

UNUSUAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

THE STANDARD DEVIATIONS

DAVID LESTER, Ph.D.

*Richard Stockton State College
Pomona, New Jersey*

Written for the professional interested in current research into sexually deviant behavior, the purpose of this book is to review the literature on sexual deviations with the primary concern being on research literature and not clinical studies. However, occasional reference is made to the conclusions of clinical studies and, in particular, to psychoanalytic hypotheses about sexual deviations.

The author has adopted a classification of sexual deviations which proposes three kinds of deviant behavior:

- variation of mode which refers to deviations in the manner or mode of obtaining sexual satisfaction and includes exhibitionism, obscene telephone calls, voyeurism, sadism-masochism and rape.
- variation of object which refers to deviations in the choice of stimulus which provides sexual satisfaction and includes incest, pedophilia, fetishism and homosexuality.
- variation in strength of the sexual response which refers to deviations in the frequency and intensity of sexual behavior.

(continued on front flap)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to review the literature on sexual deviations. Primarily the review is concerned with the research literature and not with clinical studies. However, occasional reference is made to the conclusions of clinical studies and, in particular, to psychoanalytic hypotheses about sexual deviations. The coverage of clinical and psychoanalytic ideas is by no means intended to be exhaustive, unlike the coverage of the research literature. The review does not cover the treatment of the sexual deviant.

The review is written from an unbiased a viewpoint as possible. Given my attempt to be unbiased, I dislike the term "sexual deviant." I much rather prefer the term "sexual variant." However, although the latter term is less judgmental, its meaning is less clear. It also leads to a more cumbersome terminology. For example, the meaning of terms such as "variant sexual behavior" and "sexual variant" are more ambiguous in their referent than the terms "deviant sexual behavior" and "sexual deviant." Thus, I have decided to continue to use the term "deviant."

I have adopted a classification of sexual deviations that proposes three kinds of deviant behavior.

1. *Variation in mode*: This refers to deviations in the manner or mode of obtaining sexual satisfaction and includes exhibitionism, obscene telephone calling, voyeurism, masochism and sadism, and rape.

2. *Variation in object*: This refers to deviations in the choice of stimulus that provides sexual stimulation and covers homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, and fetishism. (Bestiality is not discussed here since no research study was found on the topic.)

3. *Variation in strength of the sexual response*: This refers to

deviations in the frequency and intensity of sexual behavior and includes impotence and frigidity on the one hand and nymphomania and satyriasis on the other. These topics are not included in this review. Impotence and frigidity are not usually considered to be sexual deviations, and their inclusion seemed out of place. Nymphomania and satyriasis are considered sexual deviations, but I was unable to find research conducted on either behavior.

4. *Miscellaneous*: Most classificatory systems have a miscellaneous category and it proved difficult to fit transvestism and transsexualism* into the three categories already described. I have placed these two behaviors in a separate category.

Obviously, there are cultural differences in what kinds of sexual behavior are considered to be deviant. This book deals with the perspective of the Twentieth Century and the United States, since this is the context in which the research reviewed here was conducted. Thus, heterosexuality is not considered as a deviation under the category "variation in object."

*This spelling is preferred over "transsexualism."

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UNUSUAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

SECTION I

DEVIATION OF MODE

EXHIBITIONISM

EXHIBITIONISM MAY BE DEFINED as an act of exposure of a part or the whole of the body for sexual or nonsexual rewards (Evans, 1970). This definition is not as broad as some that have been offered, such as that by Henry (1955) who defined exhibitionism as a self-display made for the purpose of winning approval. However, it is broader than some definitions that have been offered; in the narrowest sense, exhibitionism consists of exposure of the genitals to another who has not requested such a display.

The particular acts which are considered to constitute exhibitionism vary from culture to culture (Honigmann, 1944). In our culture, a common practice for males in groups is for one of the males to remove his trousers and present his bare arse to a female or group of females. Yohe (1950) described cases where a group of males gangs up on one male and removes his trousers, often in the presence of a female audience (which may be involuntarily observing the exposure). Yohe noted that in young boys aged eleven to fourteen, the female audience was not desired and the act had homosexual connotations, whereas in boys aged fourteen to seventeen the act assumed heterosexual connotations, and a female audience was desired. Our culture often excludes these acts from the narrow definition of exhibitionism.

