Current among sociological conceptions of deviance is an approach that concerns itself less with the attributes of the person or persons said to have violated a social rule than with the character of the reactions of other persons to these attributes and events. This approach, sometimes called the “labeling” approach to deviance, sees the deviant as a social product, the outcome of interaction sequences between labelers and labeled (cf. Becker, 1964a). The questions that are raised by this approach thus concern the behaviors that are labeled as deviant, what the processes are by which the labels are successfully applied or avoided, and what the consequences of such processes are for both labelers and labeled. . . .

“It is important to note that the great majority of homosexuals in the armed forces do complete their service without incident and leave with an honorable discharge.”

This paper examines in one particular situation, what the effects of the deviant’s behavior are on the application of the deviant label. Our focus is the contribution made by the deviant himself to his discovery. To what
extent is he an active participant in the process? Are there any factors in his behavior which place him more or less "at risk" as regards the scanning operations of control agencies?

The particular situation in question concerns irregular discharge from the military for reasons of homosexual conduct. We shall examine the role played by the individual serviceman in having his sexual status called into question by military authorities. We are aware that the type and extent of surveillance and differential sanctioning activities on the part of these authorities are an important factor in this process. For this study, however, this subject is [suspended]; we propose that it is still possible to get some notion of the deviant's role in the labeling process.

It is important to note that the great majority of homosexuals in the armed forces do complete their service without incident and leave with an honorable discharge. Over 90 percent of all servicemen receive honorable discharges and many homosexuals are included in the majority. In a study done by the Institute for Sex Research in 1967, of some 458 male homosexuals, 214 had served in the military of whom 77 percent had received honorable discharges. Earlier data reported by Simon and Gagnon (1967) indicate that only one-fifth of 550 homosexual males reported any difficulties in the military. Finally, in the present study, of 136 male homosexuals who had served in the military, 76 percent received honorable discharges.

What of those who are discovered? It is our contention that such eventualities are mainly determined by transgressions from those rules, either to their not being learned in the first place or to situational conditions making them difficult to follow.

We considered the following to be possible contributing factors as to whether a homosexual comes to the attention of military authorities.

Homosexual Frequency Prior to Induction into the Military

If a person is frequently engaging in homosexual behavior before he enters the military, then it is reasonable to expect that he is likely to perceive and evaluate the military situation in terms of the opportunities open to a homosexual to a greater degree than do those persons whose homosexual behavior is less frequent prior to their induction. For this reason we expected discovery to be positively related to frequency of homosexual sex before induction.

The Nature of Homosexual Conduct while in the Military

The way in which the homosexual manages his sex in the military was also expected to be related to discovery. We anticipated a positive relationship between discovery and (a) frequency of homosexual sex while in service and (b) the degree to which such sex is engaged in with other military personnel. Those homosexuals who frequently engage in sex while in the military place themselves more at risk than those who have little sex. Having other servicemen as partners also increases the risk of discovery. (For example, in prosecuting these cases, military authorities endeavor to find out the names of all partners of the accused who are also servicemen; this is often done by threats and promises to the accused, or through the inspection of personal effects—letters, diaries, and the like. Also, homosexuals who want to get out of the service and so admit their homosexuality often agree to provide the names of other homosexual servicemen. Cf. Williams and Weinberg 1970.)

The manner in which a homosexual is discovered is also of interest. It is our contention, which we examine later, that manner of discovery is closely associated with the variables that determine discovery in the first place.

"Most homosexuals, not unlike heterosexuals, pursue sex according to rules which reduce visibility and potential risk."

These should not be considered remarkable findings; to define them as such suggests a stereotyped view of the homosexual as a person having uncontrollable sex drives that demand constant and indiscriminate satisfaction (a view implicitly held by military authorities). Most homosexuals, not unlike most heterosexuals, pursue sex according to rules which reduce visibility and potential risk. The homosexual realizes the consequences of homosexual behavior in the military; as the consequences have similarities to discovery in civilian settings, he is likely to apply the same type of operative rules that he had learned before.
METHOD

The research design . . . involved comparing male homosexuals who had been less than honorably discharged from the military with homosexuals who received honorable discharges.

Two sample sources were utilized: the Mattachine Society of New York and the Society for Individual Rights in San Francisco. Both are homophile organizations with large memberships. Using their mailing lists those persons who lived in the New York or San Francisco metropolitan areas were respectively selected out. . . .

