

Michael C. Baurmann

Sexuality, Violence and Psychological Sequelae

A Longitudinal, Cross-Sectional Study of Sexual Assault Victims
and Representative Offenses Involving Sexual Contact.

Wiesbaden 1983

Foreword

In the prosecution of criminal acts, the interests of the crime victim are still too seldom considered. This complaint has, in recent years, been registered with increasing clarity. Each time, the criticism is made that the victim is paid attention only for as long as they serve as witnesses in criminal proceedings; afterwards, they are, again, quickly forgotten. Their physical and emotional injuries receive scarcely any notice at all. Along with the direct injuries resulting from the offense, many victims experience further injuries subsequent to it, which are caused by institutional agents and/or members of the victim's own family.

In Volumes 2 and 3 of its Research Series, the Federal Police Bureau has published, respectively, inquiries into the issue of the victim 'dark number,' and, a standard against which fluctuations in victimology within the Federal Republic can be measured. The present volume is an extensive longitudinal, cross-sectional study undertaken which is concerned with the special situation of the sex victim immediately--as well as some years--following the occurrence of the offense. The impetus for this project came from the Police Bureau of Lower Saxony; the longitudinal, cross-sectional study itself was carried out by the Federal Police Bureau's criminological research group.

Sexual taboos, social settings, and moral values obviously must also be discussed, in that they would relate to any study asking questions about situations in the sexual sphere. Moreover, one can not avoid the fact that conflicting opinions are indeed encountered, time and time again. And yet, the end result has to be that such statements have gradually made scientific investigation as well as rational discourse on this topic achievable. In this sense, the current undertaking will provide further momentum to the discussion, as well as stimulate a reconsideration of initial reactions and views typically espoused regarding this subject.

The police must, subsequent to the offense, demonstrate the appropriate basic, humane interest in and respectful attitude toward the victim which is required in order--if the victim wants it--to be able to provide him or her with meaningful assistance. Additionally, special care must be taken so that their role as witnesses in the criminal prosecution itself does not cause them to experience any additional injuries. The police are in a good position to readily provide updates on the case to victims who are utterly dependent upon them for this information. The fact that this study focuses on the victims of criminal acts has the potential--along with preventive and counter-measures--to lead in the final analysis to a reawakening of the need for avoidance of and enlightenment regarding situations likely to foster victimization. In this sense, the present study will undoubtedly be of assistance.

Dr. Heinrich ~~_____~~ Boge
BKA Commissioner

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