Acts of exhibitionism are occasionally difficult to distinguish from (1) advances by pedophiles to children, (2) drunks, psychotics, or retarded males urinating without thought as to where they are, and (3) solicitation by males for females to engage in heterosexual intercourse. However, the majority of acts of exhibitionism do not fall into these three categories; they merely constitute acts in which the exposure of the genitals is the sole sexual aim of the male.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACT

The incidence of exhibitionism is difficult to ascertain, for many cases remain unreported. It is found that some one third of all sexual offenses are acts of indecent exposure (Macdonald, 1973). The way in which the act is carried out varies greatly from person to person. The exhibitionist may be in a public or private place, at the window of a house, in a car, or in the open street. Macdonald reported that indecent exposure occurred most often outdoors and almost one half of these exposures were performed by males in cars. Some exhibitionists have an erection during the exposure while others do not. Masturbation may precede, accompany, or follow the act, or not occur at all. Macdonald (1973) reported that 7 percent of the exhibitionists that he examined undressed completely for their act of exposure.

The act seems to be impulsive in some cases and premeditated in others. Some men report no awareness of their actions until the act is completed; they appear to be dazed (in an altered state of consciousness). The majority of exhibitionists, however, develop a stereotyped pattern for the act. Occasionally, exhibitionists seem to carry out their act in a way that facilitates arrest. Some exhibitionists report feelings of guilt and shame, but others do not perceive their actions as a problem and are difficult to motivate toward treatment. Often only legal pressure can keep exhibitionists in psychotherapy (Mathis and Collins, 1970).

Quetelet's law states that crimes against the person are most common in warm months and warm climates, whereas crimes against property are most common in cold months and cold climates. Although it is claimed that acts of exhibitionism are more common in warm months (Evans, 1970), Macdonald (1973) found no seasonal variation in Denver. He discovered that acts of indecent exposure were most common between 8 AM and 6 PM, in particular between 8 AM and 9 AM and between 3 PM and 5 PM, and were more common on weekdays than on weekends. It might be noted that the temporal variation for exhibitionism is quite different from the temporal variation for rape.

Occasionally force or threat is used by the exhibitionist. Macdonald (1973) observed that four of 200 exhibitionists that

he studied used force, three followed their victims, and two chased their victims. Macdonald also found a few cases of exhibitionists who brandished guns or knives and occasional cases of exhibitionists who forced victims to watch them masturbate.

The audience for the exhibitionist is usually a strange female. Most exhibitionists expose themselves to adult females (and particularly females who are alone). Exposure to children is also common (although not characteristic of the majority of exhibitionists) and, in these cases, exposure most often occurs in the presence of groups of children. Some exhibitionists are very particular in the choice of an audience, and this constitutes part of the stereotypy of the act. A few exhibitionists intend their act to be an invitation to further sexual involvement, but the great majority of exhibitionists do not want sexual involvement with the audience. They desire a particular reaction from the audience—fear and flight, indignation and abuse, or pleasure and amusement.

Acts of indecent exposure are rarely victim-precipitated, unlike many acts of rape.

THE EXHIBITIONIST

Most exhibitionists are male. Female cases have been reported but such reports are rare, and the females are usually judged to be retarded or psychotic. On the other hand, male exhibitionists are frequently judged to have personality disorders, although exhibitionism can be found in males with a variety of forms of psychopathology. Ellis and Brancale (1956) judged 72 percent of exhibitionists to be neurotic and 10 percent normal; a further 8 percent were judged to be borderline psychotic. Evans (1970) classified exhibitionists into two groups: organic (mentally retarded, epileptic, brain damaged, senile, and diabetic) and psychological (psychoneurotics, psychopaths, and psychotics). (Actually, Evans included the psychotics in the organic group, but such placement seems inappropriate.)

The usual onset of exhibitionism is in puberty, and the peak incidence occurs between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Its onset after the age of forty-five is rare except in cases of organic disease. Macdonald (1973) found little variation in the incidence of exhibitionism in different racial groups in Denver, although

he did note that indecent exposure by whites was an intraracial act whereas indecent exposure by blacks was an interracial act. Macdonald also noted that exhibitionists came disproportionately from the lower social classes and tended to be married more than other sexual offenders, but had fewer children.

Rickels (1955) distinguished between three kinds of exhibitionists.

1. The depraved exhibitionist who exposes openly for sensual pleasure to stimulate an "impotent penis." He is immature, uses dark locations, exposes to children often as a means of solicitation for further sexual involvement, and tries to avoid arrest.

2. The exhibitionist who has organic brain disease and whose act is due to carelessness, loss of sense of social propriety, or an inability to distinguish right from wrong.

3. The exhibitionist who acts against his will, that is, one who acts under a compulsion. He is usually a tense, anxious man, conscious of his deed but unable to resist the impulse. Other investigators use the term "ego-dystonic" to describe such acts.

