

Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*. New York: New York University Press, 1990. 201 pp.

The subject of rape has long been a topic of concern and study for feminists and scholars. More recently, acquaintance or date rape has become an important issue on college campuses, but the issue of gang rape perpetrated by male organizations has been neglected. Like other scholars, Sanday believes rape is not a crime of sex, but of power and domination; a crime for which many men go unpunished and many women are blamed. She also argues that gang rape occurs because women are viewed and talked about as objects. This anthropological case study examines fraternity gang rape from a descriptive and analytic perspective.

The specific circumstances surrounding one incident at a university and generalized accounts of gang rape on other college campuses compose the descriptive discussion of the occurrence and the context in which gang rape ensues. Interviews with the victims, alleged perpetrators, and students present at the time of the rape provide more than adequate descriptions of the rape that recreate the incident from the perspective of the victim and the aggressor. These interviews also reveal the party and sexual subcultures that seem to be connected with most of the gang rapes. Through the retelling of these incidents, the issue of male privilege becomes appallingly apparent especially when compared to the treatment of the victim. In these instances, the members of the fraternity were lightly reprimanded. The fraternities were delivered minimal restrictions or placed on probation. In only one case was the fraternity's charter revoked. In contrast to the fraternities and their members being blameless, the women were portrayed as "asking for it" or "deserving it." Women are responsible for protecting themselves in questionable situations.

At a more analytical level, the interviews are interpreted to explore the issues surrounding sexual ideology. Gang rape is committed by male groups such as athletic teams, dormitories and fraternities; groups in which a high degree of male bonding takes place. Fraternity rituals such as initiation, promote male solidarity and feelings of brotherhood. The physical nature of male bonding approaches homosexuality, but the homosexual act is rejected as perversion. The use of group sex furthers the male bond with a group sex act that is not homosexual. The emphasis is on the male group. The woman could be any woman; her body is just used as an object to facilitate the men. The fact that many of the women were unconscious or semi-conscious when they were raped supports this. Thus gang rape is not a sexual act, but one which male groups use as a display of comradery as well as power and domination.

Ideology is also expressed through the discourse of the interviews. Some of the phrases used by the fraternity members are analyzed to provide an

understanding of their mind set. "Pulling train" and "working a yes out" are indicative of the ways that men view women. These phrases emphasize the phallogentric nature of sexual discourse because they focus on sexual conquest and are centered around male sexuality.

One of the many strengths of this work is that reading it forces you to re-think definitions of consent and rape. If a woman, because of alcohol, drugs, or intimidation, is incapable of coherently indicating that she is willing to engage in sex, then she is not consenting and that is rape. This broadens the definition so that consent does not have to be verbal.

This book adeptly evaluates the interpersonal relations involved in gang rape, but it only briefly analyzes the university social structure that contributes to these instances. Investigating why the university did not take stronger actions against the individuals or fraternities is worthy of more attention. Because Sanday is an anthropologist, the strength of her analysis is in sketching the cultural rather than the structural aspects of gang rape.

The extensive use of quotes from interviews is an excellent means of demonstrating the interpersonal aspects of gang rape. There is no better way to convey the callousness of the fraternity members or the suffering and trauma of the victim than to let them tell their own story. However, the quotes and descriptions of parties and fraternity rituals do not read well. The formal presentation of informal actions sounds stilted. There is a contrast between the language used in direct quotes and summaries. For example, joints are "marijuana cigarettes" and students get "drunk on beer" or "high on beer." This is inconsistent with the terminology that students use to describe their party activities. Even more noticeably, the people being interviewed seem to speak in grammatically correct language that is free of slang and colloquialisms. While formal speech is, in essence, the correct form, it is incompatible with the informal actions of the students. This stylistic flaw does not detract from the overall forcefulness of her assertion that gang rape exists as part of group male bonding and that these men are sanctioned while the women are blamed.

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