

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Forensic Psychology (with InfoTrac)*, *Second Edition*

REFERENCE: Wrightman LS, Fulero SM. *Forensic psychology (with InfoTrac)*, 2nd ed., Thomson-Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, 2005, 480 pp.

The academic study and professional practice of forensic psychology continues to draw increased interest as the field continues to progress and define its roles and responsibilities to the wide array of clients it serves. For his second edition, Lawrence Wrightman has enlisted the expertise of Solomon Fulero as co-author in releasing their second edition of *Forensic Psychology*.

This book is an ideal choice for instructors who teach introductory level undergraduate and graduate courses in forensic psychology. It is important to note that the text is designed with the student in mind, with easy to read passages that clearly deliver the central concept of the topics discussed. Additionally, each chapter has in-depth examples and expanded discussions on the many idiosyncratic elements that make this field so interesting and complex. Each chapter concludes with a list of key terms for review, and offers the motivated student numerous titles under the suggested reading section. Instructors teaching advanced graduate courses in forensic psychology will likely shy away from this text, as it lacks the seminal empirical research and pragmatic detail required to make this a professional desk reference. Instructors will also find a comprehensive teacher's edition developed just for them.

As a bonus, the student will be granted access to InfoTrac, an online university library offering full-text articles from a wide array of professional journals to further engage the developing professional. To assist students in conducting the necessary research expected at the college level, students are granted access to InfoWrite, providing them with tips and other valuable resources to consider when writing research papers.

The text is divided into sixteen chapters and opens with a general historical review of forensic psychology and how it has influenced and assisted the criminal justice system. Wrightman and Fulero discuss the current roles and responsibilities faced by researchers and practitioners alike. For example, chapter two addresses the range of services forensic psychologists engage in, such as conducting relevant research, law enforcement and trial consultants, forensic evaluations, and expert witness testimony. Central to the text are the remaining detailed chapters, including such topics as public safety selection, training, and evaluation. Students will find a chapter

devoted to criminal investigations of particular interest. Namely, a discussion of criminal profiling techniques, psychological autopsies, and handwriting analysis contributes to these increasingly popular sub-specialties the field has to offer.

The authors discuss the legal foundations involved when addressing insanity related issues, and guide the reader through the various types of competency related referral questions. For example, a defendant's competency to offer a plea, stand trial, and special issues related to juveniles. Chapter six is devoted to the various types of risk assessments a forensic psychologist may be asked to address. The authors discuss the benefits and limitations that exist when reviewing and applying the empirical research in their practice and the debates that have been stirred as a result. The remainder of this chapter discusses assessments that have the practitioner opine on such matters as dangerousness, violence, sexual offending, domestic violence, and suicide. A chapter is also devoted to what the authors call "syndrome evidence." This construct has value and merit, and detailed discussions are addressed beginning with defining battered women and rape trauma syndrome. Both sides of the issues are discussed, ranging from procedural and ethical arguments to how jurors may react to such evidence during trial.

A chapter about child sexual abuse addresses the complexities involved when faced with the task of assessing alleged sexual complaints of minors. Again, the role of the forensic practitioner is defined and discussed. Interviewing techniques and pitfalls are outlined in detail, allowing the reader to better understand the complexity of these types of referral questions. The chapter on child custody walks the reader through the difficult and often controversial task of offering an opinion that has serious ramifications to family stability and development. Discussed are the various roles a psychologist can have in such cases, ranging from marriage counseling, mediation, to expert witness testimony. The authors discuss the possible bias each party of the family system may bring to the table, and more importantly, how to remain an objective and valued professional to this process.

Eyewitness identification procedures, relevant research, and public policy are also presented. Included in this chapter is a general discussion of how to approach an eyewitness interview, as well as the common pitfalls that can corrupt court testimony during legal proceedings. A chapter on interrogations and confessions opens

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with a detailed case study and discussion. Of significant importance is the section on false confessions, and how researchers and those in the criminal justice field have approached this topic. Wrightsman and Fulero devote the next chapter to trial consultation, and the role of the forensic psychologist to such elements as jury selection, case preparation, and pretrial publicity. Brief discussions help the aspiring professional better understand the diversity and complexities the formal courtroom setting presents. The remaining chapters titles include discrimination, sexual harassment, and death penalty

trials and appeals. They close with a chapter about how mental health professionals help educate and shape the future of public policy.

In sum, *Forensic Psychology* is the ideal text for those wanting to better understand the current and future landscape of what this field has to offer. The material is both comprehensive in its depth and breadth, written from a jargon-free perspective, and is sure to engage students who aspire to become a forensic psychologist.