Psychology is the science of behavior and mental processes. Insights into criminal behavior can be explored from several psychological perspectives.

**Clinical Psychology** concerns the understanding and treatment of psychological disorders. Clinical forensic psychologists may evaluate criminal defendants for competency to stand trial, criminal responsibility or risk for future violence. Clinical and forensic psychologists have learned:

- Individuals with a psychopathic personality are at an increased risk for future violence and do not appear to benefit from psychological treatment designed to curb criminal behavior.

- Therapy is difficult with criminals since they often don't care what others think of them and are as likely to lie to therapists as to anyone else.

**Cognitive Psychology**, the study of how people think, includes attention, memory, problem solving and decision making. It helps us explore judgments guiding criminal behavior, as well as factors that create false memories and influence the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. Cognitive psychologists have learned:

- Witnesses’ memories of events related to crimes can be distorted by the way investigators ask questions and the information about the crime they share with the witness.

- The stress created by harsh interrogation procedures can lead to false confessions (and even cause innocent suspects to believe they were involved in a crime).

**Developmental Psychology** is the study of patterns of growth and stability that accompany the maturational process occurring from conception until death. Developmental psychologists have learned:

- Adolescents are more impulsive and sensation seeking than children and adults, and thus, can be drawn to behavior that is illegal.

- When secure, positive attachment is not established in the early years, it is more difficult to develop empathy. Without empathy, it is easier for individuals to harm other living things.

**Personality Psychology** is the study of how internal forces influence our thoughts and behaviors. These internal forces could be traits (such as vulnerability), needs (such as affection), cognitive thoughts or experiences (success or failure). From personality research, we know:

- Children who have lots of temper tantrums have a host of negative life outcomes as adults. They are more likely to be in unstable relationships, get divorced, be passed over for promotions and experience frequent unemployment.

- People who do not experience pain as strongly as others tend to use psychoactive drugs, start smoking at younger ages and drive faster.
Industrial/Organizational Psychology is the application of psychology to the workplace, which concerns workplace behavior and worker well-being. Industrial/organizational psychologists have learned:

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death in the workplace. Perpetrators often feel they have not been treated fairly by the organization.
- Personality factors such as narcissism and conscientiousness, in addition to situational factors such as feelings of being treated unfairly, are predictors of deviant workplace behaviors like theft and sabotage.
- Despite some high profile ethical offenses of executives in recent years (e.g., Enron), the majority of corporate managers are not entirely self-serving.

Social Psychology is the study of how people are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people. Here are several findings from social psychology related to criminal behavior:

- Harsh penalties, such as the death penalty, do not deter most crimes because most crimes are not the result of rational thought.
- The debate about the influence of watching violence in the media on actual aggression exists only outside of scientific research. The evidence from research is very clear that watching violence is a contributing cause of aggression.

Cultural Psychology is the study of how cultures develop and how they affect the people living in them. Cultural psychologists have found:

- Perceived inequality and social injustices can lead to criminal activity.
- Cultures set the rules for what is considered masculine behavior, which greatly affects perceptions of risk-taking and aggression.
- Terrorism is linked to cultural perceptions of religion, martyrdom and threat.

To learn more about studying Psychology at Eastern Kentucky University, call 859.622.1105, visit www.psychology.eku.edu or e-mail the Department Chair, Dr. Robert Brubaker, at robert.brubaker@eku.edu. Online degrees are also available. Details at www.psychonline.eku.edu.