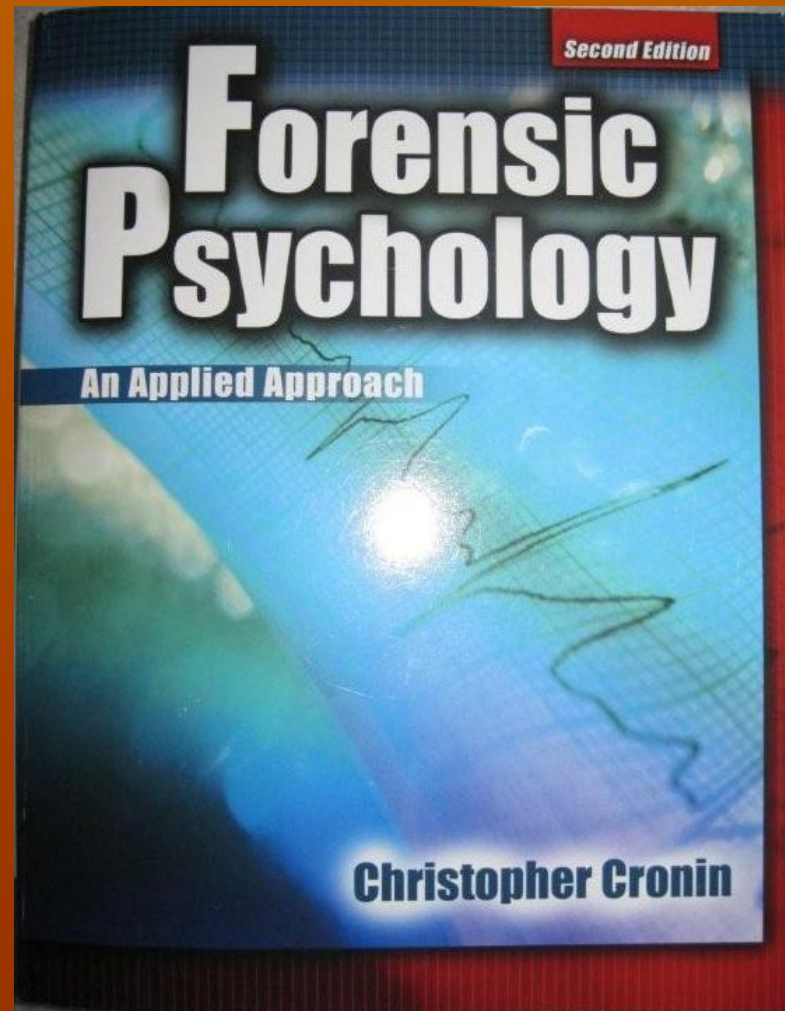


*Introduction to Forensic
Psychology*



Definition of Forensic Psychology

- Dramatic Increase in Popularity
 - Due to Popularity of Television Dramas and Managed Care Obstacles for Professionals
- Numerous misconceptions about the field: often confused with other forensic sciences such as crime scene investigation, etc.

Defining Forensic Psychology

- First need to define psychology
- **Psychology** is *the science that seeks to understand behavior and mental processes*
- Psychology is a broad field
 - Most people are familiar with clinical psychology – a specialty and one of the four applied areas recognized by the APA

Areas of Study in Psychology

- APPLIED AREAS
- Clinical
- Counseling
- School
- Industrial/ Organizational
- Developmental
- Social
- Cognitive
- Educational
- Biological
- Psychometrics
- Health

Broad and Narrow Definition of Forensic Psychology

- Broad definition – *any application of psychological knowledge or methods to a task faced by the legal system*
 - Includes just about everything from insanity pleas to testifying about the psychological impact of trade mark infringement

Broad and Narrow Definition of Forensic Psychology

- Narrow definition – *the practice of psychology as related to the law and legal profession*
 - This definition, adopted by the American Psychological Association, focuses on the applied aspect of the field... that is, the practice of psychology

Forensic Psychology versus Legal Psychology

- **Forensic psychology** – *application of clinical specialties to the law*
 - Examples: insanity plea, competency hearings, child custody, death penalty sentencing, sexual predator evaluations, parole hearings, etc.
- **Legal psychology** – *experimental areas of psychology as applied to legal questions*
 - Examples: accuracy of eyewitness testimony, size of the jury, effects of pretrial publicity, trial consultation, etc.

Legal Psychology

- Consists primarily of the *non-applied* areas of psychology addressing legal questions: non-applied refers to the APA's definition of applied psychology
- Distinction between non-applied and applied areas of psychology
- Legal Psychology can include
 - Social Psychology
 - Cognitive Psychology
 - Developmental Psychology
 - As well as other specialties in psychology

Example of Legal Psychology

- A developmental psychologist may have determined that this boy is mature enough to be a credible witness



Legal Psychology

- *Social psychology* – study of the individual in the group
 - Social psychologists can work as trial consultants:
 - research on effects of pretrial publicity, mock jury trials to test persuasiveness of courtroom strategy,
 - jury selection,
 - witness preparation,
 - this area is discussed in chapter 9 of the text
 - Social psychologists can also study legal issues such as the size of a jury or effects of judge's instructions to the jury

