

PSYCHIATRY

Sex Criminal Not a "Fiend"

Three-year study of sex offenders at Sing Sing explodes many popular misconceptions. A typical offender is passive and effeminate and is not a user of narcotics.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

► WHEN a lurid sex crime hits the front page of your local paper, how do you picture the man guilty of this horrible offense?

If you picture him as a big, aggressive brute who is probably handsome and has "a way with women," you are wrong.

A more accurate idea of what kind of person is guilty of these crimes is provided by a three-year study of convicted sex criminals at Sing Sing Prison in New York and comparison of the criminals with others guilty of crimes such as murder, grand larceny, forgery and burglary. The comparison group was picked to match the sex criminals in age, race, religion, education and intelligence.

The study was conducted under the direction of Dr. Bernard C. Glueck Jr. of the University of Minnesota Medical School as a research project for the state of New York.

The sex criminal, he found, is typically submissive, not aggressive. He has a marked tendency toward being effeminate.

Far from having a fatal attraction for women, he is generally incapable of sexually approaching an adult woman. Almost 40% present a "rather unprepossessing appearance." Over 11% are downright odd-looking or ugly.

The sex criminal shows a "tremendous amount of confusion, distortion, ignorance and anxiety" in the field of sex, Dr. Glueck found. Consequently, he recommends the introduction of a program of sex education in prisons.

Withdrawn and Solitary

Sex offenders, Dr. Glueck discovered, appear to be a strikingly withdrawn, isolated and timid group unable to utilize the ordinary channels of social activities. Their interest in, and involvement with, children and adolescents appears to be a consequence of the fears of adult social contacts.

The tendency toward personal isolation shows up clearly in the sex offenders' work record. More than twice as many sex offenders as other criminals had worked alone, and they also tend to avoid contact with the public to a greater extent.

The passivity of the sex offender also shows up in their relations to their bosses. Over one-quarter were completely submissive.

Perhaps because of this tendency to be meek with the boss, the sex offenders were in better economic circumstances than the other criminals.

The popular idea of the sex criminal as a sex-crazed individual who never gets enough sexual activity is refuted by Dr. Glueck's study. Actually, there is an im-

pairment in such men of normal sexual capacity and normal interest in girls.

Neither the sex offenders nor the comparison group have much interest in intellectual matters. But 70% of both groups have some to marked interest in mechanical hobbies. This appears to be one of their main outlets.

About one-third of each group avoid sports involving aggression against humans and half of each group avoid sports involving aggression against animals. The sex offender group show a phobia against those sports that require a display of the body. They also show phobic avoidance of dancing.

Burlesque Unpopular

For both groups, the movies are an important source of pleasure. Three-fourths of them went at least twice a week and one-fourth more often. But, in contrast, 74% of the sex offenders and 60% of the comparison group had never been to a burlesque show.

Sex crimes cannot be blamed on the use

of narcotic drugs, it was found. Of the sex offenders, 92.8% denied any use of drugs. Even the men who used drugs indicated that when they were on drugs, they had little use for women or sex.

The picture was very different with regard to alcohol. Half the sex offenders were rated as moderate to severe alcoholics. Of the alcoholic offenders, 70% had been addicts for five years or more and about half had been alcoholics for over ten years.

A difference in the effect of alcohol in the two groups was interesting. The sex offenders were more often made withdrawn and less gregarious.

Alcohol actually was important in precipitating the commission of the sex crime in nearly half (44%) of the sex criminals studied.

One of the most interesting findings, according to Dr. Glueck, was the sharp difference between the sex offenders and the comparison group with regard to gambling. Only 1.8% of the sex offenders had a compulsive interest in gambling as compared to 14% of the other criminals. A phobic avoidance was shown by 13.5% of the sex offenders and only four percent of the others.

The hot-rod or other automobile cannot be blamed for sex crimes, the study showed. One-fourth of the sex offenders have never



SEX CRIME—The sex offender, represented by the actor in the white shirt, does not portray the usual conception of the sex-crazed, aggressive "fiend." He is intended to appear even slightly effeminate to illustrate the latest scientific study on the profile of the sex offender. This is a dramatic portrayal in which models enact the arrest of a would-be attacker.

learned to drive a car and 8.9% have an irrational fear of driving. In contrast to their general disregard for laws, neither the sex offenders nor the other criminals have committed many traffic violations.

