

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT

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Throughout the last decades the so-called Psychology of criminal conduct, which agglutinates scientific knowledge surrounding criminal phenomena, has been taking shape. We can find among the principal fields of interests an explanation for antisocial behaviour where learning theories, analyses of individual characteristics, strain-aggression hypotheses, studies on social vinculation and crime, and the analyses of criminal careers are relevant. This last sector, also denominated 'developmental criminology', investigates the relationship between the beginning and maintenance of criminal activity and diverse risk predictors (singular and social, static and dynamic). Their results have had great relevance in the creation of crime prevention and treatment programs. Psychological treatments of offenders are aimed at the modification of those risk factors, known as 'criminogenic needs', which are considered to be directly related to their criminal activity. In particular, treatment programs attempt to provide criminals (whether juveniles, abusers, sexual aggressors, etc.) with new repertoires of prosocial behaviour, develop their thinking, regulate their choleric emotions, and prevent relapses or recidivisms in crime. Lastly, nowadays the Psychology of criminal conduct places special emphasis on the prediction and management of the risk for violent and antisocial behaviour, a field which will be addressed in a subsequent paper of this same monograph.

**Keywords:** Delinquency, Crime, Psychological Treatments, Prediction and Prevention of Violence

A lo largo de las últimas décadas se ha ido conformado la denominada Psicología de la delincuencia, que aglutina conocimientos científicos en torno a los fenómenos delictivos. Entre sus principales ámbitos de interés se encuentran la explicación del comportamiento antisocial, en donde son relevantes las teorías del aprendizaje, los análisis de las características y rasgos individuales, las hipótesis tensión-agresión, los estudios sobre vinculación social y delito, y los análisis sobre carreras delictivas. Este último sector, también denominado 'criminología del desarrollo', investiga la relación que guardan con el inicio y mantenimiento de la actividad criminal diversos factores o predictores de riesgo (individuales y sociales, estáticos y dinámicos). Sus resultados han tenido gran relevancia para la creación de programas de prevención y tratamiento de la delincuencia. Los tratamientos psicológicos de los delincuentes se orientan a modificar aquellos factores de riesgo, denominados de 'necesidad criminogénica', que se consideran directamente relacionados con su actividad delictiva. En concreto se dirigen a dotar a los delincuentes (ya sean jóvenes, maltratadores, agresores sexuales, etc.) con nuevos repertorios de conducta prosocial, desarrollar su pensamiento, regular sus emociones iracundas, y prevenir las recaídas o reincidencias en el delito. Por último, en la actualidad la Psicología de la delincuencia pone un énfasis especial en la predicción y gestión del riesgo de comportamientos violentos y antisociales, campo al que se dedicará un artículo posterior de este mismo monográfico.

**Palabras Clave:** Delincuencia, Crimen, Tratamientos psicológicos, Prevención y Predicción de la violencia

**C**rime is one of the social problems for which it is usually recognized that there is a greater need and possible utility of psychology. The antisocial behaviour of juveniles, violence against women, sexual aggressions, the consumption of alcohol and other drugs linked to many crimes, social exclusion and frustration as a base for aggression, or terrorism, all cause great distress in society and urge a more complete understanding that will lead to its prevention. Although all these phenomena have a multifactorial origin, some of their psychological dimensions are key, as it is a human subject who performs the antisocial behaviour. In

criminal conduct, interactions, thoughts and choices, emotions, rewards, personality traits and profiles, learning and socializations, beliefs and attitudes, attributions, expectancies, etc. are involved.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and up to the present, an authentic *Psychology of delinquency and crime* has taken shape. Based on psychology's general knowledge and methods, research studies are carried out and specific knowledge is generated in service of a better understanding of criminal phenomena. Its applications are proving to be relevant and promising for both explaining and predicting criminal conduct (Bartol & Bartol, 2005; Blackburn, 1994; Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Quinsey, Harris, Rice & Cormier, 1998) as well as for designing and applying prevention and treatment

programs (Andrés-Pueyo & Redondo, 2004; Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Dowden & Andrews, 2001; Garrido, 2005; Redondo, 2007). Thus, psychological knowledge about delinquency and crime has been gathered especially regarding the following four major fields: 1) the explanation of crime, 2) studies regarding criminal careers, 3) prevention and treatment, and 4) the prediction of the risk of antisocial conduct. Next, we briefly address each of these thematic sectors.

