

A Woman Scorned: Acquaintance Rape on Trial. By Peggy Reeves Sanday. New York: Doubleday, 1996, 338 pp., \$23.95 (cloth).

A Woman Scorned opens with a graphic description of a 1990 gang rape of a drunk college student perpetrated by St. John's University lacrosse players and an account of the court events that followed. These descriptions, which emphasize the victim's background, her experience of the preassault situation and the logic of her postassault behavior, orient readers to ask, "Why did jurors not believe her? Why were her assailants able to plead to misdemeanors?"

Having engaged her readers, Peggy Reeves Sanday turns to providing answers. In the next eight chapters she moves from 1631 to the present, tracing the interplay between culturally accepted notions of women's and men's roles and sexuality and the prevailing legal approach to rape. She accomplishes her task using period-specific writing (i.e., legal treatises, philosophical tracts, scientific publications, highbrow and common literature) and a variety of secondary sources.

Whereas Sanday's cultural-legal comparative approach is not unique, her analysis is more complex than previously published investigations of a more narrow historic scope. Sanday's reach-back to the 1600s enables her to show that while rape is now more common, its nature has not changed a great deal in four centuries. The statistical prevalence of acquaintance rape documented in recent victimization studies (detailed in chapter 9) has been typical since the birth of the nation. What changed between the mid-1600s and mid-1900s is society's response to such victimization.

Puritans accepted women and men as sexual beings, who were aware of their desires, and granted credibility to women's allegations of unwanted sexual contact. Thus, men who assaulted women they knew were likely to be held accountable for their actions during the Puritan period. In the following centuries, Sanday shows that women's sexuality was reconstructed as passive and women's knowledge of their desires was largely erased. Male sexuality was likewise reconstituted: The normal man was expected to be the sexual aggressor and his efforts to achieve sexual pleasure at the expense of others were naturalized. Sanday argues that legal doctrine shifted to reflect the changing images of women and men. Because women came to be seen as lacking knowledge of their desire and deriving pleasure from male aggression, their claims of rape were made subject to ever more stringent requirements of proof. A woman's physical resistance and other forms of corroboration were deemed necessary to demonstrate that her body had not acquiesced to strong male persuasion. Ellis' and Freud's representations of female sexuality, which appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, and the notion of the stranger rapist, emerging from the 1930s' psychopathological models of criminality, justified the existing legal framework. Few rapes of any kind were prosecuted successfully by the 1960s.

GENDER & SOCIETY, Vol. 12 No. 1, February 1998 100-112
© 1998 Sociologists for Women in Society

According to Sanday, feminist reform efforts of the 1970s and 1980s (described in chapters 7 and 8) technically redefined the crime of rape, dismantled many burdensome requirements for prosecutors, and provided some protection for women who testify against their assailants, but they did little to alter the prevailing cultural framework for understanding rape. To make her point, Sanday considers the trials of William Kennedy Smith and Mike Tyson, high-profile acquaintance rape cases that took place in the 1980s (see chapter 10). Her discussion of the mixed public response to the victims' claims of violation, some classifying the alleged assaults as "seduction, exploitative sex, a bad night" and others as rape, support her argument.

Members of the public who serve as jurors and are the final arbitrators of guilt and innocence have yet to reject baseless notions about women's false motivations to claim rape and men's biological sex drive. Recognition of this lag in the public acceptance of ideas is important from the standpoint of social change.

Shifting her focus from past to future, Sanday discusses the recent backlash against antirape activism and the present status of antirape activities on college campuses in the book's final two chapters. Her concluding discussion of feminist efforts to establish knowing affirmation as a basis for legally determining that consent was given is a true contribution to the field. In it, she brings whispers of a counterdiscourse developing on college campuses and in legal writing to the center of academic discussion.

