

BOOK REVIEW

Neil S. Kaye,¹ M.D.

A Review of Sex Murder and Sex Aggression: Phenomenology, Psychopathology, Psychodynamics and Prognosis

REFERENCE: Revitch, E. and Schlesinger, L. B., *Sex Murder and Sex Aggression: Phenomenology, Psychopathology, Psychodynamics and Prognosis*, Charles C Thomas, 2600 South First St., Springfield, IL, 62794-9265, 137 pp., \$31.75.

Revitch and Schlesinger have set out to cover a broad topic, as the title alone suggests. They begin in Chapter 1 by defining gynocide as anger directed toward the mother but displaced onto another female, resulting in sexual homicide in the continuum of sexual aggression. They then develop the classification of catathymic and compulsive gynocide, each in its own chapter. Chapter 4 is devoted to psychodynamics, psychopathology, and differential diagnosis, while Chapter 5 is entitled Prognostic Considerations.

The first two chapters are the best in the book. The authors do a good job of defining their concept and placing it in a proper historical perspective. The literature review is concise, while at the same time adequate both to refresh the memory of those familiar with sexual aggression and to whet the appetite of the novice.

The format involves a short description of a case, followed by a brief comment from the authors. The heavy reliance on cases is somewhat disappointing. The authors clearly have extensive personal experience with sexually aggressive offenders, and it might be more instructive to synthesize the results of their learning rather than to present 25 cases of their own, in addition to a number of historical cases. Occasionally, psychodynamic formulations are presented as the authors' conclusions without providing the reader enough information to evaluate the validity of those conclusions.

Throughout the book, but primarily in the final chapter, the authors cover some of the difficult forensic issues associated with these offenders. These include the use of hypnosis (which the author used to gather data and histories in a number of cases) and the difficulty of predicting dangerousness. More extensive and better referenced articles can be found elsewhere, however.

On the whole, the book falls short of its promising title. Indeed, it seems unlikely that anyone could cover such a broad topic in only 137 pages. However, the accumulation of cases makes for entertaining and fast reading and will surely stimulate the reader to think more about this important issue. In addition, the authors should be commended for trying to learn from this population and their research will hopefully stimulate others to do likewise.

¹Director of consultation and liaison psychiatry, Medical Center of Delaware, Building K, Room 206, 15 Omega Drive, Newark, DE 19713.