

Book Review: Forensic Evaluation of Juveniles

Grisso, T. (2013). *Forensic Evaluation of Juveniles, 2nd edition*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press. 314 pp., \$64.95.

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Grisso's 1998 first edition of *Forensic Evaluation of Juveniles* was a classic. His second edition builds on this foundation. In his introduction, Grisso himself summarizes what is new in this 2013 second edition:

- New statutes and case law pertaining to juvenile cases,
- New developmental science regarding capacities and disorders in adolescence,
- New research on the application of developmental science to juvenile forensic evaluations,
- The development of new structured assessment methods for every area of evaluation.

These are indeed critical areas in which research and practice on evaluation of juveniles has progressed in the 15 years since the first edition. Since his first edition, forensic psychology has developed structured assessment methods for many specific psycho-legal questions. With juveniles, basic science, especially neuroscience, has added to our understanding of how and why adolescents think differently than adults, particularly, as Grisso notes, with regard to judgment, planning, and self-control.

One benefit of reading a book on juvenile assessment by Grisso is that his career spans virtually the entire history of juvenile forensic assessment, at least in its modern form. He began his studies in the 1960's, when major cases were decided providing juveniles with due process, and now, in the later stages of his career, there are major court decisions that incorporate current research on adolescent reasoning, striking down the death penalty and life imprisonment without parole for juveniles. Few professionals have functioned as clinician, practicing forensic psychologist, workshop leader, and academic researcher regarding adolescents for such a span as Grisso. He has a broader and deeper perspective on the evolving field than most others who write on this topic, and his grasp of all aspects of juvenile justice procedures—scientific, clinical, and legal—is evident in this book. He is equally at home discussing the nuances of developmental research as he is relating the many possible placements of juveniles within the juvenile justice system. He has a down-to-earth tone throughout the book—clear, concise, and thoughtful.

After an overview of the juvenile justice system and generic evaluation issues, Grisso reviews the same evaluation types he covered in his original edition: Miranda waiver, competence to stand trial, violence risk assessment, rehabilitation evaluations, and

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waiver to adult court. He notes, accurately, that these remain the most common juvenile evaluation referrals. He covers each of these areas in detail—including discussions of the legal context, as well as the nitty gritty of obtaining records, interviewing caretakers, interviewing the youth, testing the youth—including both appropriate general and forensic issue-specific instruments—and communicating findings. He provides a current review of forensic assessment instruments available for each topic area. Where appropriate, he also applies his often-cited four-factor model of competency assessment to the forensic question as a means of structuring one's findings.

The one evaluation area in which he notes perhaps the greatest change from the first edition is in juveniles' competence to stand trial. He indicates that, in the 1990s when his first edition was published, referrals for competency-to-stand-trial evaluations were rare. Due to the dramatic increase in the 1990s of potential legal punishments for juveniles, defense attorneys began to raise the competency issue much more frequently with juveniles. However, as Grisso reviews, although the law is well developed with regard to adult competency requirements, it is not nearly so well developed with regard to juvenile competency. Grisso points out a crucial distinction between adult and juvenile competency proceedings: in adult cases, inability to perform the functions necessary (usually modeled after *Dusky*) for competency is due to a mental disorder or intellectual impairment, whereas in juveniles, an inability to perform these functions may be due simply to developmental immaturity. Whether developmental immaturity suffices for a legal finding of incompetence is in many jurisdictions not a settled issue. Moreover, it is unclear what disposition is useful when a juvenile is found incompetent due to developmental immaturity. What services would be required or useful to "restore" the juvenile to competence under these circumstances?

In this second edition, Grisso devotes attention to cultural issues in evaluations, an area he believes has been neglected in the literature. He points out that, with increased immigration in recent years in the United States, a forensic psychologist frequently will be evaluating a juvenile from a different culture. The juvenile and his caretakers may not speak English, and the evaluation may need to be conducted through an interpreter. All these cultural and language issues present special challenges, and the best that an evaluator can do (at least for now), Grisso suggests, is to be aware of these potential problems, perhaps if possible researching how the legal system in the juvenile's country of origin might handle a similar offense. In discussing risk assessment, he notes that a juvenile recently immigrated from another culture may require different risk factors, or at least a different weighting of risk factors, than a native of the U.S.

After reviewing the specific evaluation areas, Grisso concludes by considering the professional and ethical issues involved in evaluating juveniles. He addresses the sometimes unclear question of who "owns" the evaluation: the court, the attorneys involved, the agency that pays? Grisso raises the valid point that an evaluator must first clarify the referral question, making sure that the question is both clear and within the evaluator's area of competence. Not every attorney makes an evaluation referral with a clear referral question. Also, the evaluator may need to be educated about the legal

context. Finally, concerns about confidentiality and privilege need to be addressed at the outset.

In summary, this is a book that will provide structure and direction for newcomers to this area, but still has enough depth to tease out subtleties that experts will appreciate. Grisso himself is unusual in that he is truly a scientist-practitioner. Too often one reads texts clearly written by authors who are one or the other, but not both. Throughout his career, Grisso has done seminal research in the area of juvenile evaluations, beginning with his work in the 1970s regarding juveniles' ability to comprehend their Miranda rights. But he has also performed many actual evaluations of juveniles—ranging from Miranda rights to competency for trial to transfer to adult court. He knows what it feels like to be on the witness stand. This book provides a high-level integration of the nomothetic issues addressed by many academics with the idiographic concerns of forensic practitioners working on individual cases. Specialists in evaluating juveniles would be well served by reading this *2nd edition*. Even those who own the *1st edition* will find enough new material—updated to include developments of the past 15 years—to make purchase worthwhile.