

Court Testimony

Criminal psychologists often have to appear in court to provide expert witness testimony. There are psychologists whose entire practice is based on giving their expert opinion.

They base their judgments on testing they have conducted or through analyzing assessments and evidence provided by other professionals.

Psychotherapy

A criminal psychologist may also be asked to provide psychotherapy for people that have committed crimes. Their role is to help their clients cope with the consequences of criminal behavior and assist them in their rehabilitation so they can be productive members of society.

Teaching

A criminal psychologist can teach at the college level within a psychology or criminal justice department. Further, they can teach courses or present seminars at law enforcement training facilities, such as those run by a federal agency (e.g., the DEA) or the police.

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.

Where Do Criminal Psychologists Work And What Do They Earn?

Criminal psychologists usually split their time between an office and court but can also spend some time in the field, in settings like crime scenes and jails. Some work directly for government agencies, such as the police or FBI.

Others have their own practice and work as consultants to lawyers and law-enforcement agencies. Many are affiliated with universities. Criminal psychologists on average earn \$93,440, which is more than most other disciplines of psychology.

Their salary will largely depend on where they work and their specific duties. If they work directly for an agency they are likely to earn less than as a private consultant. Additionally, someone providing assessment and court testimony is likely to earn more than someone who primarily performs research.

How Does One Become a Criminal Psychologist?

First, you need to obtain an undergraduate degree, preferably in psychology. **Next**, you need to seek graduate education.

A minimum undergraduate GPA over 3.0 (and likely much higher) is probably needed to gain entry to a graduate program. Please note that criminal psychology is not recognized as an area of specialization by the **American Psychological Association (APA)**.

That means you are not going to be able to receive an APA approved graduate degree in criminal psychology.

However, you can receive an APA approved degree in forensic psychology. If you do not enter a forensic psychology program, it is recommended that you get a degree in clinical psychology and then specialize in criminology or forensics.

Although you can find work with a master's degree, finding a job as a criminal psychologist usually requires a doctorate.

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.

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.

Forensic psychology is a relatively young discipline that deals with the application of psychological principles, practices and clinical specialties within the legal arena.

Recognized in 2001 by the American Psychological Association, forensic psychology combines aspects of clinical psychology like counseling, interviews, evaluation, diagnosis and assessment with work inside the realm of the law and justice system.

A broader, but still valid definition includes the use of other subfields and applications of psychology, like social psychology and development psychology, for legal applications.

Forensic psychology is used in police departments, law firms, schools, rehabilitation centers, private practice and many other settings, but it isn't used. Forensic psychology is a broader and more diverse field than criminal psychology.

Applications of Forensic Psychology

One of the most common uses of forensic psychology is the psychological assessment and evaluation of people who are involved with or affected by the legal system. This requires forensic psychologists to be competent practitioners with superior clinical skills.

Psychological evaluations are used when people are tried for criminal allegations, apply to become foster parents, are considered for fitness for public office or are considered for parole.

Psychological evaluations are also part of determining the suitability of members of the military and private sectors for access to high-level confidential material and much more.

Because forensic psychologists are trained in psychotherapy, they can provide one on one therapy, group and individual therapy and family psychotherapy. They are also trained to conduct interventions and de-escalate situations.

Forensic psychologists may work with patients within state or federal corrections systems, attorneys, offenders, crime victims, families or defendants. These are some of the common activities performed by forensic psychologists:

- Psychological competency evaluations
- One-on-one psychotherapy, often with the victims or survivors of crime
- Sentencing recommendations
- Risk evaluations for recidivism and re-offending
- Evaluations for child placement and custody hearings
- Expert witness testimony
- Academia, including research and publication
- Law enforcement consultation
- Treating offenders, inmates and parolees
- Treatment of criminal offenders
- Provide advice and expertise in litigation
- Psychological evaluations of applicants for law enforcement
- Trial consultants

CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY V/S FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

Due to the many television shows about criminal and forensic psychology, the precise scope of each discipline has gotten thoroughly muddled in the general public's mind. Although forensic psychology is sometimes incorrectly thought of as synonymous with criminal psychology, the two are different fields for different purposes.

The vast majority of forensic psychologists are not criminal investigators. Criminal psychology and forensic psychology have a great deal in common when it comes to the education, skills and training both disciplines use.

The purpose and goal of each discipline is the most important. Criminal psychology always concerns situations where a crime has taken place. Criminal psychologists discover a perpetrator's motives, build a profile of that perpetrator and seek to serve the interests of the justice system, as relates to that specific crime and perpetrator.

Forensic psychology involves a broader array of situations, many of which don't involve crime at all. Forensic psychologists may work with witnesses to crimes, criminal offenders, and victims of crimes.

Criminal psychologists are more focused, looking only at the perpetrator and aspects of the crime itself. Forensic psychologists do not profile criminal suspects or create behavioral profiles of perpetrators. Those tasks fall to criminal psychologists.

Careers in Forensic Psychology

Forensic psychologists must have a PhD or PsyD degree. In addition, forensic psychologists must have two years of supervised experience in the field and pass oral and written exams given by their state board of psychology.

Starting out in the process of becoming a forensic psychologist, a person must earn a bachelor's degree in psychology, then proceed to graduate school. Some programs combine a master's degree and doctorate into one, which takes four to five years to earn. It's also possible to earn a master's degree, then continue into a separate doctoral program in forensic psychology.

Note that to be licensed as a psychologist, it's essential to have earned a PhD or PsyD.

The following are common careers in forensic psychology at the master's degree level:

- **Licensed Associate Counselor or Licensed Professional Counselor.** Counselors provide psychotherapy, conduct assessments, perform intake screenings, and work in a broad variety of settings.

- **Jury Consultant.** Jury consultants collaborate with attorneys to help seat the best jurors for trial cases.
- **Research Assistant.** Master's programs in forensic psychology typically have an element of research involved in them. This can be a springboard to a career as a research assistant. Research assistants may work with psychologists or attorneys in collecting and analyzing large amounts of information.
- **Juvenile Offenders Counselor.** Youthful offenders have typically been victimized themselves and need a great deal of support to help them avoid re-offending.
- At the doctoral level, the following careers are available:
- **Forensic Psychologist.** Forensic psychologists perform the jobs discussed above. They may also work directly in the law enforcement system in jails or prisons as counselors. Within the corrections system, forensic psychologists assess inmates' psychological well-being.
- **Psychology Researcher.** Professional research is a popular use of an advanced degree in psychology. There are many research and teaching opportunities in forensic psychology, due to the field's ongoing expansion.
- **Expert Witness.** Expert witnesses give legal professionals their input about the state of mind of an accused person; can make professional psychological research material easier to understand for juries and attorneys, and help juries view crimes in light of the latest research.
- **Professor.** People who earn advanced degrees are usually comfortable in academic settings, which makes teaching is often a great option for people who've earned a PhD in forensic psychology.

CONCLUSION

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. 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. Forensic psychology is a growing field, with solid expansion on the horizon past 2026. As long as people interact with the justice system, there will be job opportunities available for those in forensic psychology.

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