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Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.

DOI:10.29158/JAAPL.003751-18

## The Psychology of Juries

Edited by Margaret Bull Kovera. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017. 309 pp. \$69.95.

When I cracked the cover of *The Psychology of Juries*, I wondered how it would expand my understanding of the U.S. jury system. In the preface and introduction, the editor explains that the purpose of the book is to “[reinvigorate] jury scholarship” so that new research will apply methodological rigor and be more likely to pass the peer review process. Thus, a heavily research-focused slant is evident from the outset.

The book has two main sections. The first summarizes the scarce literature with regard to several jury-related topics and suggests areas for research. Example chapters include: “Integrating Individual and Group Models of Juror Decision-Making”; “The Effects of Collaborative Remembering on Trial Verdicts”; “The Effects of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture on Jury Behavior;” and “Juries Compared With What?” Overall, this section of the book reads as a series of review articles, and I found it very informative. I especially enjoyed the discussion in the fifth chapter comparing jury versus judge decision-

making. I got the sense that the editor hoped that the book would educate and improve the U.S. court system. The text presents several examples of assumptions made by the courts that appear to have no basis in the empiric literature. One example is the court’s position that “the collaborative nature of remembering during deliberation will lead to more accurate and complete recollections than might be expected if remembering occurred in isolation or with the help of mnemonic technology” (p 38).

The second half is fairly technical. It focuses on research methodology with a particular emphasis on external versus internal validity. Most of these chapters cover jury simulation in one format or another. The topic is approached from multiple points of view: goals; validity; and pros, cons, trends, and alternatives.

Rather than summarize specific elements of each chapter, I will share my observations about the text as a whole, from the vantage point of process.

I took from the book a sense that more is unknown than is known about juries. The authors highlighted the limitations of current jury scholarship; in many cases, the discussion in the text was speculative. One of the themes I found fascinating was the difference between individual juror versus group process. The book explores this theme thoroughly in several key areas, including memory and decision-making.

Midway through the book, the complexity of jury systems becomes evident. There are numerous variables that influence juries during story creation, deliberation, and reaching a verdict. As I read the book, I thought about how it would be for me to be a member of a jury in a complicated case, trying to recall all of the relevant facts during deliberation. As an expert witness, formulation of a case and delivery of an opinion to the court requires mastery of the relevant facts. It occurred to me that there is a process in the work of a forensic psychiatrist that parallels the work of a juror. In both roles, facts are collected, sometimes out of order, and assimilated into a narrative. In the end, the most coherent and believable story based on an amalgam of facts drives the opinion or final verdict. Just like juries, expert witnesses must be mindful of the impact of a schema coloring the way a case is interpreted. By the end of the book, I found myself wondering how the process-related questions and uncertainties raised by it might inform the work I do as a forensic psychiatrist.

I experienced a second parallel process while reading the book. Just as a jury approaches a trial with a set of representational beliefs about its surrounding circumstances, I held preconceived notions based on the title. In reading the book, I found myself thinking about juries differently from before. It was apparent that my own representational ideas about juries contained significant blind spots. I had wondered at the outset how relevant some of these chapters would be to me. However, I found that the density of the book's content was made digestible by its well-organized structure.

I would not recommend *The Psychology of Juries* to an expert witness looking for a quick and easy digest with daily applicability. It is clear that the intended audience is psychological researchers looking specifically for more information about juries. I highly recommend the book to those who are among the intended audience. In addition, I recommend it to

those interested in learning more about the psychological underpinnings of the jury. I am confident that those who are interested in gaining new information relevant to their work as expert witnesses will find it in this book. The text would be illuminating for trial lawyers and judges who must consider many of the variables and questions raised by the book. Having deliberated, my final verdict remains mixed. This book is an excellent resource, rich in detail, but it may be too research focused for some forensic experts to read cover to cover. It would be a valuable addition to a reference library. I wonder what verdict those who read it will reach.

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Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.

DOI:10.29158/JAAPL.003752-18