

While Olsen emphasizes newspaper and journal publications when addressing the informal education of youth, she employs a remarkable array of other primary sources in framing the broader context of her multifaceted analysis. Although she effectively demonstrates the importance of informal education in shaping the character of boys and adolescent young men, in some ways Olsen tries to accomplish too much. For example, her discussion about the Raj is interesting but needs more development and could be a monograph in its own right. The brief examination of the emergence of adolescence as a cultural construct, although pertinent, also requires more attention and could be a separate study. That being said, this book is an important contribution to the historical understanding of juvenile development and ideas of citizenship in late nineteenth-century Britain and demonstrates the need for further scholarship in this regard.

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### *Policing Sexuality: The Mann Act and the Making of the FBI.*

By Jessica R. Pliley.

Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2014. 304 pp. Cloth \$29.95.

Although there are many books about the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there are few about the White-Slave Act, a federal law passed in 1910 to fight the transportation of women for immoral purposes. Known as the Mann Act, after its author, it passed three years after the founding of the FBI (then the Bureau of Investigation) in 1907. The Mann Act made the federal government a player in moral policing, previously the province of local authorities. "White slavery" stemmed from the moral panic that emerged as fear of immigrants and political violence against people of color peaked in the United States, and as feminists intensified demands for political equality.

That only some white women were worthy of, or desired, rescue made Mann Act enforcement fraught almost immediately. In addition, the law made all women potential criminals. Sexual predators—traffickers, pimps, blackmailers, adulterers, and cads among them—treated women cruelly and sold their sexual services. But the law also gave fathers and husbands new resources for

controlling daughters and wives. Because the Mann Act allowed prosecution when women were transported for "other immoral purposes," it also became a vehicle for the federal government to enforce racial hierarchy. Perhaps the most famous case of this was the prosecution of the boxer Jack Johnson, engaged to a white woman whom he later married. Asian and black women, who muddled the category of "white slave" from the beginning, were presumed to be immoral and were almost never viewed as deserving justice for crimes committed against them, including being trafficked.

*Policing Sexuality* eventually becomes a history of prostitution as well as trafficking. Prior to World War I, the bureau enlisted hundreds of reformers as "white slave officers," issuing attractive badges that gave them federal authority to patrol "red light" districts, neighborhoods where prostitution was one of many criminal industries. But because local police were often paid off by madams, pimps, and saloonkeepers, Mann Act investigations were rarely systematic or effective. The war changed that. Arguments that sexual commerce undermined male national character and military readiness were suddenly successful in 1917, and the white slave officers finally put many urban vice districts out of business.

One wonders how many white slave officers were actually hired to enforce the Volstead Act in 1920 as that agency ballooned to over 2500 officers. When J. Edgar Hoover took over the FBI in 1924, remaking the agency into a scientific, professionalized, and national police force, he purged volunteers. However, Hoover's well-known conviction that national crime rates were linked to moral decline acquires fresh meaning in *Policing Sexuality*. By the 1930s, the FBI was fully engaged in fighting new forms of criminally organized prostitution that moved women from state to state, using ordinary houses, apartments, and street networks to market sex undercover. In addition, new forms of transportation that also served criminals created easy routes for women to escape parents and unwanted marriages. Pliley's research shows that, even as the importance of the FBI grew, Mann Act investigations were still often launched at the request of an ordinary citizen: a father; a husband; or, in the case of a female African American runaway, a white employer.

*Policing Sexuality* is a rich study of how popular audiences and policy makers understood female sexual agency and male predation between 1890 and 1940. It is an excellent example of how police records reveal shifts in sexual practices, and of how a phrase like "white slavery" remained politically useful long after prosecutors knew that no such thing existed. Readers will also learn a great deal about how prostitution evolved over time: a final chapter on commercial sex networks undermines a long-cherished notion that sex work passed

from female to male control after World War I. In fact, despite male control of the industry, many women with specialized sexual skills were valued workers and operated with a high degree of autonomy.

That said, *Policing Sexuality* tells us less about the FBI than the title or the introduction promise. The first two chapters on the emergence of popular white slavery narratives seem familiar, and they delay any discussion of the FBI for seventy-five pages. Mann Act cases represented close to a third of the bureau's caseload in the 1920s and 1930s, something that no historian before Pliley has noted or addressed, but that unfortunately receives no substantive analysis. What was the relationship between Mann Act investigations and the bureau's war on kidnapping and interstate bandit crime in the 1930s, campaigns Pliley does not mention? Were the 1930s a critical moment for expanding the capacity of the state, or was it a more long-term project triggered by the Mann Act in 1910? How does Pliley square Hoover's vigorous embrace of the Mann Act with his very public refusal to take on either the policing of vice, or the investigation of organized crime? These are important questions that other excellent aspects of the book—vivid descriptions of elopements, misguided youth, pedophiles, cads, traffickers, and professional sex workers—obscure.

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### *The Brooklyn Thrill-Kill Gang and the Great Comic Book Scare of the 1950s.*

By Mariah Adin.

Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015. ix + 167 pp. Cloth \$37.00.

**M**ariah Adin has woven an important argument about the fear generated by comic books in the 1950s into the riveting story of one noteworthy case in New York City. Adin adds to the historiography of the Great Comic Book Scare by examining an incendiary example of the moral panic caused by comics in the early 1950s. She shows the fear juvenile delinquency sparked in adults, who searched for explanations and solutions. At its heart, though, this is the story of four boys in Brooklyn who were held up as cautionary tales to parents. Ultimately, their case led to horror comics being banned in New York, part of the larger movement seeking to address the causes of juvenile delinquency.

Adin begins her book by introducing the reader to the crimes committed by Jerome Lieberman, Robert Trachtenberg, Melvin Mittman, and Jack Koslow. On August 16, 1954, the four friends went looking for "bums," finding an inebriated Willard Menter and escorting him toward the East River in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. After Jack and Melvin beat Menter, he fell into the water and drowned. Jack warned Bobby and Jerry they would be included in any charges as accessories to murder. After a quick arrest, Melvin confessed and turned in his coconspirators.

From there, media and experts on juvenile delinquency descended upon Brooklyn. With four boys arrested for murder without motive, the public and press started to pry into every detail of their lives, looking for reasons why "good" kids fell into depravity. Even Dr. Fredric Wertham, the psychiatrist best known for arguing that horror comics had a major role in juvenile delinquency, came to interview Jack Koslow, finding a poster child for his theory.

Adin links these boys' crime to *Yiddishkeit*, the lack of religious education many in the Jewish community felt was necessary. This was a particularly vulnerable time for American Jews, who had traditionally been dependent upon European Jewry for connections to their faith. In the wake of the Holocaust, that connection was severed, and American Jews began to ask if they were "worthy inheritors of the great Jewish cultural tradition" (61). With four Jewish youths on trial for their lives, Brooklyn's Jewish community reflected seriously on where these boys (and their parents) went wrong.

Adin concludes with the trial and aftermath. Mel and Jack were convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to life in prison. In the wake of the verdict, the New York legislature restarted an earlier attempt to regulate the comic book industry. In response, the comic book industry adopted its own self-regulating code in October 1954, hoping to fend off any further damage to their business. Instead, New York pushed ahead, banning in early 1955 the publication or sale of horror, crime, sex, or terror comics. By 1958, when Mel's and Jack's convictions were overturned and they pled guilty to manslaughter charges, the public's interest had disappeared. The boys' case was irrelevant next to the sensation it caused.

Adin has produced a fascinating case study of the mass hysteria caused by comic books in the 1950s. By connecting one case with larger questions about juvenile delinquency, *Yiddishkeit*, and New York's laws banning horror comics, she has personalized the fear found in the early Cold War era. She has given it the young faces of four teenagers, who symbolized, to parents and legislators, how far America's youth had slipped.

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