

# The Theoretical Exploration of Criminal Psychology: Definitions, Formation Mechanisms, and Practical Implications

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**Abstract.** The study of criminal psychology is an interdisciplinary field that merges psychological and criminological principles. It aims to understand the psychological processes and societal factors that drive criminal behavior. This research explores various definitions of criminal psychology, its formation mechanisms, and the impact of genetics and environment on criminal behavior. It delves into the influence of parenting styles, family structure, and personality traits on criminal behavior. Additionally, the study discusses the importance of criminal psychological portraits and lie detection in criminal investigations. Overall, this research highlights the significance of criminal psychology in enhancing the understanding of criminal behavior and its prevention.

**Keywords:** Criminal psychology, Formation mechanisms, Criminal behavior, Personality traits, Lie detection.

## 1. Introduction

The interdisciplinary study of criminal psychology, which intersects the domains of psychology and criminology, by integrating psychological principles with criminal justice theories, this field not only enriches the theoretical foundations of psychology and criminology but also refines their respective methodologies. Through meticulous research and exploration, criminal psychology uncovers the intricate psychological processes and societal factors that underpin criminal actions. This deeper understanding enables the formulation of effective preventive strategies to mitigate the incidence of crime.

Additionally, this discipline holds substantial social significance; it prioritizes the mental health of offenders by providing essential psychological support services for those in need. It underscores the critical roles that communities and families play in crime prevention while fostering public awareness through educational initiatives aimed at reducing crime rates.

Despite the extensive body of research in the field, a definitive understanding of criminal psychology and its underlying mechanisms remains elusive. This ambiguity has led to a lack of a coherent and systematic approach to studying criminal psychology. As a result, the research conducted in this area is often fragmented, hindering a comprehensive understanding of the operational framework within which criminal psychology operates. To address these gaps, this study endeavors to delve into the conceptual definitions, the formation mechanisms, and the pertinent insights that are integral to the field of criminal psychology.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition of Criminal Mind

The definition of criminal psychology has been primarily explored through the lenses of psychology and law in previous studies.

#### 2.1.1. Psychology

The field of criminal psychology has seen a spectrum of definitions proposed by various scholars. Some scholars assert that criminal psychology generally pertains to any intentional crime originating from the mind. Others argue that it encompasses the multifaceted psychological elements that compel individuals to engage in criminal activities, encapsulating the mental processes that underpin various

forms of criminal behavior. Additionally, some researchers suggest that "the concept of a criminal mind reflects societal negativity manifested within human cognition."

Yao Gengxin offers a unique perspective, characterizing criminal psychology as an abnormal psychological phenomenon manifested by individuals who are otherwise considered normal. Fundamentally, it represents a mindset that runs counter to social behavioral norms and moral standards, often referred to as "antisocial psychology". Furthermore, it is posited that an understanding of criminal psychology cannot be divorced from its relationship with crime: "The study of criminal psychology is inherently linked to specific definitions of crime; without this connection, there can be no true understanding of criminal psychology [1]."

### **2.1.2. Jurisprudence**

In examining the interplay between antisocial behavior and criminal conduct, it is crucial to acknowledge that these psychological phenomena are not confined by national or societal frameworks. Antisocial behavior cannot be comprehensively defined as criminality without reference to specific legal concepts surrounding crime itself. It is noteworthy that different countries possess varying interpretations and definitions regarding what constitutes a crime; for instance, an act deemed illegal in Country G may not hold such status in Country A. Moreover, even within a single nation, perceptions and definitions related to crime evolve—underscoring the necessity for standardized evaluative criteria. Taking our country as an example necessitates reliance on legal provisions outlined in our "Criminal Law" as benchmarks for judgment; otherwise, there exists no foundation upon which one can identify both crimes and their associated psychologies.

In the context of our nation's "Criminal Law" within the domain of criminology, offenses are classified into two primary categories: intentional crimes and negligent crimes. A particular emphasis is placed on intentional acts within the realm of criminal psychology. Specifically, this field encompasses all psychological processes involved from the development of a motive through the stages of premeditation, up to the actual commission of the act (regardless if said act succeeds).

For this study's purposes—and drawing upon pertinent findings from both psychological research and jurisprudential analysis—we define criminal psychology as encompassing those cognitive activities and behavioral responses occurring during both preparation for and execution of a crime consciously motivated by individual psyche or awareness—a manifestation indicative of an aberrant antisocial state-of-mind while simultaneously distinguishing between intention versus negligence per legal statutes to delineate clear boundaries around subjects pertinent to research within this domain.

