

and he is of slight to medium build, from which the authors conclude that ". . . he appears to be a bit smaller than average" (p. 97) Is that really smaller than average? For some reason, the authors find this surprising because they have a notion that one would expect a rape victim to remember her assailant as larger than he was. The point escapes me.

Further on we are told that ". . . he (the assailant) is certainly not handsome" (p. 106), with no evidence to that effect except what the authors consider attractive. The list of characteristics (on p. 98) which are used to support this is hardly convincing. Indeed they could easily apply to a variety of people we all know, non-rapists included.

From this collection of sketchy data and shaky analysis, the authors arrive at the assumption that ". . . our social structures have produced so many "losers" whose sexual alienation expresses itself in rape." Whatever the validity of this conclusion there is little in their data to substantiate it.

The real drawback in the data section of the book is that the authors somehow feel they must speak to every piece of information they have. In so doing, they make unsupported generalizations and draw attention to facts which can only be peripherally related to the central concern.

Even with the identified shortcomings, however, Clark and Lewis have provided a thought provoking book and a step in the continuing effort to eliminate the crime of rape.

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The Hite Report: A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality

SHERE HITE. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1976. Pp. 633.

The art of analysis presupposes a body of material that is sufficiently distinct and serious enough to be studied. Given that women have been sexual beings since year one, it is nothing short of mind-boggling that a member of the species has only just published a study laying bare some facts about our sexuality that we did not know. It is no less remarkable that the reason she has been able to accomplish this is that we women are only just beginning to take ourselves and our

sexual needs, capabilities and proclivities seriously. And, albeit guardedly, we are willing to talk about it.

Without the aid of gauges, thermometers, GSR and EKG machines, Shere Hite has collected a prodigious amount of data representing a complex range of female sexuality. Some of it contradicts the results of previous studies. Much of it extends beyond the scope of precise scientific corroboration. In fact, Hite, armed with a masters degree in the methodology of the social sciences, has set herself up as something of a heretic in academic circles. To the extent that the book has been pooh-poohed by sexual scholars, it has been

welcomed with great sighs of relief by women who only need to be told that they are not alone in their struggles with themselves. For better or for worse, Hite has rescued sex from the laboratory and allowed it to reclaim the positive (and negative) feelings that are its mystique. As a result, female sexuality may be a more complex phenomenon to study by the scientific method, but it rests now within the boundaries of our own reality.

Hite began sending out her questionnaire to over one hundred thousand women in 1972. A little over three thousand replies were received. Questionnaires were distributed through women's groups and church groups; respondents were solicited through ads in newspapers and magazines. Oui, a men's magazine, published the entire questionnaire in one of its issues. If this population is biased, as has been alleged by some critics, then it is no less biased than Masters and Johnson's survey of couples seeking help for their sexual "dysfunctions."

Many of the women involved in this study (which included the ages 14-78) were seriously dissatisfied with their own sexual fulfillment, but had never considered seeking professional help. In fact, for many, the questionnaire provided a first opportunity to set down their actual feelings on the subject.

I cried when I first read through this. There is so much I've lied



about for so long. . . (p. 47)

I answered it for cheap therapy and introspection. I'm glad I did it. . . I don't spend my average day writing ten pages on my sexuality and it's been a good thing to do. (p. 46)

I answered because it seemed like a good way of having a dialogue with myself--only incidental to sharing me with you. . . . I've kept a journal for fourteen years without ever being able to write this candidly about my sex life. I was able to let out hidden things I'd otherwise never tell a soul. (p. 46)

The questions asked in the Hite questionnaire were detailed and explicit. For the most part, they referred to matters of sexual techniques and gratification. Later questionnaires also asked about age, religious background, education and occupation. When replies were received, answers to specific questions were sorted into categories which, as Hite explained, began to form themselves.

As they are gathered together in this one volume, the sheer word bulk is difficult to wade through. It is difficult to taste more than a few pages at one sitting. At the same time, we are aware of the collective power of many women speaking frankly for per-

haps the first time. What they say to us is both a reassurance and, to some, a threat.

Sharing our sexuality is sharing our deepest selves, where the roots of our upbringing have a tenacious hold.

Stating the problem is half the battle, but once it is stated, we assume the responsibility of changing what we do not like. While our public selves are out there in the world fighting for equal pay, equal time and equal rights, our private selves may hang on for dear life to old and secure patterns. The only judges of whether or not we are getting enough pleasure are ourselves, and, alas, we are often the only ones who stand in the way of getting what we want.

