

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *Applied Criminal Psychology: A Guide to Forensic Behavioral Sciences*

**REFERENCE:** Kocsis RN, editor. *Applied criminal psychology: a guide to forensic behavioral sciences*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 2009, 286 pp.

In this scholarly yet accessible book, Dr. Richard Kocsis has gathered together an illustrious international team of clinicians and researchers, each a leader in their topic of interest, to present a useful and comprehensive review of current research and practice in specialized areas of forensic behavioral science. Forensic psychology is a topic that has garnered substantial popular interest. Rather than survey topics typically found in many forensic psychology texts (e.g., the assessment of insanity, or competency to stand trial, or civil damages) the focus of this volume is placed on ways in which forensic psychology can contribute to understanding violent criminal behavior, aiding in its investigation and providing insight into the psychological disorders and dynamics that drive its perpetrators.

Here we find integrated into a single volume concise chapters addressing the theory, research, and practice of applied criminal psychology. The book is divided in three main sections, providing an insightful and practical introduction to several core issues in this area.

Part A is devoted to four chapters exploring the associations between criminal behavior and mental disorder. The first two chapters address specific DSM Axis I and Axis II psychiatric disorders (covering both major mental illnesses and personality disorders) to identify linkages between psychopathology and criminal offending. These excellent chapters lay the foundation for the following chapters that are devoted to: (i) the disparate roles that forensic psychologists can play in the criminal justice system and (ii) risk assessment for dangerousness, with attention to special high-risk populations including stalkers and murder-suicide cases.

Part B is comprised of five chapters that delve into the disparate topics of the detection of deceit in both perpetrators and witnesses, the fallibility of eyewitness memory, problems encountered by forensic hypnosis, the development and application of cognitive interviewing techniques, and the phenomenology of false confessions. These are each topics of substantial interest that are treated with a refreshing honesty regarding the state of the research literature and an accurate assessment of the current state of knowledge.

Part C, the final section of the book, presents three chapters about ways in which forensic psychology is used in the process of investigating or responding to crime, with emphasis on (i) criminal profiling, (ii) the psychological autopsy, and (iii) crisis negotiation. These topics, criminal profiling in particular, loom particularly large in the popular imagination yet suffer from a relative dearth of scientific substance. The authors do a commendable job of separating the wheat from the chaff, presenting blunt and insightful summaries of what we do and do not know; what we are and what we are not able to do. The result is a helpful synthesis reflecting both the art and the artifact subsumed in each area.

This book does not flinch from examining “hot” topics that have captured the popular imagination but often lack scientific substantiation, with a balanced tone and an eye toward the science (or lack thereof) behind the topics presented. It offers directions for the future, warns practitioners away from dead ends and scientifically untenable endeavors, and provides a master class on the core issues in contemporary criminal psychology.

This volume serves as a great textbook and introductory guide to a unique area of the field of forensic psychology that will prove to be a good resource for students and practitioners alike. The volume represents a valuable addition to the literature and is worthy of its own spot on the professional bookshelf.

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