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FRATERNITY GANG RAPE

Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus

Second Edition

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Introduction to the Second Edition

In the dark cold days of February several weeks into the spring semester, a student of mine at the University of Pennsylvania, whom I’ll call Laurel, got high on a combination of LSD and beer before going to a fraternity party on campus in search of a good time. People at the party reported that during the course of the evening her behavior attracted quite a bit of attention as she danced provocatively to the beat of music only she could hear. She seemed disoriented and out of touch with her surroundings, oblivious to the various fraternity brothers who danced with her during the course of the evening. Some of the brothers spun her around until she was so dizzy she couldn’t find her way out of the room.

According to various eyewitness and hearsay accounts, after the party was over five or six of the brothers had sex with Laurel. When Anna, who had observed Laurel’s behavior at the party, heard the brothers bragging about their sexual escapade the next day, she concluded that Laurel had been raped. According to Anna, Laurel was incapable of consent due to her drunken-drugged condition. At a rally held to protest the event weeks later, after word got out on campus about what had happened, Carol Tracy, then director of Penn’s Women’s Center, referred to the 1983 legal definition of rape when she said:

The law is clear—if a woman does not consent and is forced to have sexual intercourse, it is rape; if a woman cannot consent, it is rape.

By the year 2000 the Pennsylvania rape statute spelled out the meaning of consent even more clearly than in 1983:

A person commits a felony of the first degree when he or she engages in sexual intercourse with a complainant:
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1 By forcible compulsion.
2 By threat of forcible compulsion that would prevent resistance by a person of reasonable resolution.
3 Who is unconscious or where the person knows that the complainant is unaware that the sexual intercourse is occurring.
4 Where the person has substantially impaired the complainant’s power to appraise or control his or her conduct by administering or employing, without the knowledge of the complainant, drugs, intoxicants or other means for the purpose of preventing resistance.
5 Who suffers from a mental disability which renders the complainant incapable of consent.
6 Who is less than 13 years of age.

On many campuses, then and now, sex with a drunken, nearly comatose, or passed-out woman is not defined as rape by the male participants. One cannot understand campus rape without seeing it in the context of the sexual culture that breeds the behavior. Often the male leaders characterize their role as passive despite the fact that they stage scenarios which they call “hitting” or “riffing” on women. The passivity they attribute to themselves is the prelude for blaming the victim later.

A woman who gets drunk is said to be “asking for it.” This is true despite the fact that fraternity brothers admit that the goal of their parties is “to get ‘em drunk and go for it” and that they make the women’s drinks “really strong to loosen up some of those inhibitions.” As a rule, getting women drunk as a prelude to “getting laid” is as far as it goes. However, in some cases the “go for it” attitude spills over into the acquaintance rape of an inebriated party guest who is unable to give informed consent. When a woman is particularly vulnerable, acquaintance rape turns into gang rape as a group of brothers take advantage of a woman who is clearly “out of it.”

In the case of Laurel the XYZ (a pseudonym for the fraternity) brothers claimed that she had lured them into a “gang bang” or “train,” which they described as an “express.” They thought of what had happened as a routine part of their “little sisters program,” something to be proud of. Reporting the party activities on a sheet posted on their bulletin board, they described what had happened as interviewing for the little sisters program. They proposed that the name for the program should be “little wenches,” and “the XYZ Express.”
The XYZ brothers never publicly admitted to wrongdoing. I concluded (as did the local DA) that what had occurred at the XYZ house was rape as the term was legally defined. This conclusion was based on my talks with Laurel and interviews with students who had observed her behavior at the party, as well as other evidence presented in these pages.

My purpose in conducting the research for this book was to understand the shadow sexual culture that ensnared a drunk, vulnerable woman who was out of control. I wanted to bring to the public eye an event that I learned was common on college campuses. My goal was to erase the divide between what is well known to many male college students but hidden from the public sphere of debate and action. In the aftermath of the incident, the brothers' first instinct was to brag about what had happened, thinking it would increase their status on campus. When the fraternity faced a one-year expulsion from campus, the brothers claimed that it was common knowledge that such events took place frequently. Defending their actions in a lawsuit against the university, they testified that excessive drinking occurred not only on weekends but at all times. They also testified that it was "common for multiple consensual sexual intercourse to occur in one evening on the University campus approximately one to two times per month."