## **2.2. Formation of criminal behavior**

### **2.2.1. Biological factors**

People are made up of various tissues and organs. Biological nature will never disappear with the expansion of sociality. Moreover, with the increase of sociality in the human body, the biological nature of the human body may be changed. Based on the conviction of this point, the Western criminal psychology circle has conducted a long-term study on the biological factors of criminal behavior and has formed a theoretical system, which is worth learning for the Chinese criminal psychology circle. Since Lombolousseau established criminal anthropology by combining Darwin's evolution with Mundel's genetic law and put forward the theory of born criminal, western criminal psychologists began to have a strong interest in the connection between criminal behavior and the human body. Lange (J. S. Lange's comment on the earliest twin studies on criminality in his book *Crime of Fate*, that is, "Heredity determines who will become a criminal", exists as a classic proposition in the field of criminal psychology. [3].

There are three theories to explain the biological factors of criminal behavior: the endocrine disorder theory, the chromosome abnormality theory, and the constitution theory (a correlation between physical appearance and antisocial behavior). Changes in individual genes, genotypes, allelic frequencies, or SNP sites may alter an individual's sensitivity to environmental stimuli by affecting

the function of central and neurotransmitters and inducing impulsive behavior under the influence of stress factors or psychosocial factors. [4].

For the general human population, the straightforward correlation between genes and problematic behaviors is almost negligible, indicating that the genetic makeup, or genotype, does not exert an independent influence on these behaviors. When individuals are exposed to adverse environmental conditions, those with a genetic predisposition to certain behaviors are more susceptible to displaying aggressive and antisocial tendencies. In essence, an individual's propensity for violence and antisocial behaviors is shaped by the intricate interplay between their genetic predisposition and the environmental influences they encounter.

In the development of human psychology and behavior, the role of heredity and environment has always been inseparable. Genetics provides the physiological basis, while the environment provides the space for development.

### **2.2.2. Family factors**

The influence of family-rearing style on individual criminal behavior is multi-dimensional and deep. First, authoritative parenting style and criminal behavior: Authoritative parenting style usually shows that parents have clear requirements and rules for their children, but also give appropriate care and support. This kind of upbringing is helpful to the socialization and self-control of children to some extent. However, if the authority is excessive, it may lead to the children's rebellious psychology, so that under the induction of external adverse factors, criminal behavior may occur. Secondly, the authoritarian parenting style and its association with criminal behavior: Authoritarian parenting is marked by a strict and sometimes severe disciplinary approach, often lacking in warmth and understanding. This style of parenting can create significant psychological stress and emotional disconnection in children, which may result in aggressive or antisocial behaviors. Consequently, these behaviors can elevate the likelihood of criminal involvement. Third, drowning parenting style and criminal behavior: Drowning parenting style is usually manifested by parents' excessive love for their children and lack of discipline. This parenting style may lead to selfish, capricious children, lack of self-control and social responsibility, easy-to-encounter setbacks or desires that can not be satisfied, taking illegal means to solve the problem, and thus toward crime. Fourthly, the impact of neglectful parenting on criminal behavior: A neglectful parenting style is characterized by a lack of attention and emotional support for children. This approach can result in children growing up without adequate role models or proper supervision, making them susceptible to negative social influences and ultimately leading to criminal behavior. Fifth, family structure and criminal behavior: defects in family structure, such as single-parent families, parental divorce, etc., may affect the quality of family upbringing. Family instability may lead to children's lack of security and belonging, and increase psychological stress, all of which may increase the likelihood of criminal behavior. Sixth, the function of family education and criminal behavior: the imperfect function of family education, such as the lack of moral education, legal education, and social norms education, may lead to the lack of correct values and judgment of children, it is difficult to resist bad temptation, and thus embark on the road of crime. [5]

### **2.2.3. Personality factors**

Whether the specific external environment can become the inducement of people's criminal psychology depends on people's inner personality traits to a large extent. For people who commit criminal acts, this personality trait manifests as a specific personality defect. It is the existence of such personality defects that make it difficult for people to overcome the influence of leading factors, unable to make a rational balance between social interests and personal interests, unable to rationally control personal behavior, and unable to avoid the risk of committing crimes.

Antisocial personality refers to the abnormal personality of an individual who tends to violate social norms in social behavior and never feels guilty when hurting others for selfish purposes. It is a kind of abnormal personality, also known as antisocial abnormal personality, antisocial personality

disorder, and immoral personality. Abnormal personality in the narrow sense refers to antisocial personality.