A short questionnaire was sent to each of these persons. . . . From the responses to this questionnaire it was possible to separate out those who received a less than honorable discharge due to homosexuality (hereinafter referred to as the LHD group) and a comparison group of homosexuals who had served in the military but who had received honorable discharges (the HD group). It was also possible to estimate the equivalence of both groups as to the stage of their homosexual careers at the time of their induction into the military. . . . [Of the 136 respondents who had served in the military and who agreed to be interviewed, we interviewed 31 who had received less than honorable discharges (LHD) due to their homosexuality and 32 who had received honorable discharges (HD).]

Included in the personal interview were questions designed to tap the following: the stage of the respondent's homosexual career prior to induction into the military . . . ; his homosexual behavior in the military (how often and with whom); and how his homosexuality was discovered (LHD group only). On both the initial questionnaire and in the interview a large number of other questions that had nothing to do with the military were also included. These were asked to gather data on other aspects of the homosexual's sociopsychological situation.4 These other questions concealed the fact that military experiences were the main focus of interest and thereby limited some of the bias that could appear, for example, through the creation of a "sad tale." Thus questions on the military were the last questions to be asked.

RESULTS

Manner of Discovery

The homosexuality of those respondents who were discovered came to the attention of military authorities in three main ways. . . .

The most common manner of discovery involved discovery through another person. Seventeen of the respondents were discovered in this way (54 percent of the LHD group). This mode of discovery is sometimes related to jealousy, a lovers' tiff, or blackmail.

(R 28 year old salesman. Served in the Navy for almost three years before receiving an Undesirable Discharge. Exclusively homosexual before service.) I was turned in by a civilian—he was a bartender. The ship came to Monterey and he fell in love with me. I couldn't stand him. . . . He said if I didn't become his lover he'd turn me in. I ignored him. He called ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) and turned me in.

There were also cases where another serviceman was discovered and persuaded to reveal his previous sexual partners or whoever else he knew in the service to be homosexual. Through threats or promises or through a search of personal effects names are discovered.

(R 45 year old policeman. Served in both the Army and the Navy for a period of about six years receiving an Undesirable Discharge from each service. R exclusively homosexual before entering service.) I was having an affair with a serviceman on a ship, who kept a diary. He was apprehended with another fellow and through this they got the diary and I was apprehended along with several other people.

This mode of discovery is often linked to many voluntary admissions. . . . To get out through voluntary admission the military requires proof of homosexuality. The best proof is to provide the name of a partner who is also a serviceman. Not only can he be interrogated at length by military authorities, but there is the further possibility that he will supply additional names. Six of the 17 cases who were discovered through another person were victims of servicemen who were onetime sexual partners and wished to get out of the service. An example of one such case is as follows:
A drag queen asked if 'she' could stay in my apartment. I said yes, but don't hustle and don't bring tricks back. But she didn't listen to me. She brought two sailors back and we got into an orgy. They both wanted out of the service and used me as a reference. . . . I denied I was in the Navy but they went ahead and used my name.

Twenty-nine percent of the LHD group (nine cases) were voluntary admissions. The most frequent reason given for seeking discharge was dissatisfaction with military life. Generally absent from such accounts were any pressures that the homosexual might undergo such as fear of exposure or the inability to control sexual tendencies. Such reasoning seems more an influence of stereotypical views of homosexuals, held especially by the military. Also . . . few were unduly bothered by the potential stigma of a less than honorable discharge. Note the following case:

(R 50 year old dress designer-manufacturer. Served in the Army for two and a half years before receiving an Undesirable Discharge. Exclusively homosexual before service.)

I felt I was just wasting time. . . . I wanted out because I was bored to death. . . . I had the advantage of being able to get out as a homosexual. . . . If I had been doing something of value I would have stayed.

The final manner of discovery was through the homosexual's own indiscretion. There were five cases (16 percent of the LHD group) where discovery was due to imprudent action on the part of the respondent.

(R 30 years old, hydraulic engineer. After serving two years in the Navy he was released with a General Discharge. No homosexual experience before service.)

It's not a very good story. I was turning gay and one feels he's the only one in that category. It was coming to the surface and I didn't want to control it and had sex and was caught in the locker room.

It is obvious from these cases that the serviceman runs a risk in engaging in homosexual behavior. Not only may he be directly discovered but there is even more of a chance of indirect discovery due to being the "fall guy" in connection with another serviceman or through his name arising in connection with the other's case.

Having discussed the manner in which the homosexual serviceman is discovered, we turn to the factors associated with the probability of discovery and whether these factors are related to the particular manner of discovery.

