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**Criminal Psychology**  
**Nature, Nurture, Culture**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Miller is a court-appointed forensic psychological examiner for the Palm Beach County Criminal, Juvenile, and Family Court, and he serves as an independent expert witness in civil and criminal cases involving brain injury, traumatic stress syndromes, psychological disorders, civil and criminal competencies, criminal culpability, workplace violence and harassment, workplace stress, psychological disability, fitness for duty, and personal injury.

Dr. Miller is an adjunct professor at Florida Atlantic University and at Palm Beach State College, where he teaches courses in abnormal psychology, neuropsychology, forensic psychology, criminal psychology, police psychology, business psychology, and clinical psychology. He is also an adjunct instructor at the Criminal Justice Institute-Police Academy of Palm Beach County, where he has taught courses in law enforcement stress management and law enforcement crisis intervention. In addition, Dr. Miller conducts training seminars and continuing education programs regionally and nationally on topics pertaining to the brain, health, law, psychology, and organizational management.

Dr. Miller is the author of over 300 publications, including books, book chapters, professional journal articles, popular publications, and online resources. He is the editor of the *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health* and serves as a peer reviewer for several other professional journals. He is a frequent guest on regional, national, and international radio and television, and serves as a script and media consultant to television shows and movies. Dr. Miller writes the *Practical Police Psychology* column ([policeone.com/columnists/laurence-miller/](http://policeone.com/columnists/laurence-miller/)) on the [PoliceOne.com](http://PoliceOne.com) website. He is also a musician and performs at local venues as time allows.

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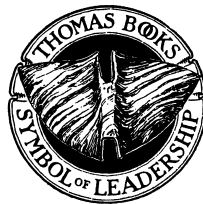
# CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY

## NATURE, NURTURE, CULTURE

A Textbook and Practical Reference Guide for Students and  
Working Professionals in the Fields of Law Enforcement,  
Criminal Justice, Mental Health, and Forensic Psychology

*By*

LAURENCE MILLER, PH.D.



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*To  
My colleagues, students,  
friends, and family*



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## Preface

Imagine two twins, separated at birth, pursuing independent but parallel educations and careers, only to discover in middle age that they've been working side-by-side in adjoining offices their whole lives, toiling over the same project, occasionally exchanging a few words and ideas, but never realizing their common bond or their full potential for productive collaboration. This pretty much describes the current relationship between the fields of psychology and criminal justice. Both twins are preoccupied with the nuances of human thought, emotion, intention, volition, behavioral expression, and self-control. Both of these siblings recognize that a deep understanding of human motivation as it applies to health and disease, crime and justice, individuals and societies, is essential in order to formulate accurate theoretical models of the human mind because these often have immediate and important consequences for real people's lives.

*Criminal Psychology: Nature, Nurture, Culture* endeavors to arrange a family reunion by introducing readers to the foundations of criminal psychology as it is understood and practiced from the research lab and classroom to the police beat and courtroom. This text offers a comprehensive, yet assimilable, review of the field of criminal psychology and, at the same time, can serve as a practical reference guide for working professionals in the fields of law enforcement, criminal justice, mental health, and forensic psychology. The title, *Criminal Psychology* is chosen quite purposefully: to make a full contribution to the broad field of criminal justice, psychology must go beyond dry, superficial descriptions of criminal behavior, in order to seek an understanding of the complex causal biopsychosocial dynamics of crime, because only in this way can our civilization develop the tools and strategies to control it.

Recent years have seen an explosion of interest among students in the field of forensic science, including behavioral forensic science. Movies, television shows, books, CDs, DVDs, and Internet websites present a constant stream of information on criminal profiling, special victims units, serial homicide, sex offenders, terrorism, hate crimes, and mass violence. In addition, attorneys, judges, mental health professionals, and forensic examiners

are looking for authoritative, yet practical, information that can guide their work with the more common cases of robbery, assault, family violence, child abuse, sex offenses, and juvenile crime that comprise their caseloads. Thus far, academia is struggling to keep up; in fact, my own experience has been that the student demand for quality training in these areas far exceeds the supply.

For many years, I've taught undergraduate and graduate courses in Abnormal Psychology, Neuropsychology, Business Psychology, and Clinical Psychology. In these courses, I've often introduced forensic applications of these topics, and found that this invariably whetted students' appetites for broader and deeper knowledge in this area. Several years ago, I developed and began teaching several new courses at Florida Atlantic University and Palm Beach State College, one in Police Psychology, another in Criminal Psychology, and a third in Forensic Psychology. My dilemma was to find appropriate texts for these courses.

In the case of Police Psychology, I solved the problem by writing my own text. *Practical Police Psychology: Stress Management and Crisis Intervention for Law Enforcement* began as a manual for law enforcement personnel, but quickly expanded from materials I had been using to teach this class at the Palm Beach County Police Academy to an academic textbook accessible to students and practitioners in psychology, law enforcement, criminal justice, and public safety. For the Forensic Psychology course, there appear to already exist a few workmanlike texts to choose from, but my own contribution is a possible project for the future. As for the Criminal Psychology course, there are a few existing texts on "Criminal Behavior" on the market, but I've found them unsatisfying in terms of their organization and coverage of topics—at least with respect to how I want to teach this subject.