A Woman Scorned is not a traditional ethnography, yet the richness of detail in Sanday's discussions of trials in the 1600s and 1700s have an ethnographic feel. Her representations of contemporary court cases are credible, based on reports appearing on television and in print, interviews with important actors (attorneys and victims), and her courtroom observations. An important strength of this book is its accessibility. Sanday's writing is very readable, whether she is elaborating complex philosophical and psychiatric arguments that have infused American culture or how legal ideas, such as "will," have evolved in case law with reference to women. Sanday should also be credited for thoroughly discussing the debates about methodology and research design that swirl through the research attempting to quantify rates of acquaintance rape and carefully picking apart the logic of arguments made by "antifeminist" writers Katie Roiphe and Camille Paglia.

While I am favorably impressed by this book, it is not without shortcomings. Most stem from lack of attention to existing literature in the broad domain of race. Sanday brings some attention to the issue of race as it pertains to rape prosecution in her discussion of several trials. However, she fails to provide an analysis of the role of race in prosecution through American history that would allow a systematic assessment of its symbolic power in the present. For example, relevant theoretical material that could reinforce her analysis of the Tyson and St. John's cases is available in works by Angela Davis and Julia and Herman Schwendinger, who analyze the formation of an ideology of sexuality that justifies the violation of Black woman and the lynching of Black men. Likewise, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's efforts to curtail the lynching of Black men was an early *feminist* effort to address the realities of rape that is ignored. Following over a decade of critiques by feminist sociologists like Patricia Hill Collins, these absences are glaring.

Original feminist writing generally gets less attention than it deserves from Sanday. She relies heavily on recently published secondary sources to describe feminist rape law reform efforts of the 1970s and 1980s; chapters 7 and 8 are weak in comparison to the rest of the

book. The voices of the reformers who challenged the prevailing rape discourse in legal periodicals and legislative assemblies (e.g., Vivian Berger, Camilla LeGrand) would add richness to her discussion. References to the abundant sociological and criminological literature concerning the success of rape law reform efforts and the actual ways that popular notions of rape infuse legal actor's decision making would strengthen these chapters as well.

A Woman Scorned fills a gap in rape research—connecting the past to the present—tracing out the cultural developments and their logical impact on law through the entire European history on this continent. It also clearly accomplishes Sanday's goal to show that we have not yet "abided by our constitutional commitment to equal justice for all" (p. 19).

AMANDA KONRADI
Ohio University

Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women. By Daphne Spain and Suzanne M. Bianchi. New York: Russell Sage, 1996, 240 pp., \$34.95 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper).

In 1994, Daphne Spain and Suzanne M. Bianchi set out to update their 1986 text *American Women in Transition*. On examining more current data on women, the authors realized that the transitions taking place in women's lives are too dramatic to be confined to a revision. In *Balancing Act*, Daphne Spain and Suzanne M. Bianchi provide a new, comprehensive examination of the changes and conditions in contemporary women's lives, focusing on three areas: motherhood, marriage, and employment, and the overlaps among the three. The end-product is a straightforward, demographic overview that provides a plethora of up-to-date facts and statistics.

The organization of the book makes it accessible to readers at all levels. The book has seven chapters, each devoted to a specific issue: childbearing, marriage and living arrangements, education, labor force participation and occupational attainment, earnings, family well-being, and combining employment and family. Spain and Bianchi open each chapter by explaining why the issue is, in fact, an issue for contemporary women. The authors provide statistics in various formats (text, table, and graph) to highlight trends and developments in a given area. The authors also flesh out differences among racial and ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, Asian, and white) and compare developments in the United States to those in a number of Western European countries. Each chapter closes with a succinct summary.

Spain and Bianchi focus on the status and conditions of contemporary women. However, the authors do a good job of tracing trends and patterns in women's lives across 20-, 30-, and 40-year time periods. This approach emphasizes the dynamic changes that have taken place and are still taking place. They also do a good job of tracing developments across cohorts. For example, most discussions of the narrowing wage gap typically credit women's educational and political progress. While Spain and Bianchi also acknowledge the improvements in women's relative wages, they emphasize the impacts of less positive forces on the narrowing wage gap, by tracing developments across cohorts. First, they point out that men's real wages have declined significantly, and this has actually had the effect of negating