### EXPLANATION OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

The psychological explanations of crime which have received empirical support from research are essentially specified in five major propositions, which at present are considered to be complementary. These propositions are the following:

#### 1. Criminal behaviour is learned

The theory of *social learning* is considered today to be the most complete explanation for delinquent behaviour. The most well-known model in psychology is Bandura's (1987), which enhances the role of *imitation* and *expectancies* of behaviour, and distinguishes between the moments of *adquisition* of a behaviour and its later *execution and maintenance*. However, the dominant model in the explanation of crime is the version of social learning formulated by Akers (2006; Akers y Sellers, 2004), which considers that in the learning process of delinquent behaviour, four interrelated mechanisms are involved: 1) *differential association* with people who show delinquent habits and attitudes, 2) individual's adquisition of *definitions* favorable to crime, 3) *differential reinforcement* of criminal behaviour, and 4) *imitation* of pro-delinquent models.

#### 2. There are individual traits and characteristics that predispose to crime

The biopsychological research on individual differences and crime has highlighted the association of antisocial conduct with factors such as cranial injuries, low activity of the frontal lobe, low activation of the Autonomous Nervous System, reduced psychogalvanic response, low intelligence, Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity, high impulsiveness, tendency towards sensation seeking and risk taking behaviour, low empathy, high extraversion and an external locus of control. A still current psychological perspective regarding individual differences and crime is Eysenck's theory of personality

(Eysenck & Gudjonsson, 1989), which includes the interaction between biological and environmental elements. In short, Eysenck considers that there are three temperamental dimensions interacting (Garrido, Stangeland & Redondo, 2006; Milan, 2001): 1) the *extraversion* continuum, which would be the result of a reduced activation of the reticular system and which would show itself psychologically in the traits "sensation seeking", "impulsivity" and "irritability", 2) the *neuroticism* dimension, sustained in the emotional brain and which is shown by "low negative affectivity" when dealing with states of stress, anxiety, depression or hostility, and 3) the *psychoticism* dimension, which is considered a result of dopamine and serotonin neurochemical processes, and which manifests itself in personal characteristics such as the greater or lower "social insensitivity", "cruelty" towards others and "agressiveness". The unique combination in each individual of personal characteristics in these dimensions and of environmental experiences would condition the diverse degrees of individual adaptation and, also, of possible antisocial behaviour, due to a strong deficiency in the socialization processes. According to Eysenck, human beings would learn "emotional conscience" which would inhibit them from putting antisocial behaviour into practice. This process would take place by means of classical conditioning administered by parents and caregivers, from the association of aversive stimuli with socially inappropriate behaviour. However, individuals with *high extraversion*, *low neuroticism* and *high psychoticism* would have greater difficulties in the efficient acquirement of this "moral conscience", as an inhibitor of antisocial conduct (Milan, 2001).

#### 3. Criminal offenses constitute reactions to personal experiences of stress and tension

Multiple research studies have highlighted the link between life experiences of strain and the tendency towards committing certain crimes, especially violent offenses (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Tittle, 2006). Many homicides, intimate partner homicide, injuries, sexual aggressions and robbery, are perpetrated by individuals who experience strong feelings of rage, revenge, sexual appetite, thirst for wealth and property, or scorn for other people. With regards to this, a classic perspective in psychology is the hypothesis linking the experience of frustration with aggression.