Legal Psychology

- *Cognitive psychology* – study of human thought (cognition)
 - Cognitive psychologists serve as expert witness on accuracy of eyewitness testimony, recovered memories and false memory syndrome
 - Cognitive psychologists can also conduct research on ways to improve gathering of eyewitness evidence

Legal Psychology

- *Developmental psychology* – study of changes in behavior and mental processes over time
- Developmental psychologists can serve as an expert witness on how the courts treat children
 - For example, the suggestibility of children's testimony, ability to make legal decisions such as offering a confession, and impact of various child custody arrangements on the emotional health of the child
- Developmental psychologists can also research ways to improve questioning of children or effects of custody arrangements

Legal Psychology

- A legal psychologist may do a detailed crime scene analysis in an effort to identify the perpetrator's “signature” of modus operandi



The Practice of Forensic Psychology

- A specialty in the professional practice (applied areas) of psychology
 - Applied areas of psychology include clinical, counseling, school, and industrial/organizational.
- Most forensic psychologists are *clinical* psychologists who practice in the specialty of forensic psychology
- Large part of forensic psychology involves assessment and treatment
- Psychologists are frequently asked to assess an individual on a *psycholegal* question and then report back to the court, offering an *expert opinion*

Examples of common forensic evaluations are: (1)

- Insanity plea evaluations
- Competency evaluations including:
 - competency to stand trial, civil competency, competency to waive Miranda rights, to offer a confession, to be executed.
- Child custody evaluations
- Death penalty sentencing evaluations as in mitigating or aggravating factors
- Risk assessment for individuals about to be released from prison
 - sexual predator evaluations
 - Dangerousness

Examples of common forensic evaluations are: (2)

- Suicide risk assessments for inmates
- Clinical assessment for inmates
- Fitness-for-duty evaluations for law enforcement
- Pre-employment evaluations for law enforcement candidates
- Assessment of psychological injury for personal injury lawsuits

Forensic Psychology: Treatment

- Provision of treatment in correctional facilities (Correctional Psychology – discussed in chapter 6 of the text)
- Post-release treatment in the community
 - Sex offender groups, anger management, domestic violence, drug treatment, etc.
 - Often times this type of treatment is mandated as part of the conditional-release

Training and Credentials in Forensic Psychology

- Most forensic psychologists are clinical (or counseling) psychologists
- Ph.D. or the Psy.D in clinical or counseling psychology with specialized training in forensic work, usually post-doctoral work in the form of continuing education; possibly a forensic internship or fellowship

Training and Credentials in Forensic Psychology

- Master-level practitioners – usually provide direct mental health services within correctional or police settings or community-based treatment programs
- Although work is available at the master's level, credibility increases with the doctoral degree for work as an expert witness in court proceedings

Basic skills required beyond the academic degree

- Psychological Assessment Skills:
 - intellectual, personality and specialty areas, such as competency, violence potential, criminal responsibility, etc.
- Strong writing skills:
 - Reports to the courts, lawyers, probation officers, etc.
- Oral presentation skills:
 - Social presence when appearing as an expert witness

Career Opportunities in Forensic and Legal Psychology

- Forensic Psychology
 - Full time v. part time work as a practitioner
 - Correctional Psychology
 - Police Psychology
- Legal Psychology
 - Work in academic settings as researcher and mentor
 - Work as a consultant to attorneys

Brief Overview of the Course Topics (1)

- Ethical Issues in Forensic Psychology
 - Clash of psychological and legal professional ethics
- Forensic Assessment
 - Differences between clinical and forensic assessment
 - Overview of assessment instruments
- Criminal Responsibility and Competency to Stand Trial Evaluations
 - Case law
 - Assessment instruments

Brief Overview of the Course Topics (2)

- Police Psychology
 - Selection of law enforcement personnel
 - Fitness-for-duty evaluations
 - Counseling and Peer counseling
- Correctional Psychology
 - Unique role of the correctional psychologist
- Assessment of Psychological Injury
 - Tort Law
 - Evaluation for psychological damages

Police Psychology

- One of the responsibilities of *police psychology* is to aid in the selecting police officers



Brief Overview of the Course Topics (3)

- Child Custody Evaluations
- Trial Consultation
 - Jury selection
 - Change of venue request
 - Witness preparation
- Criminal Investigative Techniques
 - Detection of deception
 - Investigative Hypnosis
 - Criminal Profiling
 - Psychological Autopsies

Brief Overview of the Course Topics (4)

- Eyewitness Memory and Recovered Memory
 - Accuracy of eyewitness memory
 - Techniques to improve eyewitness evidence
 - Repressed memories and false memory syndrome
- Emerging Trends in the Field of Forensic Psychology
 - Increase growth and sophistication
 - Increased cooperation between the two professions
 - Future training models in forensic psychology
 - Therapeutic Jurisprudence

Web Sites

- American Board of Forensic Psychology
 - www.abpp.org
- American Psychology-Law Society
 - www.ap-ls.org
- American Psychological Association
 - www.apa.org
- American Psychology-Law Student Section
 - www.aplsstudentsection.com