

Introduction to the Journal's Section Devoted to Case Studies

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Case studies have a long history in the field of psychology, from John Harlow's description of Phineas Gage's injury and subsequent personality change, to Sigmund Freud's writings on Anna O.'s unconscious, to Suzanne Corkin's research with amnesic patient Henry Molaison (commonly known as H. M.) For this section, we invite scholarly articles addressing interesting case studies related to pertinent forensic issues.

These case studies can take a variety of forms, with the ultimate goal of using specific examples to illustrate a point, describe a new technique or methodology, point out gaps in our current knowledge, or generate hypotheses that can later be empirically tested. For example, clinical case studies can illustrate a specific diagnosis or constellation of symptoms/traits related to criminal behavior, forensic assessment, or treatment, such as Murphy's (2010) discussion of an individual with an autistic spectrum disorder and its relation to his violent behavior. Other case studies can examine the application of a new treatment method, technique, tool, or practice in the forensic arena in order to illustrate the approach and provide preliminary support (or invalidation) for its use. Still other case studies can focus on the experiences of forensic evaluators in order to illustrate issues related to practice as a forensic psychologist.

A recent example of a clinical case study is the article by Mart & Connelly (2010), published in this section, that discusses a case of postictal aggression resulting in criminal charges. The authors summarize the literature related to seizures and their concomitant behaviors, some of which might lead to criminal acts. Mart & Connelly (2010) then outline the specifics of the particular case, and discuss the findings of their forensic assessment of the case in terms of his mental state at the time of the crime, paying specific attention to the role that his seizure played in his criminal behavior and his volitional control.

An example of a treatment case study is Barnao, Robertson, and Ward's (2010) in-depth discussion of how the Good-Lives-Model approach to offender rehabilitation was applied to three forensic patients. They begin by outlining the model and then illustrating the approach in terms of case conceptualization and treatment for three different individuals. Finally, they use the case examples to embark upon a discussion of the model and how it relates to the treatment of forensic patients and criminal offenders.

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For this journal, clinical case studies could generally include a detailed forensic assessment of the individual, characteristics of the offense or offenses (if applicable), and a scholarly discussion of pertinent forensic issues, including a brief literature review of the symptoms or psychopathology in question and their relationship to criminality and/or forensic issues. Case studies focusing on treatment methods could provide a detailed description of the approach, a review of the literature relevant to its development and application, and the results of its implementation, paying particular attention to the implications of its use for the field of forensic psychology. Other case studies could similarly provide an empirical background as well as a scholarly discussion of the topic and its relation to the practice of forensic psychology.

Case studies dealing with assessment, treatment, and practice in a variety of forensic or correctional settings are welcome. We look forward to receiving manuscripts that provide interesting case studies related to the field of forensic psychology.

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