Along the same line, a more modern criminological formulation is the General strain theory which points out the following explicative sequence for the relationship between stress and crime (Agnew, 2006; Garrido, Stangeland & Redondo, 2006):

- a) Diverse *sources of strain* which can affect the individual stand out; among these the failure to achieve positively valued goals, being deprived of expected or desired gratifications, and being subjected to unavoidable aversive situations.
- b) As a result of previous strains, negative emotions such as anger would be generated in the person which energizes his/her conduct towards correcting the situation.
- c) A possible corrective action against an experienced source of strain is *criminal conduct*.
- d) The suppression of the source *aliviates the strain* and this way the behavioral mechanism used for solving the stress is consolidated.

#### 4. Involvement in criminal activities is the result of the rupture of social links

The verification that the fewer the emotional links with socially integrated people are (as is the case in many situations of marginality) the greater the subject's implication in criminal activities is, has moved researchers to theorize about this in so called social control theories. The best known theory is the *Social Bonding Theory* by Hirschi (1969), who postulated that there is a series of main contexts in which youths bond with society: *family, school, peers* and *conventional patterns of action*, such as recreational or sports activities. Internalization in these contexts is produced through four complementary mechanisms: *attachment* or emotional ties of admiration and identification with other people, *commitment* or degree of assumption of social objectives, *participation* or range of the individual's involvement in positive social activities (at school, family, work...), and *beliefs* or group of convictions favourable to established values and contrary to crime. In this perspective, the ethiology of antisocial conduct resides precisely in the rupture of the previously mentioned mechanisms of bonding in one or more of the aforesaid social contexts.

#### 5. The beginning and maintainance of a criminal career are related to the individual's development, especially in childhood and adolescence

Lastly, an important current line of psychological

analysis of delinquency is specified in the so-called *developmental criminology* which focuses on the study of the evolution of delinquent careers over time. Hereafter, we will refer to it in more detail due to the novelty and relevance of this approach at present.

#### STUDIES ABOUT DELINQUENT CAREERS AND DEVELOPMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY

Research regarding *delinquent careers*, also known as *developmental criminology*, understands delinquency in connection with the diverse developmental stages that individuals go through, especially during childhood, adolescence and youth (Farrington, 1992; Loeber, Farrington & Waschbusch, 1998). It is believed that many young people engage in antisocial activities on a temporary basis during adolescence, but soon abandon them in a "natural" way. However, the priority for psychological analysis are the "persistent" delinquents, who make up a small percentage of juveniles who have had a very early beginning in deviant behavior and who will commit many serious crimes during long periods of their lifetimes (Howell, 2003; Moffitt, 1993). In studies regarding delinquent careers an analysis is made of the sequence of offenses perpetrated by an individual and the "factors" that are linked to the *beginning, maintenance and ending* of the deviant activity. Hence, the main focus of attention are the "risk factors" of delinquency. A differentiation between the static factors (such as a subject's delinquent precocity, his/her impulsiveness or psychopathy) which contribute to the real risk but which cannot generally be modified and the dynamic or substantially modifiable factors (such as her/his cognitions, having delinquent friends, or drug consumption) is made.

Farrington (1996) formulated a psychological theory which integrates knowledge about delinquent careers, and distinguishes in the first place between the 'antisocial tendency' of a subject and the 'decision' to commit a crime. The 'antisocial tendency' would depend on three types of factors: 1) *energizing* processes, among these we find the levels of desire for material goods, excitement and social prestige (more intense in marginal youths due to their greater hardships), frustration and stress, and possible alcohol consumption; 2) the processes that introduce an *antisocial directionality* to behaviour, especially when a young person due to his/her lack of prosocial abilities tends to opt for illicit methods of achieving gratification, and 3) the possession or not of

adequate *inhibitions* (beliefs, attitudes, empathy, etc.) which keeps him/her away from criminal conduct. These inhibitions are especially a result of an appropriate parental rearing process, which has not been gravely disrupted by risk factors such as high impulsiveness, low intelligence or contact with criminal models.

The 'decision' to commit a crime would take place in the interaction of the individual with a concrete situation. When the aforementioned antisocial tendencies are present, the crime would be more probable in function of the *opportunities* with which he/she is presented and the favourable valuation of the *anticipated costs and benefits* of the crime (material, legal punishment, etc.).

