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Book Review: Sex Offenders

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may meet the scientific demand for replication, while studies seeming more rigorous are frequently not redone. . . . We may confidently predict that this study will by no means be the last word on police" (p. 41).

ALLAN S. HOFFMAN

SEX OFFENDERS. By Gebhard, Gagnon, Pomeroy & Christenson. New York: Harper & Row, 1965. Pp. 875.

The expenditure of countless words dealing with sexual problems in the past three centuries indicates an almost compulsive Anglo-Saxon pre-occupation with this subject. Regrettably, however, our society's legal accomplishments in this area have not been as notable as our interest in the subject would lead one to expect.

Among all of the publications on sexual problems that have appeared, it was probably the Kinsey Report of 1948¹ that struck the most telling blow at censorship and made the greatest contribution toward relaxing the social and legal restrictions on public discussion of sexual matters. Out of the storm of acclaim, condemnation, and controversy which followed the publication of this 1948 volume, one unmistakable fact emerged—that a truly scientific approach to human sexual behavior could be developed.

There has been a long-standing interest in sex offenses and sex offenders, and with the growth of the behavioral sciences this subject has been given increasing attention. Articles have been written, legislatures have either revised old statutes or enacted new ones, and the news media have published numerous studies of sexual offenses.

Nevertheless, despite all of this coverage of modern sexuality, little is known about sex offenders. Because of this, the Institute For Sex Research of Indiana University, founded by Alfred Kinsey, has added another volume to its growing library of publications concerning human sexual behavior. Kinsey's protégé, Dr. Paul Gebhard, and his associates have, in their volume entitled *Sex Offenders*, compiled and published data in an attempt to determine whether persons who have been convicted

¹ Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948).

of various types of sex offenses differ from those who have not, and in what respects they, themselves, differ from each other.

Gebhard asks the question, "Who is a sex offender?" and answers, "Anyone who commits a sex offense." He is quick to add, however, that such an answer fails to solve the problem of formulating a satisfactory definition. Because of this, Gebhard has developed a definition which is an amalgamation of the legal, cultural, and psychiatric definitions which have been offered in other treatises. He writes:

A sex offense is an overt act committed by a person for his own immediate sexual gratification which:

- (1) is contrary to the prevailing sexual mores of the society in which he lives, and/or is legally punishable, and
- (2) results in his being legally convicted.

Gebhard and his colleagues have limited their study to male subjects. This can be easily understood when one notes that women are rarely charged, and even more rarely convicted, of sex offenses.² Women commit fewer illegal sexual acts, and even when they do commit one, they enjoy a greater tolerance from society than do men.

A second limitation was imposed on this study—the limitation of age. Only sex offenders 16 years of age and older were interviewed. The two reasons for this are:

- (1) Sex offenses by younger people are usually masked by the juvenile court system.
- (2) A 16 year old male understands what "society" expects from him, while a younger boy may not.

The authors, having defined their terms and delimited the scope of their work, subdivide their samples of sex offenders into types or categories. These types are based on three variables:

- (1) Whether the offense involved a member of the same or opposite sex.
- (2) Whether the sexual activity was consensual.
- (3) Whether the object of the offense was a child, minor, or an adult.

When these three variables are combined, the following nine sex offenses, to which individual chapters are devoted, emerge:

² Female prostitution is admittedly a common sexual offense, but since prostitution is usually practiced primarily for money, it does not fall within Gebhard's definition of "an overt act committed by a person for his own immediate sexual gratification."

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1. Heterosexual	consensual	with a child
2. Heterosexual	consensual	with a minor
3. Heterosexual	consensual	with an adult
4. Heterosexual	forced	with a child
5. Heterosexual	forced	with a minor
6. Heterosexual	forced	with an adult
7. Homosexual	consensual	with a child
8. Homosexual	consensual	with a minor
9. Homosexual	consensual	with an adult

Separate chapters are also devoted to Peepers and Exhibitionists. In interviewing these eleven categories of sex offenders the authors used the following subheadings as guidelines: early life, masturbation habits, sex dreams, heterosexual petting, premarital coitus, marriage, extramarital coitus, postmarital coitus, age of coital partner, homosexual activity, extensive homosexuality and criminality. This gross classification is then given more detailed treatment in individual chapters.

Basing its study largely upon personal interviews, the Sex Research Institute accumulated data on over 1500 sexual offenses. Sexual histories of thousands of persons never convicted of sex offenses were accumulated and used as a control group, so that adequate comparisons and conclusions could be drawn. The numerous tables and figures found in this volume attest to the quantity, detail, and diversity of the data obtained.

This volume serves to establish parameters of evaluation between the nature of the sex offense and the psychological and psychiatric potentials that motivate the offender. In this, of course, lies the sole possibility for prophylaxis.

It seems safe to say that out of much that is considered unwholesome by present standards, time will ultimately fashion a wholesome solution; but this is obviously more than may be hoped for in the immediate future. Social offenses and crimes do not disappear automatically merely because they are in opposition to existing social and legal standards. Man's sexual drive inescapably clashes with the numerous, complex, and often contradictory demands of society. Hence, punishable sexual behavior is commonplace. With increasing knowledge, authorities will hopefully become able to determine what situations predispose toward the more serious sex offenses, and thereby become able to reduce such offenses. Thus, the information contained in this volume should prove valuable not only to doctors and social workers, but also to those concerned with law enforcement.

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