*Criminal Psychology: Nature, Nurture, Culture* is a comprehensive integration of psychology and criminal justice that can be utilized for graduate and advanced undergraduate courses in Criminal Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, and Criminal Justice. It can also be used as a handbook and reference source for clinical and forensic psychologists, mental health practitioners, attorneys, judges, law enforcement, and military personnel.

This book is predicated on two fundamental concepts. First, to understand any kind of human phenomena, it is essential to go beyond observable behavior to study the way people actually think and feel, to understand what drives those inner mental states, and to be able to discern what consequences they have for the persons themselves and those around them. Indeed, the crucial legal questions that both psychology and criminology attempt to address—competency to stand trial, sanity or insanity at the time of the of-



fense, prediction of future dangerousness, among others—all rely on a precise understanding of the biological, psychological, and social forces affecting a given defendant, not simply a description of his or her behavior.

Second, any theory or model that explains abnormal behavior—including criminal behavior—must be able to explain normal behavior. That is, a cardiologist diagnoses low blood pressure or hypertension because she knows the scientifically established reference ranges for normal blood pressure. A psychologist makes an assessment of mental retardation or giftedness because he knows where on the scientifically validated bell-curve of intelligence this particular subject falls. Similarly, when we ask why a given person's behavior is sufficiently impulsive, aggressive, psychotic, deceptive, predatory, manipulative, callous, nonreflective, and/or violent to be called "criminal," we must understand what are the normal reference ranges of these traits that keep most of us out of trouble. Thus, continuity between the normal and abnormal is a fundamental basis for understanding any natural phenomenon, including human behavior.

As an instructional text, this book is organized around the way I teach my courses. First, I believe that knowledge—any knowledge—that has practical, real-world applications and that affects the lives of real people, must be based on the highest standards of authoritative research and scholarship. In their daily practice, forensic psychologists will be asked to conceptualize why a given defendant is or is not competent to stand trial, how the standards of the insanity defense may or may not apply to another defendant, or whether a third defendant is or is not sufficiently dangerous to warrant early parole or involuntary civil commitment. They may also be asked if the unique configuration of elements at a crime scene can contribute to developing a psychological profile of a sexual homicide perpetrator, or whether an existing institutional policy is sufficient to prevent, respond, and recover from an incident of school violence, workplace violence, or terrorist attack. This cannot be done without a solid foundation of scientific knowledge. Therefore, this text is built on psychological and criminological sources that have been researched and validated as thoroughly as possible.

Second, whether trying to learn a new subject myself or encouraging students to absorb, retain, understand, and master a new domain of knowledge, I have always found it especially effective to present the material from more than one perspective. Done right, this kind of 360-degree learning model yields not redundancy, but integration and consolidation of knowledge. Thus, this book is organized into five sections. Part I examines the nature and origins of criminal behavior. These chapters outline the role of psychology in the criminal justice system, and review the biology, psychology, and sociology of crime to develop a naturalistic model of criminal behavior in the con-

text of past and contemporary human societies. Then the practical applications of this model to forensic psychology, mental health treatment, law enforcement, and criminal justice are outlined, setting the stage for the more detailed discussions in the chapters to follow.

Part II examines the major classes of mental disorder that may be associated with criminal behavior. The structure of each chapter consists of a description of the syndrome, followed by applications to law enforcement, criminal justice, and forensic mental health. This includes initial law enforcement contact, criminal competencies, insanity defense and mitigation, adjudication in the criminal justice system, sentencing and corrections, and mental health treatment options. Topics covered include organic brain syndromes, psychoses and schizophrenia, anxiety and mood disorders, personality disorders, and a special consideration of antisocial personality disorder and the psychopath.

Part III deals with death. The topics include homicide, multiple homicide, serial homicide, and mass homicide, including serial killing, workplace and school violence, and terrorism. Part IV covers sexual offenses and crimes within the family, including rape and sexual assault, sex crimes against children, family violence, child battery, domestic violence, and family homicide. In Part V, the psychological perspective on a variety of crimes is considered, including stalking and harassment, theft and robbery, gang violence, organized crime, arson, hate crimes, and the psychology of corrections and the death penalty.

Sidebars, or Boxes, within each chapter illustrate that chapter's topics with examples from the media, or explore in-depth applications of, or controversies surrounding, particular topics in criminal psychology, e.g., whether juveniles should be tried as adults, the validity and practicality of crime scene offender profiling, or the use of "designer defenses" in arguing cases. In some chapters, certain material is organized into Tables for easy reference. Throughout each chapter, case examples from the professional literature, the news media, and the author's own clinical and forensic psychology practice are used to illustrate the concepts and applications discussed in this book.