Appalled at the glimpse of university life presented to her, the hearing judge, Lois Forer, asked whether there were rules regarding consumption of alcoholic beverages and having visits by members of the opposite sex at fraternities. She was told in response by the counsel for the plaintiff: "The only thing in the University Code of Conduct says members of the university community shall not act immorally, whatever that means."

The meaning of "whatever that means" is the subject of this book. After some sixteen years, there is still a need to address this topic. The many cases reported since the book was published confirm the repetition of a common pattern up to the present. In 2003, reporting on the sexual assaults at the Air Force Academy, for example, USA Today wrote that it was "hardly alone in having problems with sexual assaults." According to this article,

Harvard University has reported 50 forcible sex offenses on campus over the past three years. The Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., has had 11 midshipmen accused of indecent assault in the same period.
The U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., has investigated 15 cases over the same period. (USA Today, Kenworthy and O'Driscoll, March 13, 2003)

Recent cases have also been reported at Notre Dame (USA Today, May 24, 2002); Brigham Young University (Stephen Hunt, The Salt Lake Tribune, Aug. 10, 2005); the University of Colorado, Boulder (NOW, Feb. 19, 2004); Morehead State University (Campus Watch 2002, 2003); and the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (Bill Poovey, Associated Press, Nov. 8, 2005). Charges of forcible rape brought in March 2006 by an exotic dancer involving three members of Duke University's lacrosse team who were present at a team party attended by more than forty players received nationwide publicity, including front-page attention from the New York Times (New York Times, Drape and Bernstein, March 29, 2006—"Rape Allegation against Athletes Is Roiling Duke").

These and other incidents in secondary schools and gangs demonstrate that the same underlying behavior occurs across the U.S. social spectrum, not just on college campuses. It is reported in elite and nonelite secondary schools and among street gangs. It is not restricted to whites, blacks, or other ethnic groups. American campus-style gang rapes also occur in other countries; most notable is the high-profile case reported at Waseda University in Tokyo. Between 2001 and 2003 a leader of a university club and other members used strong alcoholic drinks to intoxicate their victims to the point of unconsciousness, whereupon they were raped on various occasions by up to a dozen members of the club. The explanation given was that rape created solidarity among members and those who did not participate in the gang rapes were not members (Yumi Wijers-Hasagawa, The Japan Times, Nov. 3, 2004).

In this new Introduction I broaden the explanatory framework for understanding fraternity gang rape by putting the subject in its personal, social, and historical context. In the new Afterword I focus on what has and has not changed at the University of Pennsylvania and on other campuses since I wrote this book. Not wanting to convey the impression that all of Penn's fraternities are rape prone, in the Afterword I include a profile of a rape-free fraternity. This profile was first written by two brothers who approached me in 1995 saying that they were organizing their fraternity according to rape-free values. In 2006 I talked
with two current members of this fraternity to determine whether the rape-free values were still in place.

When the book was originally published in 1990, I did not identify the University of Pennsylvania by name despite the fact that the local press had done so at the time of the incident in 1983. After publication, a book review in the *New York Times* divulged the name of the university and the name of the fraternity. I had not identified either because I did not want to put the onus on one campus or one fraternity for fear that both would be thought of as unique. My goal at the time was to draw attention to a sexual culture in which the line between consensual and nonconsensual sex is often blurred. Now that the incidence of acquaintance and gang rape on college campuses has been widely publicized and the identity of many campuses revealed, choosing to identify Penn is not a revelation, nor is the sexual culture described in this book unique to Penn’s fraternities.

When Duke University was confronted with allegations of forcible rape brought by one of the African American dancers hired for a party attended by over forty members of the lacrosse team, in a letter addressed to the university community Duke’s president, Richard H. Brodhead, instituted a mechanism for examining the campus sexual culture (*New York Times*, April 7, 2006). Although not all of the facts in the Duke case have yet come to light, enough is known of the context surrounding the alleged gang rape to suggest that the activity is similar to what I describe in these pages: male bonding and sexual dominance fueled by pornography, heavy drinking, and dehumanizing references to women as sexual objects. Regardless of the legal outcome of the alleged sexual acts reported in the Duke case, the culture revealed when the charges were made raises serious questions about the continuation of sexism and racism on campus. Most campus administrations know where the problems lie. The question is why no action is taken until charges such as those brought at Duke and those associated with the XYZ Express erupt into the media.