In a longitudinal plane Farrington's theory distinguishes three temporal moments in delinquent careers. The *beginning* of criminal behaviour would mainly depend on the increased influence that friendships acquire on the young person, especially during adolescence. The greater influence of friends, combined with the gradual maturing of the young person, increases his/her motivation towards greater excitement, the obtention of wealth and other material goods, and increased group status. It also increases the probability of imitating the illegal methods of friends and, in their company, opportunities for committing a crime are multiplied, at the same time as the expected usefulness of the illicit actions increases. *Persistence* in criminal behaviour depends essentially on the stability shown by antisocial tendencies, as a result of an intensive and lengthy learning process. Finally, the *abandonment* of a delinquent career will happen in accordance with the degree to which the young person improves his/her ability to satisfy objectives and desires through legal means and to increase his/her affective links to non-antisocial partners (which usually occurs at the end of adolescence or in the first stages of adulthood).

In the framework of *developmental criminology*, one of the most important theories proposed at present, which incorporates knowledge drawn from research and previous psychological theories, is the synthesis formulated by Canadian researchers Andrews & Bonta (2006), in their *Risk-Needs-Responsiveness* model. Said model focusses on psychological applications in the prevention and treatment of delinquency and establishes three great principles: 1) the *risk principle*, which asserts that those individuals with a high risk in *static factors* (non-modifiable historical and personal) require more intensive interventions; 2) the *needs principle*, which asserts that *dynamic risk factors* directly connected with

delinquent activity (such as delinquent habits, cognitions and attitudes) should be the authentic objectives of intervention programs, and 3) the *individualization principle*, which warns about the necessity of adequately adjusting interventions to the subject's personal characteristics and situations (motivation, responsiveness to techniques, etc.). Following is a more detailed presentation of the progress of psychology in the fields of crime prevention and treatment.

## PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Crime prevention allows varied possibilities in function of both the successive temporal moments in the development of delinquent careers (primary, secondary and tertiary prevention) and also the different actors and contexts that intervene in the crime (prevention with respect to the aggressors, victims, social community and physical environment) (Garrido *et al.*, 2006). In all these prevention modalities, the collaboration of diverse disciplines such as criminology, psychology, victimology, law, sociology, social work and urban design is required, only to mention some that seem more evident. We will not refer here to all the possibilities or variants in prevention but we will rest our attention on those in which psychology has shown greater utility until the present, which is mainly specified in the psychological treatment of both juvenile and adult offenders.

Psychological treatments are founded on the aforementioned explanations and other knowledge about delinquency and crime, such as the social learning theory and delinquent career analyses. In essence, treatments consist of psychoeducational interventions directed at youth at risk of deviant behavior or convicted offenders, with the objective of reducing dynamic risk factors linked to their criminal activity. They constitute one of the currently available technical means for the reduction of the risk of offenders engaging in antisocial behavior. Nevertheless, this does not mean that these treatments are the 'solution' to delinquency and crime, as it is a complex and multicausal phenomenon, and for this reason it requires very diverse interventions.

Canada is, on an International level, the country with the greatest development in terms of treatment and rehabilitation programs for offenders. Their offer is very wide and it includes national programs for the prevention of family violence, the so called *Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program (R&R)* (the first wide cognitive program applied in this field), a program on the



management of emotions and anger, a program of training in free time activities, childrearing abilities, of community integration, of sexual offenders, prevention of toxic substance abuse, prevention of violence, prevention of isolation in closed penitentiary regimes, and a group of specific programs for female offenders (Brown, 2005). In Europe, the country with the greatest technical development in the treatment of offenders is Great Britain. In resemblance to Canada, it offers a wide variety of treatment programs which includes those directed towards training in thinking abilities, anger management, several programs for sexual aggressors, motivation programs and everyday-life skills for juvenile offenders (McGuire, 2001). Other European countries with good development in the treatment of offenders are the Nordic Countries, and some in Central Europe such as the Netherlands and Germany.