This latter kind of exhibitionist is usually modest and follows a strict moral code for behavior. He is embarrassed by his behavior and depressed after the act. He exposes himself before strange females and does not always masturbate. His tension is often relieved as soon as he is viewed. He tends to have voyeuristic tendencies. He frequently has been raised in a home where modesty is stressed and where there is a strict moral code, especially with regard to sex. As a child he tends to be judged as ideal and well-behaved. There is a close attachment to the mother which she will not allow to dissipate. The mother often insists on being called by some term of endearment (such as "honey"). The son often fails to make a good heterosexual adjustment. Marriage is not frequent and, if marriage is attempted, the sexual adjustment is poor. This kind of exhibitionist is overly reserved with women, with sexual contact infrequent and unsatisfactory. Exhibitionism often begins in puberty but is sometimes suppressed so that overt acts do not occur until later. The parents of the exhibitionist often have a lack of harmony and a good deal of tension in their marriage and they tend to fulfill their affectional needs through the son. The act of exhibiting is often precipitated by an emotional trauma such as engagement,

the death of a relative, or marriage.

Mohr, et al. (1962) reported that the exhibitionist's urge to exhibit usually occurred during a time when he had a conflict with females (in adolescence his mother, in adulthood his fiancée/wife). At school, the exhibitionists were loners and isolated. They had few friends and either were bullied or frequently involved in fights. They had experienced difficulties in social relationships and in handling aggression.

The intelligence scores of the exhibitionists seemed to be average (although Ellis and Brancale [1956] found the intelligence of exhibitionists to be lower than that of the general population, yet higher than that of other sexual offenders). However, their educational achievement was quite poor. They were generally hard-working and conscientious (with a tendency to be compulsively conscientious), very sensitive to criticism, and easily upset if things went wrong. They preferred "manly" occupations and had good work records.

About a third of the exhibitionists had absent fathers during childhood. The fathers tended to have been distant emotionally and were more likely to be viewed negatively by their sons. The relationship of the exhibitionist to his mother was more emotional and there was strong love, resentment, or both. There were no differences in birth order, but there was an excess of male siblings over female siblings. Most of the exhibitionists idealized their relationships with their siblings, and they seemed unable to express resentment and hostility toward them.

About two thirds of the exhibitionists were married and the precipitating event was often the impending or recent marriage or the birth of a child. The wives seemed as disturbed as the husbands, with a struggle for dominance and dependency as the theme of the marriage relationship. Sexual intercourse with the wife was common, as was masturbation, and, although the men claimed that exposure often occurred after an absence of sexual activity, Mohr, et al. found that exposure frequently occurred after sexual intercourse with their wives.

Most of the exhibitionists had expressed a wish to have children soon after marriage, but once the children were born, there was no indication that there was a strong relationship between the father and his children. Only a small proportion of the

exhibitionists were judged to be psychotic or neurotic.

McCawley (1965) and Macdonald (1973) reviewed a number of clinical studies of exhibitionists and noted that exhibitionists have been described as passive, compulsive, reticent, schizoid, morally strict, nonaggressive, shy, timid, retiring, conscientious, well-educated, highly intelligent, heterosexually immature, orally fixated, with feelings of inferiority, with a feminine identification, with poor impulse control, and occasionally (but not often) with sadistic and masochistic tendencies. (It might be noted that the good education and high intelligence is not borne up by surveys of arrested exhibitionists. Case studies from psychotherapy often produce different findings from surveys of arrested individuals.)

Zechnich (1971) proposed that exhibitionists suffered from a lack of privacy as children (particularly with regard to nudity) and that they deduced from this experienced that they have nothing which warrants covering. Their act of exhibitionism asserts that indeed they do have something worth covering, that they do have a life-space, and thus that they do exist. The exhibitionist attempts in his interpersonal relationships to correct for the experienced lack of privacy by being closed, guarded, hidden, secretive, and noncommittal. Zechnich noted that not only did the act of exhibitioning serve to get the exhibitionist arrested, it also satisfied the exhibitionist's need to avoid success which is manifest in other spheres of his life.

Gebhard, et al. (1965) classified exhibitionists into four groups: patterned-compulsive, drunks, mentally deficient, and miscellaneous. Gebhard, et al. noted that exhibitionists did not socialize much as children with their peers. After puberty, heterosexual difficulties were common. Masturbation was frequent among the married exhibitionists, although few married. Pre-marital sex began late and often was with prostitutes. The patterned-compulsive exhibitionists possessed a truly compulsive urge usually triggered by some emotional stress. The sexual availability of a wife or other female was not sufficient to reduce the urge.