The sexual culture associated with the XYZ Express and the university’s response at the time yielded a picture of entrenched sexual inequality on a campus where fraternities had historically occupied a privileged place in campus social life. After prolonged self-examination and pressure from faculty and students, the policies and educational programs initiated some years later made Penn one of the earliest cam-
pus leaders in the anti-rape movement. In the Afterword I ask whether and to what extent the sexual culture has changed in response to these efforts. In answering this question I include the results of a student-conducted examination of fraternity sexual culture conducted in the spring of 2005. The evidence suggests a complex mix of continuity and change.

**WRITING FRATERNITY GANG RAPE**

I was an early member of the anti-rape movement that began in the late 1960s and took off with the publication of Susan Brownmiller’s landmark book *Against Our Will* (1975). Throughout the 1970s I researched the social context of rape in a cross-cultural sample of ninety-five band and tribal societies in order to question the then prevalent assumption that rape was universal. By demonstrating variation in rape cross-culturally, the findings broke the back of the then prevalent biological argument that all men will rape if given a chance (Sanday 1981).

Rape was rare in 47 percent of the societies studied and common in 18 percent of them. Most interesting about this study was the evidence that the relative frequency of rape was significantly correlated with gender roles and status. In the more rape-free societies there was evidence of male-female integration in the affairs of everyday life, especially in domestic activities. Women had higher status in these societies. In the more rape-prone societies there was greater sexual segregation, male social dominance, interpersonal violence, and the subordination of women (Sanday 1981b, 2003).

Different social factors are also associated with rape-prone as opposed to rape-free fraternity environments. The isolation of fraternities and athletic teams may enhance a sense of privilege and entitlement that spills over into interpersonal violence against outsider males or violence against female party guests that takes the form of sexual abuse. When I heard the story of what happened to Laurel, I was struck by how the sexual activity was not unlike the rapes in rape-prone societies in the band and tribal world in which men use rape to establish social dominance.

Lest it be thought that all fraternities are rape-prone, it is important to note that this is not the case. At the time of the XYZ Express there were fraternities on campus known to treat women with respect. As mentioned, I will have more to say about the rape-free mores in one of
the houses described to me in later years in order to demonstrate that sexual segregation is not necessarily a formula for disaster (although this fraternity was and still is leaning toward requesting coed status).

The striking similarity found in incidents of gang rape on many college campuses in the 1980s led to the book's title, *Fraternity Gang Rape*. I did not use the word “fraternity” in the title to refer to fraternities generally as an institution. The phrase “fraternity gang rape” refers to bonding through sex. This does not mean that all fraternities engage in this activity. Nor does it mean that this kind of bonding is found only in fraternities. It is also commonly found in athletic teams and other male-segregated settings. I use the word “fraternity” in its broader sense to mean a group of persons associated by or as if by ties of brotherhood, or, any group or class of persons having common purposes and interests (Random House Unabridged Dictionary 1999).

The commonality is male bonding in sex acts in which the males involved aid and abet the activity. In party settings, boys examine the girls as they come in the door and play the host by plying them with drinks as they pick partners for dancing. One never knows when or if a date-rape drug is part of the mix. The success of the night, who “scored” and who didn’t, is discussed either at the end of the evening or the next day—or is written up. Once a girl has been sexually “snagged” at a party, she is forgotten because the object is always to score with new targets. The more new girls a brother can boast about, the higher his status. There is a thin line separating consensual sexual activity in this scenario from acquaintance rape. The next day the girl herself may not be sure what happened.

If, as sometimes happens, the behavior mushrooms into group sex, there is always the question of whether the girl consented. The boys may not even consider the possibility that she may have been too drunk to consent. They assume that by drinking she signaled her desire for sex. The woman involved is a tool, an object, the centerfold around which boys both test and demonstrate their power and heterosexual desire by performing for one another. They prove their manhood on a wounded girl who is unable to protest. Her body stands in for the object of desire in porno-staged acts of sexual intercourse that boys often watch together. She is the duck or the quail raised and put in place for the hunter. Who she is doesn’t matter and she is quickly forgotten after it’s all over—sloughed off like a used condom. The event operates to glue the male group as a unified entity; it establishes fraternal bonding
and helps boys to make the transition to their vision of a powerful manhood—in unity against women, one against the world. The patriarchal bonding functions a little like bonding in organized-crime circles, generating a sense of family and establishing mutual aid connections that will last a lifetime.