Two sets of variables were conceptualized as related to discovery. These were: how "homosexual" . . . the respondent was at the time of his induction and the nature of his homosexual behavior while in the military.

Prior Homosexual Frequency and Discharge Status

In an attempt to reconstruct the comparability of the HD and LHD groups when they entered the service the respondents were asked on the initial questionnaire how often they had been engaging in homosexual sex at the time of their induction. . . . Of those who before induction were having homosexual sex once a week or more, 69 percent received less than honorable discharges. Of those who were doing something of value I would have stayed.

Other data regarding the stage of the respondent's homosexual career at the time of induction support the conclusion that those who eventually received less than honorable discharges were more likely to be further advanced than were those who eventually received honorable discharges. . . .

Sexual Behavior in the Military and Discharge Status

Frequency of sex. . . . Of those engaging in homosexual sex [once a month or more while in the military,] . . . 61 percent received less than honorable discharges. Of those engaging in homosexual sex less frequently, 38 percent received less than honorable discharges.

Type of partner. . . . Respondents were asked whether they had sex predominantly with military personnel while they were in the armed forces.

Of those who engaged in homosexual sex predominantly with other
servicemen, 82 percent received less than honorable discharges. Of those who did not have predominantly military partners, 35 percent received less than honorable discharges.

In summary, we have seen thus far that not only are those who have more frequent homosexual sex before they enter the military less likely to receive honorable discharges, but that those who have more homosexual sex while in the military and who restrict this sex mostly to other servicemen are also less likely to receive honorable discharges.

There is thus a relationship between discharge status and the character of the respondent's homosexual career at induction as well as his sexual behavior in the military. . . . Goodman's (1964) test for analyzing interaction in contingency tables showed no significant interactions [between these factors].

"Their [homosexuals caught through their own indiscretion] low frequency of sex while in the military is at variance with a frequency-probability model of risk, which would suggest that those discovered this way would be engaging most in the behavior. All such cases did, however, report that their frequency was greater than it had been prior to induction. As these respondents were all engaging in sex primarily with other military personnel, and were not high in sexual frequency prior to induction, it seems reasonable to say that their discovery was mainly due to inexperience in a deviant role. . . ."

The data support out hypotheses regarding factors involved in the probability of discovery. The relationships . . . turned out, however, to be more complex when the manner of discovery was considered.

Prior Sexual Frequency and Manner of Discovery

Among those who received less than honorable discharges, what is the relationship between their homosexual frequency at induction and the manner of their discovery? . . . Those who had higher frequencies at induction were more likely to come to the attention of military authorities by their own wish; those who were lower in frequency at induction were more likely to come to the attention of the authorities due to being caught through their own indiscretion. Sexual frequency at induction was not related to discovery through another person. . . .

Sexual Behavior in the Military and Manner of Discovery

Sexual frequency in the military. . . . Those whose in-service activity was high were more likely to be discovered through another person. Those whose sexual behavior in the military was relatively infrequent were more likely to be caught through their own indiscretion or to voluntarily admit to their homosexuality. . . .

Usual type of sex partner while in the military. . . . Those whose sexual partners were predominantly other servicemen were more likely to have been discovered through their own indiscretion, whereas those whose sexual partners were not predominantly other servicemen were more likely to have been discovered through another person. . . .

It is evident that of all variables considered, sexual frequency while in the military shows the strongest relationship to manner of discovery. . . . There are three main patterns that led to the discovery of homosexuals by military authorities.

Two groups of LHD respondents had low frequency of sex while in the military. The first of these are those homosexuals caught through their own indiscretion. Their low frequency of sex while in the military is at variance with a frequency-probability model of risk, which would suggest that those discovered this way would be engaging most in the behavior. All such cases did, however, report that their frequency was greater than it had been prior to induction. As these respondents were all engaging in sex primarily with other military personnel, and were not high in sexual frequency prior to induction, it seems reasonable to say that their discovery was mainly due to inexperience in a deviant role; i.e., their indiscretion was not due to the extensity of their behavior but to ignorance of, or disregard for, the safest ways in which to engage in the behavior.

The second group of respondents who had low frequency of sex while in the military provide us with another pattern of discovery. These were those respondents who voluntarily admitted their homosexuality. Contrary to the above group, they tended to score high on sex frequency prior to induction . . . [and were broader] in their choice of partners.
while in the military. From the interviews it was apparent that their disclosure was motivated by a desire to leave the service, the stigma of the discharge not being the major concern. Being further advanced in their homosexual career at induction seems to have made them less afraid to use their homosexuality to get out of the service.

