

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives

REFERENCE: Ressler, R. K., Burgess, A. W., and Douglas, J. E., *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives*, Lexington Books, 125 Spring St., Lexington, MA 02173, 1988, 234 pp.

This is an exciting book. Written by two Special Agents of the FBI and a Professor of Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, it presents in detail extensive data concerning 36 convicted, incarcerated sexual murderers. Primarily for law enforcement personnel, this volume provides an excellent perspective of criminal personality profiling, a technique developed by the FBI to help identify, apprehend, and convict violent criminal offenders. The authors demonstrate many ways in which these techniques have assisted in the apprehension, identification, and conviction of offenders. They show the social, environmental, and behavioral antecedents to sexual homicides; the relationship between the crime and the surroundings; the motivation leading to the criminal behaviors; and the factors assessed in legal and psychiatric investigations. These myriad elements ultimately cohere leading to criminal conviction and incarceration.

The authors give particular attention to the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit and the Bureau's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP): A detailed crime analysis report form gathers data from many sources; this is useful to evaluate potential suspects. Data are compiled from knowledge of known murderers, from composite drawings by police artists, from counseling families of crime victims, and from other sources. The authors also provide a chapter by Dr. Burgess and others on response options of a prospective victim to the acute threat of rape.

The volume has a reasonable number of statistical tables and omits the long, boring anecdotes so common in clinical texts.

The direct, factual presentation is designed to assist personnel dealing with violent criminals and their victims. Writing is readable, narrative style, the authors bring together many data and demonstrate their applications in the field. Sources are credited and employed adroitly. They bring a direct and balanced viewpoint to their use of criminalistic, clinical, and computer technology to assist criminal identification and conviction.

While not specifically intended for behavioral scientists, this volume will be of considerable interest to psychiatrists, psychologists, and others who deal with the violent criminal. It represents the best available application of behavioral knowledge to coping with violence in our society. I highly recommend this book to law enforcement personnel, jurists, attorneys, mental health professionals, and others interested in learning more about the forefront of applied behavioral knowledge to law enforcement.

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