**REACTION TO FRATERNITY GANG RAPE**

With its graphic description of abusive sexual behavior fueled by sexist attitudes, *Fraternity Gang Rape* exploded onto the campus scene and was widely reported upon in the media. I was invited to many campuses to raise student consciousness and to talk to administrators about what could be done by way of prevention. I also appeared on numerous television programs and was interviewed by reporters and radio commentators across the country.

To this day I am called whenever a new incident is reported. Recently a CNN reporter called to ask about the case at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, involving six football players who were charged in November 2005 with taking turns raping a drunken student after a party. Vetting me for an appearance on CNN, this reporter asked with a tinge of outrage in her voice, “Why do things like this happen?” I was surprised because I had already given explanations to CNN several times after the book was published. I should not have assumed that what I said over fifteen years ago would be remembered today. The source of the problem is still not common knowledge. After I started to answer her question, I realized that she was only looking for a sound bite: one minute into my answer she got another call and hung up on me.

Around the same time, a local newspaper reporter called about another incident, this time at a Florida university. He asked the same question as the CNN reporter, adding, “Is it the pack mentality?” This phrase always carries with it the assumption that there is something evolutionary in the behavior. I pointed out that whatever might be evolutionary in sexual behavior, among humans it is shaped primarily by group values, sexual mores, and taboos. After all, man is not just an animal, but the premier culture-bearing being. (See Sanday 2003 for a response to the argument that rape is evolutionarily programmed.)
When I was called about the Duke case, the reporter asked me why the athletes involved engaged in such “pathological behavior.” I answered that what he was calling pathological was commonplace in the sexual culture of some young males, replete with the joking and bragging that was evident in the email written later by one of the lacrosse team players, along with the dehumanizing, racist language that reportedly occurred during the party. My point was that however pathological the behavior may be, it is necessary to understand its roots before effective change is possible.

We know (or should know) that rape is common in the United States, which is in all likelihood one of the most rape-prone societies in the world. According to the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), conducted from November 1995 to May 1996 by the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 300,000 women and almost 93,000 men are raped annually. Researchers analyzing the survey results found differences in rape prevalence (defined as lifetime experience of rape) relating to age, gender, and race/ethnicity, as well as other factors such as whether victims were first raped as minors. In their report they concluded that “despite widespread public education, rape remains a largely underreported crime; and despite increased levels of research over the past few decades, significant gaps remain in understanding rape victimization” (Tjaden and Thoennes 2000, 2006).

The studies conducted by University of Arizona psychologist Mary Koss and her colleagues in the 1980s provided the first data on rape prevalence among college students (see Koss et al. 1987 and Warshaw 1988.) The data indicated that one of every four women on campus had been subjected to rape or attempted rape. These findings have been replicated in many studies since then. Between 13 percent and 25 percent of the participating females respond affirmatively to questions asking if they had ever been penetrated against their consent by a male who used force, threatened to use force, or took advantage of them when they were incapacitated with alcohol or other drugs (for a summary of these studies see Koss and Cook 1993:110; see also Sanday 1996:193, 251–255).

More recent studies, conducted in the late 1990s, report similar results. A nationally representative survey of 4,838 college students funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported
that 20 percent of college women, recalling their entire lifetime, said they had been raped (Brenner, McMahon, Warren, and Douglas 1999).2

According to a report issued by the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics in December 2000 entitled “The Sexual Victimization of College Women,”

[college campuses host large concentrations of young women who are at greater risk for rape and other forms of sexual assault than women in the general population or in a comparable age group.

This study was based on a telephone survey of a randomly selected, national sample of 4,446 women attending a two- or four-year college or university during the fall of 1996. The questions were asked between February and May 1997. Responding to a question asking about sexual victimization incidents before 1996, the study found that about

1 in 10 college women said they had experienced a rape, while the same proportion stated that they were victims of an attempted rape. Almost the same proportion also had sexual intercourse or contact in which they were subject to threats of nonphysical punishment or promises of reward. Unwanted or uninvited sexual contacts were widespread, with more than one-third of the sample reporting these incidents. (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000:17)

IS RAPE BIOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL?

Anthropologists argue that while the capacity for sexual pleasure may be constitutional, human sexual behavior “is rather a sociological and cultural force than a mere bodily relation of two individuals” (Malinowski 1929: xxiii; see also Sanday 2003). This means that human sexuality sits precariously on the divide between individualized sensations and culturalized meanings, making it both preeminently social as well as physiological. As sexuality straddles two worlds—the biological and the social—the major question for research concerns the social purposes served by types of sexual
behavior. This question is answered by introducing the concept “sexual culture.”

