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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section



THOUGHT PROVOKING

Handbook of Forensic Sexology: Biomedical & Criminological Perspectives *by* James J. Krivacska and John Money, Eds, Hard Cover, Binding - cloth, 6" x 9".

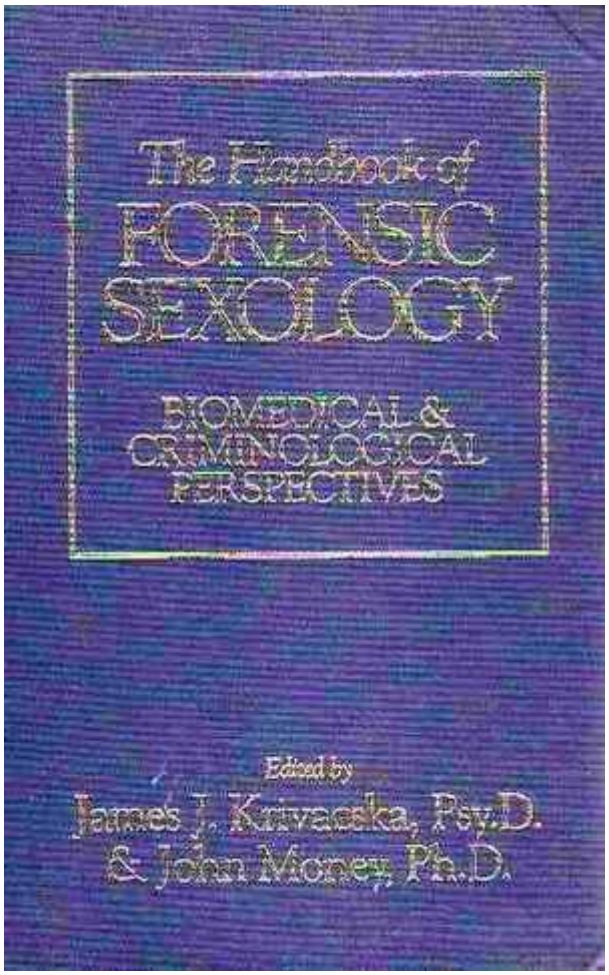
Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst, New York 14228-2197, USA. or . Publication Date: July 1994. 594 pages, index, Category: Human Sexuality, ISBN 0-87975-883-X. Price $130.00

Official site of this book: http://www.prometheusbooks.com/catalog/book_336.html

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This is a rather difficult book to categorise even more so since the editors do not clearly state to whom this book is aimed at but do not despair. The prologue tells us *that "The science of sexology.....offers the best available vehicle within legal systems for making rational decisions that are more likely to be consistent with reality"* and the book seeks to aid this process by providing a dialogue based on a process of investigation, critique, analysis and systematic research.

Click here to read Excerpts from *Forensic Sexology*

Part One of the book addresses **Sexology and Criminology** which starts off with **Sodomy Laws, Paedophilia** and **Incest** followed by **Rape, Sadomasochistic Paraphilias, Exhibitionism** and **Voyeurism, Autoerotic Asphyxial Deaths, Prostitution, Transsexualism** and **Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**. This section lays down the legal and social aspects of various sexual aberrations. Part I therefore addresses the history of society's attitudes toward sexual behaviour over time. The nine chapters cover behaviours labelled as 'deviant'.

Part Two of the book is more of a practical approach and is entitled **Identification and Case management of Sex Offences**. This is followed by Part Three: **Public Policy, Sexology and the Law.** The latter section has chapters contributed by an author from Russia (Forensic Sexology in Russia) and a chapter on Sex Policy and the Law in China. The section ends with a chapter by Underwager and Wakefield on the implications of *Daubert vs. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* case for expert testimony (see accompanying box). There is also a chapter by Paul Okami ("Slippage") on how professionals, including sexologists, have allowed advocacy to contaminate their research. The

book ends with an epilogue by Jerome Miller, a criminologist, who charges professionals with arrogance in treating sex offenders.

Testimony of Expert Witnesses: the acid test

All in all, the book appears as a mish-mash of various aspects of Sexology but the editors have done a good job to hold the book together. Of the editors, John Money is Emeritus Professor of Medical Psychology and Paediatrics of The Johns Hopkins University and Hospital in Baltimore.

There are thirty-one contributors including the editors. Most are drawn from the USA but there are Canadian and European contributors. The case law quoted is of course mostly American but should provide interesting reading to legislators elsewhere.

All the chapters are supplemented by extensive and impressive references.

Reading this book is quite a challenging task. I myself preferred to pick and choose chapters rather than attempt to read the book from cover to cover. Many of the chapters present a perspective that is rarely found in standard, politically correct, conventional or mainstream child abuse literature. In fact the whole perspective is not one I am used to. Amongst other things the book discusses the criterion of 'normal' and goes on to say that this is merely ideological and the standard of perfection is not absolute but relative, varying with time and place, historically and transculturally and is set by the authority of those who posses the power to threaten and enforce punishment for disobedience and nonconformity. In sexology, 'normal' is judged on the basis of mathematics and statistics.

...Many of the chapters present a perspective that is rarely found in standard, politically correct child abuse literature. In fact the whole perspective is not one I am used to... ...It is up to the individual reader to decide what he or she believes in, both from a personal point of view and a professional point of view...
...The book raises important questions and deserves a serious readership... ...In my opinion most Psychologists, Child Protection Agencies and Forensic Physicians would benefit immensely from this tome even if they do not agree with the views expressed...
As the preface informs us at the very outset, in the matter of sexology early twentieth century science gave its imprimatur to religiously inspired moral dogma.

Statements such as *"Incest laws that punish on the basis of blood kinship and affinity are no longer relevant and cannot be enforced to their fullest extent"* and *"Children are best protected by child abuse laws. Using ancient incest laws for child protection distorts the issue"* could be construed as controversial, unacceptable or even heretical in some communities and circles. It is up to the individual reader to decide what he or she believes in, both from a personal point of view and a professional point of view.

The book thus raises important questions and deserves a serious readership although as previously mentioned it is not clear at which group of professionals that it is aimed at. In my opinion most Psychologists, Child Protection Agencies and Forensic Physicians would benefit immensely from this tome even if they do not agree with the views expressed. Forensic physicians and paediatricians who deal with cases of child sexual abuse would do well to read and re-read chapter 10, **The Alleged Child Victim and Real Victims of Sexual Misuse** and chapter 12, **The Manufacture of Sexual Abuse "Memories": Psychiatry's Latest Fad.**

Click here to read Excerpts from *Forensic Sexology*

To me at least, these two chapters certainly were thought provoking.

On the whole, the book is a valuable addition to the literature relating to forensic sexology. Not many books are available on this subject, and this book should come as a welcome addition to this genre of literature. I am sure, it is destined to become a classic!



-Gyan Fernando
Dr. Gyan C.A. Fernando is a Sri Lankan born forensic pathologist. He is now the Home Office Pathologist for Devon and Cornwall in England. He has dealt with a number of cases of aberrant sexual behavior, and is considered an expert in this field.

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