Other investigators have pointed to narcissistic tendencies, organ inferiority, a history of stammering (both exhibitionism and stammering are primarily male behaviors), and a high

utilization of fantasy, particularly with respect to sexual activity. Kopp (1962) described a subset of exhibitionists who were brash, loud, vulgar, and openly attention seeking. Some writers (for example, Selling, 1939) see the personalities of exhibitionists as quite variable, however. Many investigators state that exhibitionists are psychologically disturbed and perceive the exhibitionism as a secondary symptom of the psychiatric disorder. (It was noted above that the psychiatric disorder was frequently found to be mild or absent.) Other investigators view exhibitionism as a separate diagnostic entity (a compulsion or a form of acting-out, or both).

Macdonald (1973) reviewed other studies and concluded that 20 percent to 34 percent of exhibitionists had convictions for previous sexual offenses. However, 40 percent to 67 percent admitted previous sexual offenses. In addition, 15 percent to 23 percent had previous convictions for nonsexual offenses. The recidivism rate for exhibitionists has been estimated as 27 percent within five years, with a probable maximum of 30 percent (Frisbie, 1963). Mohr, et al. (1962) reported a recidivism rate for exhibitionists of 20 percent in three years as compared to 13 percent for pedophiles.

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF EXHIBITIONISTS

Sjostedt and Hurwitz (1959) tried to assess the perceptual-cognitive maturity of exhibitionists, homosexuals, and controls using the Rorschach Test. (Perceptual-cognitive maturity was defined as form being dominant over color and immaturity as global undifferentiated responses.) The groups were matched for age, intelligence, and marital status. Sjostedt and Hurwitz found no differences between the groups (although the homosexuals were more variable than the exhibitionists in perceptual-cognitive maturity). In all groups the married subjects had greater perceptual-cognitive maturity than the unmarried subjects.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BEHAVIOR

There is no research bearing on physiological, constitutional, or genetic factors in the etiology of exhibitionism. Many

investigators view exhibitionism as a learned behavior. The act may initially occur intentionally (perhaps due to sexual frustration of sexual outlets or a desire to expose), accidentally, or through vicarious learning. McGuire, et al. (1965) reported cases of men who were surprised by females while surreptitiously urinating in public, for example, and who later developed into exhibitionists. The act of exhibitionism may continue to occur either through drive reduction mechanisms or simply because the first occurrence is incorporated into masturbatory (and possibly other sexual) fantasies. Evans (1968) tried treating exhibitionists with behavior therapy and found that those exhibitionists with normal masturbatory imagery were deconditioned faster than those with exhibitionistic masturbatory fantasies.

The development of exhibitionism, according to some writers, may also be the result of the individual's failing to learn society's rules well enough. Such a hypothesis is sufficiently reasonable as to be irrefutable. Schlegel (1963) classified the act of exhibitionism as a form of displacement (as understood by ethologists), but he felt it was unlikely that it was the result of a presently unknown innate releasing mechanism.

Rickels (1950) described the mothers of exhibitionists as important in the development of exhibitionism in their sons. The mothers were judged to have a high degree of penis envy which led to two possible outcomes: a masculine identification (a positive approach) or attempts to psychologically castrate men (a negative approach). These behaviors were made stronger if the mother hated her own father and feared him. The mothers tended to identify with their sons and to use the son to prove their equality with males. They possessed a penis through their sons, compensating for their lack of a penis and repairing the original injury to their narcissism. The sons exhibited themselves to prove their independence from their mother.

Rickels found two kinds of mothers: aggressive and masculine women and "clinging vines." The mothers rejected their husbands as soon as the son was born. The strong link between mother and son prevented the son's becoming schizophrenic.

The fathers of exhibitionists are often industrious, passive, meek, and ineffective, which serves to increase the son's depend-

ence upon the mother. This leads to strong incestuous impulses in the son and castration anxiety based upon fear of the dominant mother. Some fathers of exhibitionists are strong and dominating which perpetuates the sons' feelings of weakness and impotence. The act of exhibitionism then is used to assert the sons' potency.

