

Professional ethics: roles and importance



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Briefly describe the profession you selected.

Criminal Forensic Profiling is not as it is seem on TV. Crimes are not solved within an hour. According to Douglas, Burgess, & Ressler (2006) as well as Campbell & DeNevi (2004) Criminal Forensic Profiling is a technique for identifying the major personality and behavioral characteristics of an individual based upon an analysis of the crimes he or she has committed (Campbell & DeNevi, 2004; Douglas, Burgess, Burgess & Ressler, 2006). Profiling is used to assist law enforcement in successfully capturing and convicting the criminal (McCann, 1992).

Analyze the role of ethics in the profession you selected. A formal Ethics Code in Criminal Forensic Profiling are lacking. The Academy of Behavioral Profiling does have Ethical Guidelines that Profilers should follow, but many profilers do not. The ethical guidelines of the Academy of Behavioral Profiling are:

- Honesty, Integrity, & professionalism.
- Assign appropriate credit for the ideas of others that are used.
- Confidentiality unless permission is granted.
- Impartial, neutral and independent attitude.
- Personal biases or preconceived notions need to be avoided.
- Render opinions and conclusions strictly in accordance with the evidence in the case.
- Do not fraudulently represent, misrepresent or exaggerate oneself.

- Honesty in all area, do not misrepresent your opinion, and do not go outside your area of expertise even when testifying.
- Profiles do not mean a person is guilty or innocent of any crime and should not be used for that reason.
- Inform the court of evidence implications and maintain confidentiality.
- Report unethical conduct. (Turvey, 1999: 722; Academy of Behavioral Profiling, 2012)

In the Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists, Guideline 2. 01 (Scope of Competence) and Guideline 2. 02 (Gaining and Maintaining Competence) (APA, 2010). Both address the psychologist having adequate training and education, consultation and supervised experience. The problem here is that other than the FBI, there are no educational courses that specialize in Criminal Forensic Profiling, No training available unless you are able to work with a Professional Criminal Forensic Profiler (which maybe hard since there are so few available), supervised experience is difficult since profilers are a rarity outside of the FBI, and consultation is a problem because if there are so few Professional profilers, who do you consult with other than the FBI.

Guideline 2. 05, Knowledge of the Scientific Foundation for Opinions and Testimony, state:

“ Forensic practioners seek to provide opinions and testimony that are sufficiently based upon adequate scientific foundation, and reliable and valid principles and methods that have been applied appropriately to the facts of the case. When providing opinions and testimony that are based on novel or emerging principles and methods, forensic practioners seek to make known the status and limitations of these principles and methods (APA, 2010).”

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Criminal Forensic Profiling does not meet the Daubert Standard in a court of law and it is not considered scientific, so it does not meet the Frye Standards. It also does not have wide-spread acceptance within the scientific community (Ramsland, 2010).

Guideline 11. 01, Accuracy, Fairness, and Avoidance of Deception can also be a potential pitfall for some Criminal Forensic Profilers. There are many people who claim to be “ Profilers” or “ Criminal Profilers”, and represent themselves as such, when in reality they have no training, no educational background, no study, not competence and not licensed. By passing themselves off as “ Profilers” or “ Criminal Profilers” to the public, they are, in fact, committing fraud and violating guidelines 2. 01, 2. 02, 2. 03 & 11. 01.

Unfortunately, ethical problems will remain in the Criminal Forensic Profiler area until it has regulations or Codes or Conducts, Guidelines (more in-depth than the few stated above), and practioners are properly licensed.

Explain why ethics are important in the profession. Be specific providing examples to illustrate your points.

Ethics are important in Criminal Forensic Profiling because it sets rules and guidelines regarding conduct, and it sets a moral example for the practioners through those rules, guidelines, and codes of conduct—it is a moral compass for practioners. It states what should be done and what shouldn't be done by a practioners, and, in the case of the Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychology, it also deals with the legalities, since forensic psychologists are likely to be part of legal proceedings and assisting the courts. For example, if a forensic psychologist is also a profiler, he shouldn't be conducting

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evaluations or assessments of the defendant that he profiled for the police. Another example is if a forensic psychologist is treating a child for sexual abuse and is asked to evaluate and assess her for the defense while still treating her.

Share insights and draw conclusions about professional ethics in forensic settings/practice.

Professional ethics in forensic settings helps to keep the practitioners on the “straight and narrow” and also helps navigate them through any potential problems that may arise by reviewing the guidelines or standards. Ethics are only as good as the person committed to following them—if a person doesn’t care about ethics, morals, integrity and values, then they won’t adhere to them. For those who are committed to “harming none” and helping people, who are caring and compassionate, then ethics will serve to better them, how they treat their patients, and maintain the highest standard of care.

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