

LEGAL PSYCHOLOGY SPECIAL ISSUE

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Legal Psychology is the field of psychology that conducts research and methodology to improve the practice of law in general and the intervention of the justice system, in particular meaning the security forces, the judicial administration and the penal institutions. Thus, in the interest of the law, and with the aim of regulating life in society, psychology can make significant contributions as the science that explains

conduct (Muñoz et al., 2011).

The specialties in legal psychology have their antecedents in treaties of psychiatry and legal medicine, and criminology of the sixteenth century and later. Law and medicine are the sciences that are its precursors, which are, like present-day psychology, rooted in two different traditions: one *philosophical* (humanist, scholastic, metaphysical and theological) whose main representatives would include clergymen, theologians, or at least supporters of the Catholic tradition; and the other *medical* (positivist, "Krausist", and with emphasis on the physiological perspective), in which most of the representatives are physicians.

Thus, the first people interested in legal psychology, from the philosophical (humanist) tradition, had studied law: Ramón Martí d'Eixalà (1807-1857), Concepción Arenal (1820-1893), Quintiliano Saldaña (1878-1938), Cesar Camargo Marín (1880-1965), and Luis Jiménez de Asúa (1889-1970). While those from the medical tradition, as seems logical, belonged to the area of legal medicine and proposed a positive (experimental) psychology: Mariano Cubí (1801-1875), Pedro Mata (1811-1877), Luis Simarro (1851-1921), Rafael Salillas (1854-1923), Tomás Maestre (1857-1936), Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora (1886-1971), and Emilio Mira (1896-1964).

From a formal point of view, legal psychologists began their journey with the Spanish Health Act of 1885, which created the body of *Forensic Doctors*, organised into three sections: 1) the Section of Medicine and Surgery, 2) the Section of Toxicology and Psychology, and 3) the Section of Mental Medicine and Anthropology. Later in the twentieth century, a number of milestones mark the current situation of Spanish legal psychology, primarily the creation in 1965 of the first psychological service in the Prison of Madrid and in 1968 in the Prison Observation Centre. During the seventies, the Section of Sociology and Legal Psychology of the Bar Association of Barcelona was founded in 1971, and prison regulations were published that included the position of the psychologist as a social rehabilitation technician in 1979.

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In the eighties, the newly founded Spanish Psychological Association created the various committees of legal psychology.

Since then, legal psychology has experienced great progress. Today, we can say that it is well established in our society, recognised as one of the areas of psychology with the most prospects for the future. It currently has various specialties: forensic psychology or psychology applied to the courts; correctional psychology; investigative psychology or legal psychology applied to police work; legal psychology applied to conflict resolution; psychology of testimony; judicial psychology; psychology of criminal victimisation; and criminal psychology or psychology of delinquency. From an institutional point of view, psychologists are integrated in the justice administration in Forensic Departments, in Family and Juvenile Courts, in the courts

of Prison Supervision, and in the offices of Children and Family Services or Child Protective Services in various police and security forces.

In this issue of *Papeles del Psicólogo*, we present a number of specific studies that show the development and proposals that are being carried out in areas such as forensic psychology, investigative psychology and psychology of testimony.

REFERENCES

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