During the commission of crimes, individuals exhibit impaired mental states, a diminished capacity for discerning right from wrong, and a lack of self-control. Moreover, they are often characterized by selfishness, a propensity to hold grudges, and a tendency towards vengeance and cruelty. This behavior frequently leads to criminal acts, including assault, theft, and homicide. Globally, antisocial personality disorder and its associated criminal behaviors have emerged as a significant social issue in many countries [6].

The difference between the crime of this kind of people and ordinary people is: (1) accidental; (2) The purpose is not clear; (3) harm and benefit no one; (4) Lack of self-protection; (5) Repeat offenders; (6) committing crimes alone; (7) Violent crimes are more than intelligent crimes.

### **2.3. Psychological correlation research**

#### **2.3.1. Crime portrait**

Criminal psychology is a general term for various psychological factors that affect the perpetrator's personal emotions, cognitive will, inner motivation, hobbies and habits, crime experience, etc. It can be said to be a subjective analysis. It can be said to be a subjective analysis. The criminal psychological portrait is to study and describe the personality attributes, psychological characteristics, and behavioral characteristics of the criminal by collecting the psychological traces exposed by the perpetrator. This is an objective existence. Criminal psychology and criminal psychological portrait are the relations between subjective and objective, consciousness and material.

Different perpetrators have different criminal psychological states when committing crimes, so they show different behaviors, words, and physiological reactions in the process of committing crimes and being examined, leaving behind different physical evidence and other relevant information. These different behaviors, statements, physical evidence physiological reactions, and other relevant information are the external manifestations of criminal psychology, which is the trace of criminal psychology. Criminal psychological trace is an important basis for criminal psychological portrait. The richer the criminal psychological trace exists in a case, the more complete the basis for the criminal psychological portrait, and the resulting portrait is the fuller the character characteristics of the perpetrator. During psychological analysis, efforts should be made to find the psychological factors implied in the behavior of the criminal suspect. To dig up traces of criminal psychology. [7]

#### **2.3.2. Lie detection**

China's criminal psychological testing technology is an experimental psychological technology that utilizes the achievements of modern psychology and experimental psychological technology as well as the research achievements of neuropsychology and bioelectronics, and uses domestic PG-I and A-type psychological testers and intelligent computers to simultaneously record Several psychological and physiological indicators of people, and then evaluates the correlation degree of psychological traces.

As a new technology widely used in the investigation and trial of criminal cases all over the world, the use of criminal psychological tests is a serious legal act, which must be carried out under the legal restriction. In China for a long time to come, this technology can only be used in criminal investigation and interrogation work. The subject of the test can only be the relevant experts of public security, security, prosecution, military security, and other departments with the power of investigation; The test objects can only be criminal defendants, criminal suspects, witnesses, victims, and people related to the occurrence and outcome of criminal cases with normal physical and mental conditions. The psychological test must not be coercive, and the conversation before the test must have the consent of the person tested. During the test, the person under test has the right to refuse to answer or to remain silent at all times. In addition, the actual application of this technology must fulfill the corresponding approval procedures and legal procedures. [8]

### 3. Practical enlightenment

In the research and practice of criminal psychology, criminal psychological portrait and lie detector are two very valuable technical tools. They not only help investigators more deeply understand the psychological state and behavior pattern of criminal suspects, but also improve the scientific accuracy of judicial practice. Through the study of criminal psychology, we deeply realize that each criminal's psychological motivation, background, character, and so on are unique. Therefore, individualized intervention strategies should be adopted in the process of crime prevention, correction, and re-education. This indicates that we need to devise tailored interventions for each offender's unique circumstances to enhance the efficacy of our efforts. The field of criminal psychology offers significant practical insights and utility. It not only boosts the efficiency and precision of the criminal justice system, advances crime prevention and rehabilitation, and bolsters societal security, but also fosters progress and innovation in related academic disciplines. Consequently, it is imperative that we further intensify the study and application of criminal psychology to aid in building a more harmonious and secure community.

### 4. Conclusion

The study of criminal psychology provides valuable insights into the complexities of criminal behavior and its underlying factors. It emphasizes the intricate relationship between genetics, environment, and individual psychology in shaping criminal behavior. The research highlights the importance of parenting styles, family structure, and personality traits in influencing criminal behavior. It underscores the role of criminal psychological portraits and lie detection in criminal investigations, emphasizing their potential to enhance the understanding of criminal behavior. The study concludes that a deeper understanding of criminal psychology is crucial for developing effective crime prevention strategies and promoting social safety. It emphasizes the need for continued research and practical application of criminal psychology to contribute to the construction of a more harmonious and safe society.

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