



Book review

Investigative psychology: Offender profiling and the analysis of criminal action

By D. Canter and D. Youngs

Chichester: Wiley, 2009. 470 pp. Price: U/K. ISBN: 978-0-470-02397-6

This book claims to be the first thorough account of the nascent field of investigative psychology (IP). This discipline is concerned with exploring criminal actions in order to develop a deeper understanding of criminality that will provide practical applications in relation to detection, case management, and legal processes. The text draws on over 20 years of extensive research by David Canter, as well as many of his students and colleagues, who have contributed to what the authors feel is an integrated, comprehensive model for the differentiation of all forms of crimes and criminals. This model draws heavily on empirical research and specific analytic tools yet also is influenced by constructivist approaches within the social sciences and other perspectives which stress the importance of human agency. Canter and Youngs (2009) argue that whilst they acknowledge the value of some reductionist approaches relating to criminality, the IP models that differentiate between crimes and criminal identity themes in criminal actions are premised on that fact that offenders are fundamentally people and not simply organisms. The authors also point out that IP is not derived from purely academic concerns or interests; but rather, at its core it is concerned with 'solving real-world problems that do not owe their existence to arcane, ivory tower debates'.

The book is separated into three parts comprising of 16 chapters. The first part is entitled *The road to investigative psychology* and is comprised of 4 chapters which are concerned with amongst other things: the historical context of IP; classifying criminals; the rise of the informed detective; and the emergence of investigative advice, especially in relation to the FBI profilers. The second part of the book is concerned with the fundamentals of present-day IP, most notably: the radix of criminality; personal narratives of crime; action patterns; criminal psychogeography; investigative information; and suspect interviewing and deception. The final part of the book draws heavily on topics dealt with earlier and how they apply to particular aspects of criminality. These include chapters on: acquisitive crime; sexual offences; murder; organized crime; and terrorism. The final chapter draws together many of the topics within the book and reaffirms the core message of this text; that is, that IP is a way of doing a particular kind of problem solving and is grounded in the belief that psychology has relevance to the way in which people interact.

Given my own particular interest in various facets of IP, I was especially looking forward to reviewing this book. I am pleased to say that I was not disappointed with any aspect of this work. The fundamentals section was particularly thought provoking and as expected, provided the foundation for the rest of the book. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on personal narratives of crime in which the authors cogently argue that we all draw on the storylines within our culture to give meaning to ourselves and our actions and criminals are no different. The authors' aim of demonstrating that the role of human agency and meaning is at the core of criminality is apparent throughout the whole of the book, and their willingness to incorporate approaches such as social

constructivism into their model is to be admired. A further highlight in this volume is the chapter on terrorism which has understandably gained greater attention from psychologists over the past decade. The authors quite rightly draw parallels between terrorism and organized crime, and their analysis of terrorist social networks is especially interesting.

Each chapter was structured systematically, typically consisting of: learning objectives; a synopsis; the main body of the text; a summary; and suggested reading. The book is also filled with real-world case studies which serve to demonstrate the practical applications of IP to understanding criminality. Additionally, some of the chapters included highlighted boxes which raised pertinent questions of for discussion and research related to topic at hand. Finally, I felt the authors' use of diagrams for topics such as criminal psychogeography and smallest space analysis (SSA), especially when applied to arson, rape, and stalking, was especially enlightening. The use of visual aides made the read much more enjoyable and it never felt as if it were a dry textbook full of prolix paragraphs.

In terms of its aims, I feel the book provided a great overview of this developing field. Although the publishers state that it would be a valuable text for undergraduate and graduate students in a variety of forensic related degrees, I also believe that this book would be beneficial to practitioners, especially those who work in the field of law enforcement.

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