Because human sexual behavior is a sociological and cultural force guided by public sexual cultures—such as reflected in pornography, the media, and religious education—we must begin by examining popular, historically based models for human sexual expression. Understanding how sexual behavior has been conceived at various times in our history uncovers trends that promote female sexual choice in some contexts and deter it in others.

Early Americans had a much different conceptualization of male and female sexuality than we have now. They came to these shores with beliefs characteristic of Western thought before the eighteenth century, reaching as far back as Aristotle and Galen, that men and women were basically alike physiologically speaking. Women had the same genitals as men, with the difference that the male organs were outside and the female organs were inside the body. The word “vagina” only entered the language around 1700. Before that the vagina was imagined as “an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles” (Laqueur 1990:4, 159; see also Sanday 1996:67).

Thomas Laqueur calls this the “one-sex model” (ibid.; see also Sanday 1996:67, 297). Although the two sexes might differ in such important characteristics as the amount of vital heat or in their capacity for moral perfection, by this model sex differences were a matter of degree, not of kind. Aristotle and Galen thought of women as colder and weaker than men. Women did not have sufficient heat to transform inner fluids into the more perfect form of semen. In conception women contributed only the material substance and the place of incubation, while men supplied “the form and the efficient cause.”

Over the two thousand years that this model ruled Western thought, it entailed certain dangers for those who valued sex differences. Men could turn into women and women into men just by associating with the opposite sex or by emulating the behavior of that sex. A penis could spring out from the girl who was too active. The interior balls of women who meddled too much in men’s affairs were thought to have slipped down to her loins. By consorting closely with women, men might lactate or lose their hardness, becoming more effeminate and like a woman (see Laqueur 1990:5–6, 7, 123, 125).

Today, we live in a sexual culture in which some boys are terrified of being viewed as effeminate by other boys who bully them merci-
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lessly. Who wants to be called “nerdy,” a “dork,” or a “fag” at school? In most adolescent peer groups, a young male is expected to display his “hard-wired” maleness, lest he be thought of, or, perhaps, think of himself as homosexual. This is odd in light of the obvious homoeroticism of fraternity gang rape—unless one understands it as a ritual of “silencing the feminine,” by those subscribing to the one-sex model.

According to one-sex thinking, it was routine for both sexes to experience orgasm during conception. The seat of sexual pleasure for women has been located in the clitoris for centuries before Masters and Johnson rediscovered the clitoral orgasm. In the second century A.D., Galen wrote about the “raging desire” and the “great pleasure” that precedes “the exercise of the generative parts.” Although people debated which sex enjoyed “the pleasures of Venus more,” libido, as we call it today, had no gender then. Aristotle regarded the possibility of women conceiving without pleasure as highly unlikely. Renaldus Columbus, who claimed to have discovered the clitoris in 1559, just a half-century after the discovery of America by the more famous Christopher Columbus, took it upon himself to name the new discovery the “female penis.” He referred to the organ as “the seat of woman’s delight” and said that when it was touched it became a “little harder,” and “oblong to such a degree that it shows itself as a sort of male member.” Later, in the seventeenth century, an English midwife likened both the vagina and clitoris to the penis, giving women two penises, so to speak. One was inverted, creating a passage for the male penis, and the other, the clitoris, stood and fell just like the male organ, making women “lustful” as well as giving them “delight in copulation” (see Laqueur 1990:43, 48, 64–65).

Colonial New England appears to have enjoyed a low incidence of rape. A woman’s “no” meant something in Puritan New England. Despite the current definition of “puritanism” that emphasizes prudery, it was the only time in our history when males and females as a group were thought to have the same sexual appetite. Sexual desire was conceived of as explosive and in need of a vent for both sexes. It is also true that the laws of the colonies kept passion in check, forbidding “fornication” outside of marriage. Within marriage sexual passion was encouraged. Women married to an impotent husband could sue for divorce on those grounds alone. If a woman was raped, community officials tended to believe her because of the belief that a woman would have no
reason to lie. If she said "no," a man was more likely to desist from making sexual advances (Sanday 1996:66–81).