Most students quickly come to realize that, once you've penetrated the subject of any domain of knowledge, you begin to understand how much more there is to learn about the topic. Indeed, each of this book's chapters—indeed, each subtopic—could easily be expanded to a text of its own. My deep hope is that students utilizing this text in an undergraduate or graduate Criminal Psychology, Forensic Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Criminal Justice, or similar course will be stimulated and energized to go beyond the material offered here, to research further details and develop their own ideas. To facilitate further exploration, **terms** and **phrases** of unique or important

interest appear in **boldface** throughout the text. Additionally, extended research will be aided by this volume's extensive bibliography. Only by building on what we know and expanding it will knowledge advance in the twin fields of Psychology and Criminal Justice—knowledge that directly impacts the lives of real people every single day.

So many roads and signposts have guided this project toward its final destination that I can only summarize the acknowledgments here. Some of the material for this book was initially developed in the pages of many journals and publications, and in Internet web columns, particularly the *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, *Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, and the *Practical Police Psychology* web column on the [PoliceOne.com](http://PoliceOne.com) website. Additionally, a good deal of this volume's content has been "field tested" in multiple classrooms and courses at Florida Atlantic University and Palm Beach State College. Sharp students continue to keep me on my toes with regard to accuracy and usefulness of course content, as well as clarity and comprehensibility of teaching style.

My work with the men and women of the West Palm Beach Police Department, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, and Troop L of the Florida Highway Patrol has given me a street-level perspective on the daily practice of law enforcement and criminal justice. Similarly, working on cases with the attorneys and judges at the 15th Judicial Circuit Palm Beach County Court allows me to appreciate how fundamental issues of normal and abnormal psychology inform the criminal justice system every day.

I want to thank Mike Thomas, editor-in-chief of Charles C Thomas Publisher, for quickly adopting this project, which had its origins elsewhere, and for competently, courteously, and professionally expediting its publication. A special "Purple Heart" for copyediting goes to Claire Slagle, who stalwartly navigated the punishing terrain of this book's bibliography to assure that every single reference was accurate and properly placed. And, assuring that this volume is as esthetically pleasing to behold as it will hopefully prove edifying to read, my thanks to graphic designer Trevor Ollech for a cover design that evokes the deep historical, natural, and cultural themes that comprise the essence of this work. As always, the Thomas people are a pleasure to work with.

Finally, thanks once again to my family for their patience and support as I continue to spend innumerable hours sequestered in my grotto, constructing brick by brick yet another grand project. It is their foundation that allows these edifices to rise confidently and stand securely.

L.M.



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**Criminal Psychology**  
**Nature, Nurture, Culture**





## Part I

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# The Nature and Origins of Criminal Behavior

Why do people commit crimes? Why do some of these people commit so many crimes and seem to make a lifestyle of it? Professionals in all fields tend to view things from the perspective of their own familiar, comfortable domains of expertise. To the biochemist, a misbehaving human being is a bag of twisted molecules. To the sociologist, he is the product of group dynamics. The psychologist sees him as having been shaped by the events of his life, while the theologian worries about his unsaved soul. And, as the criminologist ponders how to punish and deter his wrongdoing, the dramatist enlists him as a metaphor for the injustices and hypocrisies of modern society. Accordingly, the theories and models of criminal behavior presented in Chapters 1–3 outline the role of psychology in the criminal justice system, and review the biology, psychology, and sociology of crime to develop a naturalistic model of criminal behavior in the context of past and contemporary human societies. We all come into this world hardwired with certain traits and dispositions. However, how these are expressed in our outward behavior is a product of a complex interaction among our genes, brains, families, and the cultures and societies we live in.



## Chapter 1

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# Psychology in the Criminal Justice System

The real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind.

– Joseph Conrad

### WHAT IS CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY?

**C**riminal psychology is the application of the principles of normal and abnormal psychology to the understanding, prediction, and control of criminal behavior. It is a branch of **forensic psychology**, which is the theory and practice of psychology in matters pertaining to the law. Forensic psychology, in turn, is divided into **civil forensic psychology** and **criminal forensic psychology**, paralleling the binary court structure in the **adversarial justice system** of the United States and other countries.

**Civil courts** deal with matters between citizens: contracts and wills, divorce and custody, compensation claims and personal injury. In civil cases, one party, the **plaintiff**, files a **lawsuit** against a second party, the **defendant**. The standard of proof in most civil cases is **preponderance of the evidence**, that is, the jury deciding the case must only be more certain than not about their verdict, which is generally interpreted as “just over 50 percent sure.” The jury may find for the plaintiff or for the defendant; in many jurisdictions, the losing side is responsible for paying court costs and other fees.

In **criminal courts**, it is the state or the federal government who brings a **criminal charge** against a citizen or organization for violating the law. The accused party is still called the **defendant**, but the side bringing the charge is the prosecution, whose legal representative is the **prosecutor, state attorney, district attorney, or federal attorney**. The standard of proof in most criminal cases is **beyond a reasonable doubt**, which is usually interpreted to mean “at least 90–95 percent sure.” If the jury finds for the prosecution’s side, the defendant is **convicted**. If they find for the defendant, he or she is