

## BOOK REVIEW

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### *A Review of The Role of the Forensic Psychologist*

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**REFERENCE:** Cooke, G., Ed., *The Role of the Forensic Psychologist*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, IL, 1980, 409 pages, \$26.50.

This volume grew out of a symposium on forensic psychology at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association. It presents a collection of theoretical and practical papers pertinent to the work of psychologists in the legal mental health field.

The overriding question, spelled out in Judge Bazelon's foreword, is How useful are mental health professionals in general and psychologists in particular in aiding the legal system? The various articles ponder this question by scrutinizing the current and emerging functions that forensic psychologists fulfill as clinicians, as consultants, and as social science researchers. They assess the shortcomings and strengths of current practices, recommend improvements, and indicate future trends.

The first section gives a solid overview of basic issues and concepts in forensic psychology and of the laws impinging upon the practice of clinical and forensic psychology. These articles are well researched and provide a good selection of references for more detailed study. Gerald Cooke's "Introduction to Basic Issues and Concepts in Forensic Psychology" and Bersoff and Jain's "Practical Guide to Privileged Communication for Psychologists" are especially valuable and practical tools.

The second section attempts to isolate some issues and functions specific to the courtroom. It highlights the legal pitfalls and ethical dilemmas that expert witnesses encounter. Ziskin's article provides excellent advice and guidelines concerning the preparation and delivery of testimony, useful for both the "old-timer" and the novice. Mack's paper on the use of neuropsychological testimony in civil suits fills a gap in the literature. It offers a good overview concerning the nature and scope of such testimony as well as a discussion concerning commonly arising problems. Other articles highlight the special functions of forensic psychologists in class action suits, in railroad tort action cases, in the selection of jurors, and in research concerning the credibility of eyewitnesses.

Forensic psychologists have a multitude of clients—patients, inmates, offenders, courts, attorneys, prisons, hospitals, society at large—whose wishes and expectations are hardly ever compatible with each other. The theme of conflicting role expectations recurs in many papers of the third section. Margaret Cooke's excellent article especially highlights this problem. She presents the major legal decisions concerning capital punishment and their

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implications for the practice of psychologists as evaluators, clinicians, and social science researchers. She confronts the professional with the necessity to continuously reevaluate his or her role as an active agent of change.

Another appeal to reconsider and scrutinize the role of the mental health professional in correctional settings and maximum security hospitals comes from two articles written by former inmate/patients who report their experiences with mental health professionals in those settings. Centifanti, Williams, and Scoleri provide astute observations and interpretations of institutional dynamics and the effects of such dynamics on inmate/patients and staff. Their descriptions of the emotional effects produced by everyday institutional routine are powerful and thought-provoking.

The ethical, moral, and clinical dilemmas that may arise in the context of the assessment of dangerousness and in the evaluation and treatment of offenders and the criminally insane are competently addressed in several excellent articles written by experienced forensic psychologists.

The forensic psychologist's role in the selection, training, and supervision of correctional and police officers deserves more attention than it receives in this book. The widely acknowledged antagonism between correctional officers and treatment staff, which exists in most prisons and maximum security hospitals, can only be overcome if psychologists in the field recognize the need to become actively involved in the training of line staff and if they have the skills to create a milieu in which multidisciplinary cooperation can occur.

Another shortcoming of the book lies in its lack of articles addressing the field of forensic psychological research. Steadman and Coccozza's excellent article evaluating the reception and impact of their study concerning the prediction of dangerousness, Simon's study on the dynamics of jury behavior, and Buckhout's study concerning eyewitness identification are the only research presentations. An additional section for a broader review and assessment of the forensic psychologist's role as social science researcher will be welcome in a future edition.

In sum, Gerald Cooke presents a well-integrated and thoughtfully edited collection of articles. The book represents a needed addition to the forensic psychological literature. It provides a rather comprehensive, critical, and constructive evaluation of this relatively young and quickly developing area of psychological expertise. *The Role of the Forensic Psychologist* is a valuable resource book for both graduate students and practicing forensic psychologists.