

Forensic psychology in Russia: Traditions, modern state and problems

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Psychological ideas in the legal context start their development in Russia in 18th century. Russian lawyers of that time dealt with issues of witness' testimonies, classification of criminals and corresponding measures of influence on them. In 19th century psychological problems of criminal and lawful behavior attracted attention not only of philosophers and psychiatrists, but also of prominent Russian writers. Scientific studies including experimental research in the field began early in the 20th century and lasted until they were banned in the Soviet Union for decades in 1930ies, as a part of political destroying scientific psychology in general.

The new rise in the development of legal and forensic psychology occurred in 1960ies due to the practical needs of criminal investigation and court proceeding. Since that time it has made a big progress in different branches of psychology and law: legal, criminological, investigative, forensic, penitentiary psychology. Hundreds of psychologists work in these fields nowadays in Russia. Forensic psychology is a subject of educational programs in many universities. Three scientific journals publish results of researches.

One of the new directions in the elaboration in this area of research and practice is juvenile forensic psychology. It encompasses all the branches of forensic psychology from the point of view of a child psychologist, where the child with its peculiarities of psychic development and legal status is in the center of the system. Current forensic psychological problems of juvenile offenders, minor witnesses and victims of crimes, including issues of legal policy, as well as those of general, developmental, clinical, educational psychology will be discussed.