Spain offers a reasonable variety of treatment programs for offenders (especially in prison), including treatment for juvenile inmates, drug-addiction offenders (offenders with problems of drug addiction), sexual aggressors, abusers, foreign convicts, handicapped convicts, high risk offenders in closed regimes, and suicide prevention (Redondo, Pozuelo y Ruiz, en prensa). The great problem that the implementation of treatment programs in Spanish prisons has to deal with is the large number of inmates, which continues to grow day after day, not due to a real increase in the number of crimes but rather to a systematic and spectacular toughening of the penal system (Redondo, 2007).

The main treatment objectives for offenders are their *criminogenic needs* or the risk factors directly associated to their criminal conduct. Andrews and Bonta (2006) have referred to what they call the "big four" risk factors: 1) antisocial cognitions, 2) pro-crime networks and links, 3) personal history of antisocial behaviour, and 4) traits and factors of antisocial personality. In accordance with the latter, of all the psychological models with therapeutic implications, the cognitive-behavioral model is the one that has produced the greatest number of programs for offenders. From this perspective, criminal conduct is considered to partially be the result of deficits in abilities, cognitions and emotions. Thus, the aim of treatment is to train these subjects in all these competencies which are essential for social life. Specifically this model has focussed on training in the following group of abilities (for greater scope see Redondo, 2007):

1. *Development of new abilities.* Many delinquents and offenders have the need to learn new abilities and habits of non-violent communication, of family and work responsibilities, of motivation for personal achievement, etc. Psychology disposes of a vast technology, to a great extent derived from *operant conditioning*, for teaching new behaviours and for the maintenance of the social competencies that may already be part of the behavioral repertoire of an individual. *Positive reinforcement* and *shaping* stand out among the techniques used for developing new behaviours, based on dividing a complex social behaviour into small steps and reinforcing the individual for his/her successive approximations to the desired behaviour. The best techniques for reducing inappropriate behaviour have proven to be *extinction* of conduct and teaching subjects new *alternative behaviours* which will allow them to obtain those rewards previously achieved through antisocial conduct. The long-term maintenance of prosocial conduct has been promoted through *behavioural contracts*, in which an agreement is reached with the subject regarding therapeutic objectives and the consequences to be obtained for his/her efforts and achievements.

In institutions, such as prisons and centres for juvenile delinquents, so called *environmental contingency programs* have been applied; which organize the entirety of a closed institution based on principles of conduct reinforcement.

Another important strategy for developing prosocial behaviours in offenders is the *modelling* of such behaviours by other subjects, which facilitates the imitation and the acquisition of the behaviour by the "learners". Modelling is also the foundation of the technique *social skills training*, which is one of the techniques most utilized with delinquents and offenders (Redondo, 2007).

2. *Thought development.* The same as occurred with psychological therapy in general, the relevance of intervening on thought and cognition in the treatment of offenders was discovered in the seventies. Within the framework of *criminal psychology*, the decisive scientific work for this was that developed by Ross and colleagues in Canada. They reviewed a large number of treatment programs which had been implemented in the previous years with offenders and came to the conclusion that the most effective pro-



grams were those which included elements of thought change (Ross & Fabiano, 1985). As a result of this analysis they devised a multifaceted program, *Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R)*, which adapted and incorporated different techniques which other authors had proven to be highly efficient. This program, in its different formats, has been widely used with delinquents in several countries including Spain, with good results (Tong & Farrinton, 2006).

Many offenders are not very competent in solving their interpersonal problems, for this reason an especially applied treatment strategy has been that of "cognitive resolution of interpersonal problems". It includes training in the recognition and definition of a problem, the identification of one's own feelings associated to it, the separation of facts and opinions, the gathering of information regarding the problem and the analysis of all possible solutions, consideration of the consequences of the different solutions and, finally, the adoption of the best solution and its implementation.

Another of the great advances in the cognitive treatment of offenders are the techniques aimed at their moral development. The origin of these techniques are the works on moral development by Piaget and, especially, by Kohlberg, who distinguished a series of levels and 'stages' of moral development, from the most immature (in which decisions regarding behaviour are based on avoiding punishment and on immediate rewards) to the most advanced (imbued with altruistic and self-induced moral considerations). Techniques of moral development show the subjects, through group discussion activities, how to take the feelings and points of view of other people into consideration (Palmer, 2003).

3. *Emotional regulation and anger control.* According to what has already been discussed, anger can play an outstanding role in the genesis of violent and criminal behaviour. Techniques of emotional regulation are based on the assumption that many offenders have difficulties in managing conflictive everyday situations which may lead them to emotional discontrol and to the aggression of other people both verbally and physically. In this process, there is usually a sequence present which generally includes three elements: lack of skills in managing the situation, inadequate interpretation of social interactions (e.g., attributing bad intention) and emotional exaspera-

tion. Consequently, treatment is directed at training the subjects in all the previous areas, which includes self-regulation of anger and construction of a hierarchy of situations in which anger is precipitated, cognitive restructuring, relaxation, training in confrontation and communication in therapy, and practice in daily life (Novaco, Ramm & Black, 2001).

4. *Relapse Prevention.* Experience indicates that many of the changes generated by the treatment are not always definite but that often 'unexpected' returns to delinquent activity or relapses in crime are produced. Thus, one of the most important present day objectives in the treatment of offenders is to bring the generalization of therapeutic achievements to the subject's habitual contexts, and to facilitate the maintenance of said improvements throughout time. With respect to the aforementioned intentions, two important types of psychological techniques have been developed and applied. The more traditional techniques of "generalization and maintenance" have as an objective the proactive transference of the new skills acquired by offenders during the treatment program. For this purpose, strategies such as the following are used: intermittent reinforcement programs, extensive training in skills by a variety of people and in multiple locations, inclusion of people who are close to the subject (who will later be in their natural environment), the use of consequences and rewards which are normal in the context of the individual (more than artificial ones), stimuli control and self-control. A more recent and specific technique is "relapse prevention" which was first designed for the field of drug addiction and later was also transferred to the treatment of offenders (Laws, 2001; Marlatt & Gordon, 1985). Its general structure consists of training the subject in: a) the detection of risk situations for relapse in criminal behaviour, b) the prevention of apparently irrelevant decisions, which although seeming to be harmless could place the person at greater risk and c) the adoption of adaptive coping responses.

If we focus on the typology of criminal behaviour, psychological treatments have been especially directed at the following categories of offenders:

1. *Juvenile delinquents.* Family programs are one of the best ways of preventing crime. Today, one of the most empirically tested juvenile treatments is the so-called *multisystemic therapy (MST)* by Henggeler and



colleagues (Edwards, Schoenwald, Henggeler & Strother, 2001). It is based on the consideration that childhood development is produced under the combined and reciprocal influence of different environmental layers which include family, school, neighbourhood institutions, etc. In all these systems, there are both *risk* factors for criminal behaviour and *protective* factors. Based on this, a series of basic principles are established: evaluate the “fit” between problems identified in the different systems; base therapeutic change on positive elements; direct therapy towards promoting responsible behaviour and focussing it on the present and on the action; interventions should be in accordance with the youth’s needs; and finally, the generalization and maintenance of achievements should be planned. Multisystemic therapy uses as specific interventions all those techniques which have shown greater efficacy with offenders, such as reinforcement, modelling, cognitive re-structuring and emotional control. It is applied in the places and times preferred by the subject, which often includes family residences, neighbourhood centres, meal times or weekends.

Another multifaceted program highly efficient with young offenders is *Aggression Replacement Treatment* (ART program) which has three main ingredients (Goldstein & Glick, 2001): a) training in 50 skills considered to be of great relevance in social interaction, b) training in anger control (identification of triggers and precursors, use of strategies for reducing and re-directing thought, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement), and c) moral development (based on group work about moral dilemmas). At present, there is a ten-week abbreviated version of this program.