Surprisingly, however, 24% of the sex offenders own or drive motorcycles compared to 18% of the other criminals studied.

Mental Test Results

Most impressive finding of the study, Dr. Glueck reports, is that not a single individual among the sex offenders could be considered to have a normal personality although the psychologist did report one man who met normal standards on the mental tests.

Altogether, 70% of the sex offenders and 56% of the controls were diagnosed as showing definite schizophrenic reactions. As many as 14.7% of the sex offenders and 16% of the controls had a severe degree of the illness while 57.6% of the sex criminals and 64% of the others were diagnosed as moderately ill.

Important in explaining the sexual offender is a disturbance in the conscience. The sex offender has never developed an adequate control over his impulses to do what he knows to be wrong and frowned on by society.

His faulty conscience is often further impaired by the excessive drinking of alcohol.

Dr. Glueck found important differences between sex offenders when they were divided according to the victim selected for the crime.

The man who picked as a victim an adult woman was most like the comparison group in character. He was generally a more aggressive, outgoing and impulsive person. However, this group showed a great deal of hostility toward their mothers.

The Victim

Most disturbed mentally were the men who picked little boys as victims. As many as 79% of these men were definitely psychotic. They often had been seduced themselves in childhood by an older man. The sexual attack is often an apparently accidental and relatively insignificant part of the total relationship with the boy victim.

The victim also plays an important part in the commission of a sex crime, Dr. Glueck found. The victim of a sexual assault is quite often not the innocent helpless object he or she is considered to be by the public.

He found about 23.5% of the "victims" had actually solicited or seduced the offender while another 37.6% were quite cooperative.

This finding is confirmed by the fact that 14.7% of the "victims" had a known history of delinquency or criminal behavior while another 22.4% were suspected of this.

Chances for Curing Sex Deviants

Dr. Glueck and his associates are not too hopeful for therapeutic measures to cure the social ill of sex crimes. Psychotherapy they tried was necessarily superficial and essen-

tially useless. In the case of the definitely schizophrenic men, shock or other treatments used for that disease are likely to help, but this cannot be confirmed unless the men are later released from prison and demonstrate how well they can adapt to community life.

Other measures suggested for handling this problem are disapproved on the basis of findings from this study.

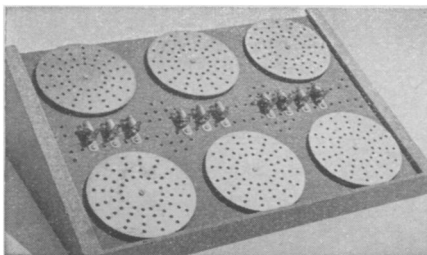
One measure proposed is to castrate all known sex offenders. Findings of the study indicate this would only add reality to the marked emotional concern and fears prominent in the men studied. The motive behind the sex crime is frequently not that of sexual gratification, Dr. Glueck points out.

Neither would legalizing prostitution be effective as a deterrent. Sex offenders, it was found, are generally incapable of sexually approaching an adult woman. Legalizing of prostitution would probably have little or no effect on the problem.

Associated with Dr. Glueck in the study throughout the full three years were Dr. Paul Benedict, psychiatrist, and Dr. Emanuel Hammer and Irving Jacks, psychologists, and also Isa Brandon and Sydney Connell, psychiatric social workers. In addition, Drs. Samuel Dunaif, Andrew Stuart, Zygmunt Piotrowski, Rose Palm, Joseph Antman and Jack Silverman contributed at various times.

Science News Letter, July 13, 1957

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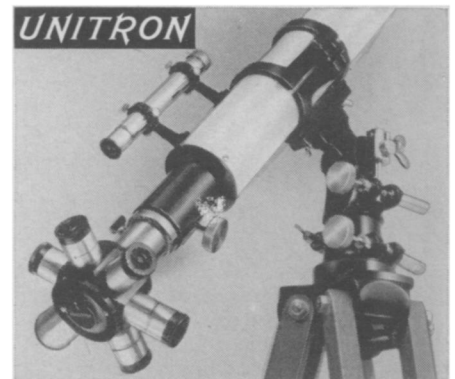
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