

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Kidnapping: An Investigator's Guide to Profiling*

REFERENCE: Concannon DM. *Kidnapping: an investigator's guide to profiling*. Burlington, MA: Academic Press, 2008, 240 pp.

Dr. Concannon, a forensic psychologist with experience in trauma, disaster planning, and corrections, including work with sex offenders, prefaces the book with a personal anecdote about an incident from her childhood in which her younger brother went missing while their family was in a mall, only to be found shortly after unharmed. The story serves as a sobering juxtaposition to the description of the many kidnapping cases to follow, including the notorious abduction and killing of Charles Lindbergh, Jr., the infant son of the famed American aviator. The book serves as a reminder that any person, regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status, can be a victim, and provides highly useful strategies for the lay public, healthcare workers, and those in the criminal justice field. Thus, it should appeal to a wide audience.

Chapter 2, which would have been better suited as Chapter 1, may be the most interesting chapter of all, in that it provides a concise and fascinating account of the history of kidnapping in the United States, including an easy to follow chronology of American kidnapping laws. Chapter 1, the Introduction, explains how the book is based on a three-part analysis of 100 kidnapping cases reviewed by four reviewers, including Dr. Concannon. The methodology and information on inter-rater reliability are included in the first chapter and some data are also printed in Appendix A. The subsequent chapters in the text cover the findings of the six subtypes of kidnapping (Domestic, Predatory-Adult, Predatory-Child, Profit, Revenge, and Political). Each chapter is organized in the same general style: three to four case studies; a reporting of the study findings and their relevance to the typical characteristics of the subtype of kidnappings; an analysis of the typical victim or perpetrator in such kidnappings; and implications for preventing or dealing with such cases. One flaw with this approach is that the book attempts to mingle research findings with case studies and draw inferences from their sample. The book also fails to explain further the rationale for their selection and their methodology. Nonetheless, the author readily admits that the findings are limited

by small sample size and obvious difficulty culling court records of past kidnappings. In addition, the transition between the two styles is done fairly seamlessly and is quite readable.

Chapters 3 through 9 each cover the different subtypes of kidnapping listed above. The cases chosen in each chapter are highly compelling yet informative. The author also does a fine job of including lesser known kidnappings along with more high-profile cases. Given the vast number of famous kidnappings, this was certainly not an easy task. An author could fill several books with the famous cases that Dr. Concannon did not cover. In addition, each chapter includes a discussion of topics related to the kidnapping type. For example, Chapter 3 (Domestic Kidnapping) includes an informative review of domestic violence from the perspective of the offender and victim. Chapter 8 (Staged Kidnapping) covers topics on deception and how to detect inconsistencies in the stories of suspects and alleged victims. These topics are balanced well by real-life examples, such as the infamous case of Susan Smith, who claimed her sons were kidnapped after she was carjacked, but later admitted to drowning her children by sending the car into a lake. Finally, the authors offer advice to both potential adult victims on how to avoid abduction, protect your child from kidnapping, and how to handle yourself if attacked or abducted. The appendices provide helpful drills and examples for training purposes.

The underlying theme throughout the book is denial, and how in spite of rampant thinking on the part of many that "It can't happen to me," the fact is that any person can be kidnapped. Even with advances in law enforcement, a person's strong self-awareness or training in self-defense, we are all potential victims. The epilogue provides further examples of recent kidnappings that occurred while the book was in preparation, and seemingly every week a new kidnapping case burns across newspapers and the Internet. This book should provide a reminder that kidnappings are an unfortunate part of society. Therefore, we must all be eternally vigilant.

In summary, Dr. Concannon has compiled a well-organized and well-written resource on the topic of kidnapping that is accessible to investigators, mental health professionals, and the public. It is a highly instructive and surprisingly entertaining read, and hopefully, will be the first of many editions on this highly important topic.

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