The birth of the nation saw the flowering of the cult of "true womanhood" and a radical change in the conception of female sexuality. While the conception of male sexuality remained the same, the conception of female sexuality became dualistic: women were either pure or promiscuous, and sexuality was either private and marital or public and prostituted. While males were expected to be as lustful as ever, proper females bore the burden of giving the new nation a semblance of respectability. At a time when male licentiousness in the cities was well known and poor women often turned to prostitution as their only source of income, chastity became the dominant symbol of a polite, refined America.

True womanhood gave women of means moral superiority, but its definition robbed them of a sexual appetite. When these women reached beyond the feminine sphere of the home and entered the arena of public debate to take up abolition, temperance, social purity, and the women’s rights movement, they wore true womanhood like a chastity belt to protect themselves from the discourse of public sexuality that demeaned and subordinated all women to the demands of male sexuality (Sanday 1996:82–99).

In the public domain of nineteenth-century sexual culture, the expansion of the culture of pornography and prostitution deepened belief in the inherent lustfulness of men and their female companions in the bawdy houses of the times. Public women served men, while private women, mothers and wives, nurtured their moral backbone. In the public domain, any woman who disagreed too openly with a man—such as in rape cases—was automatically subject to the suspicion of having "asked for it," of being inherently lustful like her sister the prostitute. In the courtroom, a woman’s past was examined for evidence of prior lustful acts on the grounds that, once "fallen," a woman was always ready for sex. The complainant’s credibility might also be impeached by suggesting she was a false accuser, a scorned or vindictive woman. The tenacity of these suspicions is seen in the legal ruling of the nineteenth century that complainants had to provide evidence of having resisted to the utmost (Sanday 1996:100–120).

As the nineteenth-century discourse on women’s rights expanded, a group of women began a campaign of sexual politics. Activist women
(the term “feminist” had not yet been adopted in American sexual discourse) argued for more sexual autonomy and started a sex-rights campaign to reinstall the right to female lust. In true backlash fashion, the science of sexology was born at this time and ushered in another trend in American sexual discourse. The new sexual scientists posited a dualistic model based on man’s biologically based aggression and woman’s lustful sexual passivity. This was a dualistic sexual model with a difference. While lust was common to both sexes, the sexes split along the active-passive gradient.

Basing his position on Darwinian thought, Havelock Ellis, one of the founders of the American sexology movement, glorified male sexual aggression as a biological, evolutionary necessity. As women rediscovered lust, to ensure female sexual subordination Ellis and later Freud defined the female sex drive as inherently passive and responsive to forceful male seduction—even rape. Freud defined the sex instinct as a basic biological drive, which in its active form was masculine and in its passive form was feminine. Thus, these men returned the sex drive to women with the restriction that the proper female was to be a sexually passive, but now willing, recipient of male passion.

The new version of the true woman still said No when she meant Yes, not because of moral superiority but in obedience to her alleged biological desire to be dominated. Under her demur demeanor, however, Freud assumed the raging fires of desire still lurked in the female breast, giving her an overactive sexual imagination that sometimes led to false accusations of rape. Thus, Freud created a new version of the lustful female false accuser. Whereas in the nineteenth century the woman who cried rape was “fallen,” in the early twentieth she was a hysteric.

These ideas influenced rape law through the most important and widely cited legal treatise on rape of the twentieth century penned by the noted jurist John Henry Wigmore. Using Freudian terminology, Wigmore cautioned the legal establishment to beware of the female hysterical and the pathological liar and advised that all rape complainants be examined by a psychiatrist for nefarious complexes of a Freudian nature. Predictably, those few rape cases that were prosecuted often ended in acquittal (Sanday 1996:121–139).

The sexual truisms of the two-sex model outlined above functioned to maintain a community of males in opposition to and superior over females. Although some of the details of the discourse changed during
the twentieth century, its ability to maintain male bonding and male dominance was unaffected until feminists began to challenge the underlying gender inequity. The discourse of “No means Yes,” which in the third sexual revolution was transformed to “No means No,” can be traced back to the nineteenth-century cult of true womanhood and to the Freudian concept of female sexual passivity. At that time, to preserve her reputation and to show that she is not an aggressive hussy, a woman had to say No so that a man could take pride in his seduction and assure himself that she is not “loose.” Turning a No into a Yes by getting a girl drunk, slipping her a “date rape pill,” or using aggressive seduction was a common practice on college campuses when I wrote Fraternity Gang Rape.

SEXUAL REVOLUTIONS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The sexual ideologies described above were associated with three revolutions for change in the twentieth century. By revolution I refer to a social movement led by high-profile individuals interested in promoting certain gender-based sex rights and privileges. Fraternity Gang Rape grew out of the third revolution inspired by late-1960s feminism.