2. *Sexual Aggressors*. They represent, due to the complexity and persistence of antisocial sexual behaviour, one of the most important challenges we face in the psychological treatment of offenders. The most common therapeutic ingredients in these programs are work on cognitive distortions, development of empathy with the victims, improvement in the capacity for personal relationships, decrease in attitudes and sexual preferences towards aggression or children, and relapse prevention (Marshall & Redondo, 2002). In a future work, we will thoroughly discuss all aspects related to the psychological analysis and treatment of this type of offenders.

3. *Abusers*. Today, partner abuse is considered to be a complex phenomenon in which diverse risk factors intervene including both personal characteristics and those regarding culture or interaction. Internationally applied treatment programs include the following therapeutic techniques (Dobash & Dobash, 2001): self-regulation of anger, systematic desensibilization and relaxation, modelling of non-violent behaviours, reinforcement of non-violent responses, communication training, cognitive re-structuring of sexist beliefs which justify violence, and relapse prevention. In Spain there are treatment programs for abusers both in prison and in the community. The program applied in prisons, originally designed by Echeburúa and his team, includes the following ingredients (Echeburúa, Fernández-Montalvo & Amor, 2006): acceptance of one’s own responsibility, empathy and expression of emotions, erroneous beliefs, emotion control, development of skills and relapse prevention. More recently, in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, the so-called “Galician program of psychosocial re-education for gender abusers” has been implemented, which is applied under judicial supervision in the community. Said program, which is carried out in 52 sessions throughout the year, incorporates techniques in the self-control of emotional activation and rage, cognitive re-structuring, problem resolution, modelling and training in communication skills (Arce & Fariña, 2007).

In relation to the efficacy of psychological treatments for offenders, between 1985 and the present day around 50 meta-analytical reviews have been performed. The essential message derived from the meta-analyses is that psychological treatments have a partial but significant effect on the reduction of recidivism rates (Hollin, 2006; McGuire, 2004): they achieve an average reduction in reoffense rates of about 10 points for recidivism base rates of 50% (Cooke & Philip, 2001; Cullen & Gendreau, 2006; Lösel, 1996; McGuire, 2004; Redondo & Sánchez-Meca, in preparation), and the best treatments are able to obtain reductions greater than 15 points (some programs, the best of all, between 15 and 25 points). In other words, treatment can reduce expected recidivism in proportions of about 1/3 (and, depending on the quality of the interventions, between 1/5 and 1/2).

#### PREDICTION OF THE RISK FOR ANTISOCIAL CONDUCT

At present, parallel to the treatment of offenders, the assessment of the risk for violence and crime that may be



present either before or after treatment, is gaining strength. For this purpose, several instruments for risk prediction have been developed and are being applied, which we will refer to in subsequent papers.

## CONCLUSION

In the first work of this monograph on violence, the advances and possibilities of psychology in the analysis of delinquency and crime were presented, which has given rise to the development of an authentic "Psychology of criminal conduct" on an international level. Specifically, it has been elucidated how psychology has good theories and explanations for crime, with precise analysis of the initiation, maintenance and cessation of offender careers, and especially, solid psychological treatments with notable results in the reduction of crime recidivism rates. In addition, the possibilities of psychology with respect to the assessment of the risk of violence has been advanced for its presentation in the next article. As a result of the aforementioned, a considerable number of psychologists work in developed countries in the fields of analysis, prediction, prevention and treatment of crime.

In contrast to the previous exposition and to finalize, we would like to draw the reader's attention to the imbalance that exists between all these psychological developments in a field of such social relevance as is the case of violence and delinquency and, in contrast, the scarce presence that such knowledge has in the academic formation of psychologists today. Psychology study plans are generally disconnected from knowledge and professional developments in the Psychology of criminal conduct, something that, for the sake of the scientific and applied projection of psychology, should be remedied in the future.

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