As it turns out, Hite informs us, we are hanging on to old misconceptions with some hefty help from the establishment. The prime target of controversy seems to be whether or not heterosexual sex is really all that it is cracked up to be. A result of the Hite study showed that only about 30% of women respondents experienced orgasm solely as a result of intercourse. This ratio corresponds to several previous studies. Yet in much of current sex therapy practice, failure to achieve orgasm during intercourse is considered a sexual dysfunction. According to this segment of the professional establishment, 70% of the female sex are in need of

their treatment. Or, would it be presumptuous to imply that the diagnosticians may be the ones at fault?

"Why is this?" asks Hite. "Even the question being asked is wrong. The question should not be: Why aren't women having orgasms from intercourse? but rather: Why have we insisted women should orgasm from intercourse? And why have women found it necessary to try everything in the book, from exercises to extensive analysis to sex therapy to make it happen?" (p. 236)

Hite posits three rationales for this state of affairs: 1) Some researchers have suggested that orgasms (with intercourse) contribute to a woman's capacity to conceive. Why then, wonders Hite, "can we have just as much, if not stronger arousal and orgasm(s) at times when we are not capable of conception. . . ." (p. 239) Other studies have shown that orgasms may well decrease conceptive capacity, and still others, that orgasms function mainly as an energy release mechanism. Since conception is comparatively rarely a "reason" for most of us to desire sexual gratification, we may, for convenience's sake assume other functions of orgasms. 2) A second, political, reason for the glorification of intercourse is our society's expectation that it is a patriarchy and must always remain so. "Heterosexual

intercourse has been THE definition of sexual expression ever since the beginning of patriarchy, and is the only form of sexual pleasure really condoned in our society. The corollary of this institutionalization of heterosexual intercourse is the villainization and suppression of all other forms of sexuality and pleasurable intimate contact--which explains the historic horror of our culture for masturbation and lesbianism/homosexuality, or even kissing and intimate physical contact or caressing between friends." (p. 244) 3) And finally, the third reason is the pervasive influence of Freudian psychology throughout our North American society, an influence that persists despite facts to the contrary.

Freud was the founding father of vaginal orgasm. He theorized that the clitoral orgasm (orgasm caused by clitoral stimulation) was adolescent and that, upon puberty, when women began having intercourse with men, women should transfer the center of orgasm to the vagina. The vagina, it was assumed, was able to produce a parallel, but more mature, orgasm than the clitoris. Presumably this vaginally produced orgasm would occur, however, only when the woman has mastered the important major conflicts and achieved a "well-integrated," "feminine" identity. The woman who could reach orgasm only

through clitoral stimulation was said to be "immature" and not to have resolved fundamental "conflicts" about sexual impulses. Of course, once he had laid down this definition of our sexuality, Freud not so strangely discovered a tremendous "problem of frigidity" in women. (p. 245)

Thank you, Sigmund. Can it be true that much of the frustration women have suffered at the mercy of doctors and psychiatrists is the legacy of one man's inadequate knowledge of female biology? How much faith have we had in ourselves that we have been willing to accept what Freud says about how we feel? And, Hite asks, "Could many of the sexual neuroses which seem to be endemic to women today be, in part, induced by doctors attempting to treat them?" (p. 248)

The Hite Report is a documentary of three thousand women's attempts to define their own needs and not feel badly about so doing in spite of what they have been taught, in spite of peer pressure, in spite of themselves. A good deal of anger shows through and it is no wonder. But there is also joy in the sexual awakening of so many women.

In bringing the sexual reality of women out from under centuries of mistrust and mistake, Hite has allowed women the chance to be honest

with themselves and their mates. Let's hope she will be able to do the same for men.

Deborah Kaetz,
Wolfville

Population Target: the Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America

E. BONNIE MASS. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976. Pp. 299

Reproductive "control over our own bodies" with respect to such issues as non-compulsory child-bearing and access to reliable birth control procedures has been in recent years a concern of progressive, Western women. In this book, Bonnie Mass describes how Third World women living in such population target areas as Latin America have had birth control measures alternatively denied them and forced upon them at the whim of government policy. Rather than birth control decisions being left to the people involved, birth control in Latin America has become population control, an aspect of economic policy linked to "development." While poor women in