The final pattern of discovery involves those respondents who differ from the above by having high frequencies of sex while in the military. This group was primarily discovered through another person. Nothing was specified by sexual frequency prior to induction and, as regards type of sex partner, they were represented somewhat less among those having sex primarily with other servicemen. This pattern of discovery was most common to our respondents and represents those who put themselves more at risk regarding involuntary discovery by military authorities.

CONCLUSION

The data reveal the deviant's role in his discovery. On the part of those who voluntarily admit their deviance, this influence is directly seen; in this case the homosexual uses a self label to gain a social label which can serve him. For those whose discovery is not voluntary, discovery involves placing one's self more at risk due to the frequency of the behavior and imprudent choice of sexual partners. With our respondents there were no cases of a "bum rap." All had engaged in a form of behavior proscribed by the organization in which they were involved.®

In this study, official labeling was found to be related to the frequency and character of the deviant's acts. As such, labeling theorists should perhaps make more precise the character of their "unconventional sentimentality." Such a stance does not preclude a recognition of the deviant's role in his own plight; on the other hand, this need not imply the sociologist's endorsement of the policies or processes of control agencies.®

NOTES

1. [Editor's note] The original article from which this excerpt is taken includes an extensive theoretical discussion of the "labeling" approach to the study of deviance and the model of the deviant which characterizes this approach.

2. For an indication of some of the variability across time and the influence of other factors, cf. West and Glass (1965).

3. We are aware, of course, that a proportion of homosexuals do not serve at all because they either avoid induction or are rejected at induction. How large this proportion is we do not know for sure. Kinsey (1948 et al., report some figures from the Second World War which state that less than one percent were turned down at induction centers or rejected by draft boards for being "homosexual.")

The only other estimate we could find as to the proportion of those persons who avoid the draft comes from a reported statement by Col. Robert A. Bier, Chief Medical Officer for the National Selective Service System, who in a study of 1,500,000 men called for examination between 1960 and 1962, found that 382,000 (25.4 percent) were granted medical deferments. Psychiatric disorders including homosexuality accounted for 11 percent of the latter. What proportion homosexuality was of psychiatric disorders was not mentioned (Time Magazine 1968, p. 15). Estimates after this date must be read with caution as homosexuality apparently has been increasingly used as an excuse to avoid the draft by some of those opposed to the Vietnam War (cf. Anonymous, 1968).

4. These . . . [are] evaluated in terms of the effects of receiving a less than honorable discharge in . . . [other sections of the book].

5. Also, all but one of the voluntary admissions had labeled themselves as homosexual before induction into the military.

6. This is not to say that "bum raps" do not occur. For a description of such cases cf. West and Glass (1965).

7. This is Becker's (1964a:5) phrase, used to describe those who assume, " . . . that the underdog is always right and those in authority always wrong."

8. Conversely, it should be mentioned that attributing a recognition of the role of control agencies in the labeling process by no means implies their moral condemnation.

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22. Bell meeting with group facilitators before the attitude reassessment workshop. Dellenback

23-26. Institute staff (Gebhard, Weinberg, Williams, Bell) who, along with invited guest
speakers, provided the summer program lectures. Dellenback
Sex Research
Studies from the Kinsey Institute
Edited by Martin S. Weinberg

Since publication of the famous "Kinsey Reports" roughly twenty-five years ago, Kinsey's Institute for Sex Research has continued to study human sexuality in its many diverse and fascinating forms. Institute publications now add up to a formidable mass of reading for even the most dedicated enthusiast. In Sex Research: Studies from the Kinsey Institute, the Institute's Senior Research Sociologist has made this wealth of research easily accessible to the general public—lay people, students, and professionals alike.

Sex Research provides highlights of the Institute's work from Kinsey's day to the present, as well as insight into the man who pioneered sex research and founded the Institute. In an introductory chapter, members of Kinsey's original research team reminisce about Kinsey and about the research methods he developed. The book goes on to provide condensations of the original Kinsey Reports and the works that have followed, including reports on males and females, heterosexuals and homosexuals, adolescents and adults. Also included are reports on abortion, nudism, incest, fetishism, sadomasochism, child molesters, rapists, and Peeping Toms. Finally, there are selections dealing with sex in other societies and times, and in various media such as art and literature.

By acquainting the reader with a wide variety of topics in human sexuality, the editor hopes this book will help to dispel "the myths and lack of knowledge that have far too long surrounded this elusive subject." For this was, after all, the whole purpose behind the research and the Institute that Kinsey left behind.

About the Editor: