

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Bloody Footprints


Edited by
Pauline B. Bart and
Eileen Geil Moran

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A *Gender & Society* Reader
Published in cooperation with
Sociologists for Women in Society



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**VIOLENCE
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Gender & Society Readers

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Dedicated to Boris Astrachan, M.D., chair of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Illinois, who saved me from the Cossacks, kapos, and "Good Germans"; to Catharine A. MacKinnon, who gave me the analysis that made this book possible, and whose uncompromising life gives us hope that we do not have to be complicit with evil; to the Chicago Women Law Teachers and Friends Colloquium; and to my grandchildren, Rebecca and Anna, with the hope, but not the expectation, that their world will not consist of endemic violence against women.

Pauline B. Bart

To my mother and to Don for their unlimited faith in me and to all my sisters, from the South Bronx to politics to the academy, whose lives have been diminished by sex inequality, but who struggle on in spite of it.

Eileen Geil Moran

Foreword

Pauline Bart suggested a special issue of *Gender & Society* on violence against women in spring 1986, arguing that a journal of feminist theory that did not address systemic gendered violence would be incomplete. At that time, I thought we would be addressing a pervasive problem that lurked on the underside of everyday life, but that tended to be put up with by women as part of "the routine." But in 1989, as we were reading manuscripts for the special issue, the hell of women's experience of violence broke loose in New York City. In every newspaper and magazine, on everyone's television set, in everyone's conversation, throughout the world it seemed, first Lisa Steinberg, Hedda Nussbaum, and Joel Steinberg played out the horror. Then came the "Central Park rape." And the familiar litany—is it race, is it class, is it pathology? Feminists looked at each other and said over and over, "What about gender? Why doesn't everyone realize this is a *gender* issue?"

Certainly, race and class were blatant in the attention paid to White, middle-class experience. The week in which a White investment banker jogging in Central Park in New York City was brutally beaten and gang-raped (April 16-22, 1989), 28 girls and women, aged 8 to 51, mostly Black or Hispanic, were raped—in the street, waiting for a train, visiting a friend (Terry, 1989). Two weeks after the headline-grabbing event, a 38-year-old Black woman was forced up to the roof of a four-story building, raped, beaten, and thrown off. She was badly injured, but lived. No headlines.

In the United States, the FBI estimates there is one rape every 6 minutes. These statistics do not include forcible rapes by dates, boyfriends, and husbands, most of which get into the news only when the *man* is famous,

as in the cases of William Kennedy Smith or Mike Tyson. When men batter their wives and lovers, it doesn't get turned into a TV movie; when wives kill their batterers, that's drama. Sexual propositions and "dirty talk" addressed to junior and senior women in workplaces all over the Western world and embarrassing sexual remarks or jokes in the school-room are such common "microinequities" that it took years before women could see them as a form of discrimination against them (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1986). And again, it took the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings to draw public attention to what every woman—heterosexual or lesbian, Black, Latina, Asian, Native American, or White—knows, and what homosexual men and men of color experience for their sexual orientation or race and ethnicity, not for their *gender*.

These are all sex crimes against women—aggressive acts of sexualized violence that range from obscene, intrusive phone calls and sidewalk salaciousness to Jack-the-Ripper serial murders and the massacre of "feminists" by men who feel their dominance challenged.

Reading the papers submitted for the special issue raised my own consciousness as to the importance of gendered violence for feminist theory and practice. In conversations with friends and family members, particularly young ones, I make constant use of the insights these papers present. This book, which not only touches on the enormity of the everyday violence women experience, but which lays out the institutional structure, politics, and research implications, should make you angry at the injustice. But then you must turn to the other women and men who also feel outrage, and with them, speak out, act out, and turn that anger into political power.

Judith Lorber
Founding Editor
Gender & Society

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Preface

I don't understand mens like that. . . . She see how the world is. Mens like that shouldn't have the right to live. I don't think they're sick. It's their egos. It's bad on her. Someone invaded her body just to take stuff. Things have changed. Think somebody damn cruel. . . . See how dogs men be.

—Mother of an 11-year-old girl raped by her cousin's friend

Fourteen women were massacred in Montreal on the day the original issue of *Gender & Society* on violence against women, which this book augments, arrived. This Montreal femicide, with the "selection" separating females from males, the former to be shot, recalled the selection on the train platform at the Auschwitz concentration camp where Dr. Mengele separated those who would live from those who would die. In both cases, people were condemned to death because of ascribed characteristics. Although the Montreal killer said that he murdered the women because he hated feminists, the debate that followed attributed his behavior simply to psychopathology, ignoring the fact that he was a woman-hating man reinforced by a woman-hating society.

Misogynist violence is common in our society. Between July 1991 and April 1992, a series of such acts were reported in the media, demonstrating not only male power over women, but men's ability to harass women with impunity. We will note five publicized cases:

1. St. John's University athletes were acquitted of the gang rape of an African-American woman.

2. The African-American judge Clarence Thomas was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as a Supreme Court justice in spite of the African-American professor Anita Hill's credible testimony about his sexual harassment of her, including the use of pornography (see cartoon, p. 66), and the Senate failed to call other women who had accused Thomas of similar behavior.
3. William Kennedy Smith was acquitted of acquaintance rape, at least in part because of the judge's failure to allow his sexual history to be admitted as evidence of a tendency to commit such crimes. The judge also refused to allow expert witnesses on rape trauma to testify. That the judge was biologically female not only shows that those members of subordinate groups who reach positions of power do so by internalizing the values of the dominant groups, but as the feminist law professor Catharine A. MacKinnon says, "The good news is that it isn't biological."

Even the surprise conviction of the heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, currently being appealed by the liberal law professor Alan Dershowitz, can be explained by the victim being what is considered "rapable," that is, young, "moral," having a witness to Tyson's harassment, and reporting the assault to the police immediately. That Tyson's every court appearance was greeted with cheers supports Jane Caputi's concept of "the heroic rapist" (see p. 13). Indeed, Tyson denied doing any harm at all because he didn't blacken the raped woman's eye or break her ribs. This "neutralization," as sociologists call it, is substantiated in the chapters by Patricia Hill Collins and Diana Scully in greater depth.

4. Another striking example of unpunished misogyny, this time committed by Harvard Law School students—"the best and the brightest"—is the vicious parody of the feminist legal scholar Mary Jo Frug's article that appeared in the *Harvard Law Review* on the anniversary of her brutal stabbing death on the streets of Cambridge. The parody appeared on everyone's plate, including that of her husband, at the *Harvard Law Review's* gala banquet. "It depicted Ms. Frug as a humorless, sex-starved mediocrity and dubbed her the 'Rigor Mortis Professor of Law' " (New York Times, 4/17/92; David Margolick, "At the Bar"). Frug had maintained in her article, as most feminist jurisprudence and critical legal theory scholars do, that the law perpetuates the subjugation of women. These graduating students with distinguished appointments to assist such jurists as Justice Scalia illustrated her point by their behavior.
5. A husband was found not guilty of raping his wife, in spite of the jury having seen a videotape he made showing his wife pleading with him not to tie her up, which he did, and screaming at him not to rape her, which he did. He slapped her and taped her eyes and mouth with duct tape after

showing her a videotape depicting similar events. His attorney told the jury her screams could be screams of pleasure—the message of pornography (Washington Post, A2, April 18, 1992). The incident also demonstrates the desensitization to women's pain that results from watching pornography.

It should be noted that the jury in the Rodney King case, to which a videotape was shown of the police beating King, also found the perpetrators not guilty and implied that King had “asked for it” by not being more docile. Dominant groups' versions of reality provide the filter through which jurors who identify with those groups construct “reality.”

We see in these events that we haven't come a long way, that woman hating is alive and well, and those women who ignore it may help their careers, but hurt their analyses (see the “Not Andrea” sections of Dworkin's *Mercy* [Prologue, pp. 1-4 and Epilogue, pp. 114-342] for a brilliant portrait of such academic feminists). This distancing from real women's real pain is reinforced by the rehabilitation of Freud, whether in the French or North American versions, in feminist theory (e.g., Gallup, Chodorow). Psychoanalytic feminism is an oxymoron like “friendly fire,” “family vacation,” and “Justice Thomas.” Taking women's experience seriously, dealing with our concrete experiences and validating them, rather than grounding our work in male seminal thinkers such as Freud and Lacan and the deconstructionists with all their mystifying jargon, frequently results in rejection by the academic community. For example, Pauline Bart's work has been called politics and not sociology by male academics.

Although this book expands the coverage of the original *Gender & Society* issue on which it is based, space limitations precluded addressing important issues such as marital rape, pornography, prostitution, rape avoidance strategies, women in prison, and unnecessary surgery, including genital mutilation, although we have tried to provide some coverage of these issues in the introduction.

In this book, we do not define women as simply victims who have no agency or coping strategies, although the issue is usually presented as either one or the other. Women use agency in coping with our lives, including our exploitation, though women have considerably less power in institutional relationships than men. One does not negate the other, although for some feminist theorists the term *victim* is taboo. In fact, Bart and O'Brien (1985) found that a substantial number of women felt strengthened by their avoidance of rape when attacked and even by the

assault itself. Yet our lives are at best constrained and at worst seriously damaged by violence and fear of violence.

We want the results of these studies to be incorporated into public policy. Policymakers usually want allegedly valid and reliable large-scale surveys answering questions such as How many? Who? Where? How bad are the consequences? and How much will it cost (Miller, 1989)? In these times, cost is a particularly important issue, and the backlash against women undercuts compelling arguments about these issues. Yet in spite of these biases, some headway is being made; for example, Carole Warshaw's work on emergency room treatment of battered women was abstracted in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and brought to the attention of the U.S. Surgeon General, who contacted her.

Currently, both in journals and in policy statements, violence against women is considered a serious public health problem, and a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* is devoted to "family" violence. One relevant example of the funding biases discussed above is that in spite of numerous criticisms, some in this volume, some in other journals (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1992), the Conflict Tactics Scale, which is a national survey to find the number of noncontextual violent incidents in families, keeps getting funded and replicated. Moreover, feminist analyses, particularly when qualitative, as most of those in this book are, are not considered "objective" and thus are less likely to be approved by peer review for funding. One such alleged peer turned down a grant application on rape from Bart because she wasn't "objective" about rape. Another "peer" reviewer did not understand what it meant to be a rape victim advocate. Perhaps if Bart had a rapist as coinvestigator, the proper balance would be attained and the grant would be approved. (See MacKinnon's chapter for a critique of "objectivity.")

When you finish reading this book, you will never watch television or read newspapers or observe male-female interactions the same way again. In fact, you will never see the world the same way again. This will not make you happier; as the saying goes, "The truth will set you free. But first it will make you miserable."

Acknowledgments

This book is built on the special issue of *Gender & Society* on violence against women that was published by Sage in December 1989. We are grateful to the authors whose work appeared in the special issue and in subsequent issues of *Gender & Society*. For addressing important aspects of this problem, we gratefully acknowledge the original contributions of Kathleen J. Ferraro and Elizabeth Anne Stanko along with the authors and publishers who permitted us to reprint their work. We particularly appreciate the contributions of Andrea Dworkin, Lynda J. Barry, and Jules Feiffer.

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Pauline B. Bart
Eileen Geil Moran
Editors

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Part I

Types of Violence Women Experience

Introduction

That some men rape, some batter, some commit incest, some sexually harass, some make obscene phone calls, and some murder is not surprising in a society in which dominance and subordination are eroticized. What is surprising is that some men do not. In the United States and Great Britain, as Jane Caputi shows in "The Sexual Politics of Murder" (Chapter 1) most men's male significant others, backed up by the media, or sometimes the other way around, steadily feed them the message that they are entitled to goods and services from women as a class; not only should we provide such services, including our bodies and the orifices thereof, but that is what we are for. And we enjoy it. As one rapist said to his victim, "You want it. I can tell You really want it." The chapters in this section address the types of violence women experience, running the gamut from pornographic phone calls to femicide, but all the acts described terrorize and control women and girls.

The major theme of this book is that all forms of violence against women are interrelated, coalescing like a girdle to keep women in our place, which is subordinate to men. This is not a conscious male plot. The controversial feminist analysis of pornography and sexual harassment, as put forward by MacKinnon and Dworkin, runs through this section.

Caputi highlights the relationship between pornography and mass murder of women by showing how misogyny is reflected in the culture. Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla (Chapter 2) also recognize the cultural and structural factors that encourage rape; they thus undermine the popular