EXHIBITIONISM AND OTHER SEXUAL DEVIATIONS

Gebhard, et al. (1965) claimed that about 10 percent of exhibitionists had attempted or seriously contemplated rape. Mohr, et al. (1962) felt that other sexual deviations were rare with the exception of voyeurism. Many authors claim to detect a relationship between voyeurism and exhibitionism. The basis for this is not at all clear. In theory the actor can be seen as the exhibitionist and the audience as the voyeur, and the occurrence of an offense may be determined by ascertaining who is the unwilling person in the dyad and hence the victim. There is no data to indicate that the actor and audience find it easy to change roles. Hackett (1971) found one exhibitionist out of thirty-seven to also be a voyeur. (One other engaged in frotteurism and one other in homosexual acts. Nine were impotent.) Rooth (1973) found that only 20 percent of a sample of exhibitionists had engaged in voyeuristic acts. Frottage and homosexuality were more common. Rooth found that most of the exhibitionists had engaged in some other sexual deviation (only 13 percent had not), but of several hundred arrests only five were for indecent assault (usually in the exhibitionists' youth). Exhibitionists do not appear to engage in violence. Thus, the presumed relationship between exhibitionism and voyeurism may well be a myth.

Conceptual justification for the association comes most often from psychoanalysts. For example, Caprio (1948) claimed that exhibitionism was a passive form of voyeurism. Saul (1952) claimed that each act could be seen as the projection of the wish behind the other. Be this as it may, there are no good data to support the association.

PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEWS

Psychoanalysts have speculated upon the motivations behind exhibitionism. According to Christoffel (1936) the moti-

vation is to persuade the audience to display her genitals in return. Fenichel (1946) felt that exhibiting gives the individual reassurance and reduces his castration anxiety. The audience confirms the presence of the penis. The exhibitionist also shows his own penis to contradict the idea that people can exist without penises, an idea that he cannot accept. (He originally has experienced the notion that people without penises can exist when he was a small child and viewed the genitals of little girls or his mother.) Fenichel felt that exhibitionism was rare in females since they do not have penises (and thus castration anxiety). Those females who exhibited their genitals were thought by Fenichel to have delusions of having a penis.

Rickels (1942) observed that exhibitionists used repression as a major defense mechanism, whereas Karpman (1948) emphasized regression. Rickels (1942) noted that the exhibitionist was usually dominated by his mother and/or wife and so the act served to prove the exhibitionist's virility and attractiveness and that his mother was not able to do everything for him. Exhibiting could be seen as an act of revenge.

Bromberg (1965) felt that the exhibitionist wished to arouse females sexually and to reassure himself of his own masculinity. The act expressed contempt for women and so was seen as hostile. It was also an act of sexual independence; a seduction without a finale. Exhibitionism can be both a defense against anger and a means of expressing anger. Exhibitionism has also been viewed as satisfying a desire to be punished (since so few exhibitionists take care to avoid arrest) and as a manifestation of narcissism (Stekel, 1952).

STRIPTEASERS

The profession of stripteasing bears many similarities to the act of exhibitionism. Most strippers are female, although occasionally males do perform (especially male transvestites). Skipper and McCaghy (1970) interviewed a number of strippers and reported that almost all were white and nineteen to forty-five years old, with the majority in their twenties. Compared to the average female and to "Playmates" (the centerfold nudes in *Playboy*) they were heavier, taller, and had larger hips and busts. The majority were brunettes (though many had dyed their

hair).

Most were born or raised in the city. They came from all social classes, had a wide variety of schooling, and came from all religions. Some two thirds of those interviewed had been married but only about 6 percent were still married. Eighty-nine percent of those interviewed were first-borns. The majority (60 percent) came from broken homes. Their first menstruation had occurred earlier than that of the average female.

Skipper and McCaghy noted that the girls soon began using their bodies to get attention and recognition from others which they did not get from their nuclear family. (They received little affection from their parents, and their father was usually absent by the time they were adolescents.) They left home early (usually by the age of eighteen), often through marriage. Only rarely did siblings enter the profession. Most had had sexual intercourse by the age of sixteen, and most reported pleasing and easy relationships with males outside of the family.

Skipper and McCaghy felt that becoming a stripper had three sources: a tendency toward exhibitionistic behavior for gain, an opportunity structure that made stripping an accessible occupational alternative (for example, being a bar-girl and meeting those in the profession), and an awareness of the easy economic gain.

Some 20 percent of the strippers shared society's negative image about them. The rest either denied this image or used rationalization as a defense mechanism. These latter strippers had a positive self-image. Few strippers engaged in deviant behavior such as organized crime, alcoholism, drug addiction or use of marihuana, or pornographic posing. Their ideology was that stripping was an entertainment, a service (sexual catharsis for males), and a sex education service (for wives and females in general).

It was common for strippers to engage in prostitution (at least 50 percent admitted to so doing) and homosexuality. McCaghy and Skipper (1969) regarded homosexuality as an adaptation to their profession. The girls were isolated from affective social relationships, they had unsatisfactory relationships with males (since becoming strippers), and the opportunity structure allowed a wide range of sexual behavior, information