

concerned about health records and confidentiality. It should be part of the library of every serious student of psychiatry and law, and every mental health practitioner who is concerned about the confidentiality of his patients' records.

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THE VIOLENT FEW. By Donna Martin Hamparian, Richard Schulster, Simon Dinitz, M.D., and John P. Conrad. Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts. Pp. 218. 1978. \$16.95

The vicissitudes of the juvenile justice system are well known. As its ineffectiveness has become increasingly manifest, glaring deficiencies have been exposed. In recent years the lack of due process in handling of juveniles has been undergoing correction, and dramatic exposures have led to increasing vigilance and improvements in the institutionalization of youngsters. The status offenders are increasingly recognized as a separate entity. The failure of treatment approaches due to inadequate conceptualization, lack of funds, and conflict of interest has been recognized. But at the same time there has been a backlash in response to increased juvenile crime, a tightening of the law throughout the states to allow for the application of adult standards, and more punitive sentencing for those youths who commit violent crimes. One must ask, if, indeed, anyone has a rational basis to justify this trend, or, for that matter, to support a retention of earlier policy. It is clear that statutory handling of juvenile offenders seems to be based more on supposition, myth, and reaction to the shortcomings of the system than on real knowledge of the behavior of juvenile offenders. Similarly, judicial determinations and recommendations vary widely from courtroom to courtroom, apparently dependent on personal philosophies, local peculiarities and prejudices, as well as on sentencing options and program availability.

In an attempt to gather facts on the crime careers of violent and dangerous juveniles which might support informed recommendations and legislation, Hamparian, Schulster, Dinitz and Conrad, under the auspices of the Dangerous Offender Project, studied a cohort of 1,138 male and female youths who were arrested at least once for a violent crime in Columbus, Ohio. Their names were pulled from the Columbus Police Department files within their Juvenile Bureau, all of the subjects having birth dates between 1956 and 1960. The socio-economic backgrounds, sex, ethnic background, nature of the arrest, other arrests and dispositions were studied, as were the rate of arrests, patterns of onset, interval between re-arrests, and termination of crime careers. In a very fine report of their work entitled, "The Violent Few, a Study of Violent Juvenile Offenders," published in 1978, the authors pose a series of questions which they consider to be myths in a world of juvenile justice, and around

which they focus their data. Tackling these myths, they conclude that "juvenile violent offenders are a very small fraction of the total youth in Columbus," that juveniles do not typically progress from less serious to more serious crimes, that "prediction of violent youth criminality remains an elusive goal," that status offenders are not headed, as usually believed, toward confirmed criminality, and that "institutional commitment is a disappointing measure for preventing delinquency and rehabilitating violent offenders." Their facts would seem to support these observations which are carefully made.

This book is most instructive; it provides a fine review of relevant literature and significant comparable studies with an extended bibliography, clarifies some of the issues, and clearly elucidates the technical problems. The text includes the statistical data and appropriate tables and also includes some brief case histories. As revealed in biographies of their professional careers, all the authors have superb credentials, and Dinitz and Conrad each would appear to have well over twenty-five years of experience in criminology, as teachers, researchers, consultants, and writers. Dr. Dinitz is the author of numerous books and articles and received the American Psychiatric Association's Hofheimer Prize in 1967, and Mr. Conrad was formerly Chief Editor of the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*.

The authors bring a certain warmth, wisdom, perspective, even tiny bits of humor to their work, giving life and readability to a basic study report. This discussion of the implications of the study and their recommendations draws perhaps as much upon their own experience as on the study itself, perhaps a shortcoming, but should be required reading. Commitment to facilities for older delinquents is noted to be generally brief but brutalizing and statistically seems related to increasing rapid return to these institutions, with increasing disrespect for the system. The authors recommend early intervention within the community, graduated and predictable consequences, and, of great interest, the promotion of purchased rehabilitation services. They emphasize that treatment should never be given by bureaucrats and custodians whose attributes are seen as running "counter to all the requirements of a helping relationship." They note, as have other authors, the need to encourage talented people to create programs for advocacy and service while rigorous attention is paid to the maintenance of state standards. The authors also caution that Columbus, Ohio, is a solvent, stable, even affluent, middle-sized Midwestern city, whose crime patterns are not comparable to those of major urban areas, and they recognize that the results of the study may not be universally valid or the recommendations universally applicable. The need for further similar research in other municipalities is clear, as is, of course, the need to follow the cohort itself into adulthood. The authors are to be congratulated.

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