

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Scientific Protocols for Forensic Examination of Clothing*

REFERENCE: Taupin JM, Cwiklik C. **Scientific protocols for forensic examination of clothing.** Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, 2011, 232 pp.

Scientific Protocols for Forensic Examination of Clothing is all about the contextual analysis of physical evidence on clothing. As explained in detail, the examination of the clothing not only provides associative evidence but also tells a story. Jane Taupin and Chesterene Cwiklik write about how physical evidence needs to be evaluated in the following dimensions: temporal, spatial, depositional, and typological. Just like with crime scene investigations, these important elements of crime reconstruction are all interdependent; the significance of each substance, each deposit, and each transfer falls on the backs of the others. DNA is today's apparent gold standard for the forensic sciences but the evaluation of body fluid stains is more than DNA analysis. The stains themselves shed light on what transpired, in which location(s), by what means, and in what order. These levels of information cannot be obtained simply through the identification of the material and attribution of its source. Likewise, the analysis of trace evidence is limited when the context is lost because garments are simply scraped to collect the trace debris. If handled properly and expertly examined, the clothing may answer questions critical to the investigation.

The authors describe these circumstances and how the examinations should proceed accordingly. They explain how the examination of the clothing should not be considered screening of the evidence; the examination of clothing is a scientific process that proceeds through multiple hypotheses and alternate explanations until the story is brought to light and confirmed.

To confirm the story, the examiner must have knowledge of the circumstances involved in the case at hand in order to develop useful hypotheses. If the examiner is unduly restricted in what information is available, the impact of the physical evidence is

diminished, while the impact of eyewitnesses or police interrogations is increased. There has been much discussion lately about contextual bias and how to minimize its effect on forensic evidence. Most will agree that examiners should have access to whatever information is actually necessary to conduct a thorough and appropriate examination at whatever point that information becomes necessary. Access to police reports, crime scene reports, autopsy reports, and the history of the garment is actually necessary at the point the clothing is examined; the clothing can be then examined within a framework of the actual circumstances.

The book is organized into nine chapters. The topics begin with a philosophy for the forensic examination of clothing, followed by some preliminary protocols and procedures, and end with examples of results and their meanings. The chapters between describe specific aspects of the examination: Stains and Deposits, Pattern Evidence, Damage, Human Biological Evidence, and Traces and Debris. There is a good chapter on the types of trace evidence possible and where to find them. The focus is on the information that can be obtained from the stains, deposits, and microtraces using a stereomicroscope and a few preliminary microscopical and chemical tests. Illustrative case examples are provided in text boxes throughout. The statements of fact are well supported by references at the end of each chapter.

I recommend *Scientific Protocols for Forensic Examination of Clothing* more for the practitioner than for the student. The authors are experienced forensic scientists with different perspectives; their experiences combine to provide useful suggestions for the practitioner responsible for the forensic examination of clothing. The forensic scientist assigned to examine clothing for physical evidence would benefit greatly from a full understanding of the suggestions in this book. More importantly, stakeholders (investigator, litigator, and trier of fact) will benefit from clothing examinations conducted in the ways described in this book.

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