The first sexual revolution began in the late nineteenth century and was waged by a few outspoken women who objected to the restrictions on their sex lives imposed by the social-purity movement earlier in the century. They talked about the “naturalness of female sexual desire” and said that women had the “right” to a “frank enjoyment of the sensuous side of the sex-relation.” A group of women living in Greenwich Village in the early decades of the twentieth century were the first to call themselves feminists in reaction to women who were activists for Victorian sexual prudery. Claiming that the sex drive was as important to woman’s nature as to man’s, the first feminists argued for female “sex rights,” sexual freedom for women, and a single standard for both sexes (Sanday 1996:121-139).

Based on the theories of Ellis and Freud, the second revolution promoted unfettered sexual freedom for both sexes, with women expected to be passive but lustful for sex while men were the aggressors. The cultural superstructure for this revolution was laid by the novels of Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence and by the work of Wilhelm Reich and Al-
Their ideas were based on Freud’s theory of the libido and Havelock Ellis’s contention that male sexual aggression and female passivity were natural.

A somewhat different theory was expressed in Wilhelm Reich’s book *The Sexual Revolution* (1963). First published in German in the 1930s and in English in 1945, Reich argued that venting sexual energy through orgasm made for a better society. According to Reich, sexual energy had to be released in any way possible or society would crumble. He claimed that controlling sexual desire only produced “sex-negative” activities such as warfare, social oppression, and human anxiety, leading to other sex-negative social expressions. Alfred Kinsey’s famous studies of male and female sexuality were both based on Reich’s theories. Like Reich, Kinsey believed that the more orgasms people had, the better off they would be.

Kinsey was the first of America’s great sexual entrepreneurs. Unlike the others who came after him, such as Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynn, Kinsey did not build a money-making sex industry. He only laid its scientific and moral foundation by suggesting that multiple orgasms was a good thing and that human sexual behavior was no different from animal sexual behavior. Kinsey writes with approval about a man he interviewed who reported having thirty orgasms a week for thirty years. Kinsey’s only allusion to sexual abuse was to write disdainfully of an incident in which an old man was put in jail because he sought release with little girls. According to Kinsey, people should have shown more sympathy for this man’s natural need.

The sexual entrepreneurs changed the American sexual culture in dramatic ways, promoting pornography as big business and leading to a tremendous increase in reported rape rates. Between 1935 and 1956, the time when Reich and Kinsey were the most popular, arrest rates for rape nearly doubled, as did the rates for other sexual offenses, while those for prostitution fell by two-thirds. *Playboy* got its start in the 1950s with Hugh Hefner declaring his undying gratitude to Reich and Kinsey. Together Reich, Kinsey, Miller, Lawrence, and eventually writer Norman Mailer reaffirmed the Social Darwinist notion that male sexual aggression was natural, that “boys will be boys,” a mantra that acts as a defense for gang rape in middle-class environments.

The basic message of the 1950s and 1960s from literature, science, and popular culture was that masculinity should be defined primarily in aggressive and sexual terms. Once denied a readership in the United
States because of obscenity laws banning the publication of their books, Henry Miller and D. H. Lawrence were widely read during the 1950s. In their novels the hero is the potent, virile male, who, like an animal, takes his woman without asking. The male is presented as all potency—the active agent in sex—while the woman is presented as the passive receptor whose sexual desire is sparked by the male’s overpowering manhood (Sanday 1996:140–160).

MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE MORES OF THE SECOND SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Since sexual revolutions tend to come in reaction to what has gone before, it is helpful to summarize my experience of the second revolution which led me to join with others in seeking sexual equity through the third sexual revolution. In the sexual culture of my teenage years—true to the two-sex active-passive model—a woman was thought to communicate her sexual desire wordlessly by the way she looked at a man or by the way she dressed. I had my first lesson in the requirement that woman waits and man proposes when I was thirteen. I was in the eighth grade and invited a fellow student (in the ninth grade) to a square dance in the park. We had a nice time and went out a few more times. Nothing much happened on these dates. Looking back on it, I realize that the boy I idolized was simply unable to relate to me as a human being as opposed to a sex object. I projected onto him my hopes for companionship not realizing that he was tied up in knots by his sense of masculine vulnerability.

One day when he saw me at our church gym, this boy invited me to play basketball with him and his friends. During this activity, which seemed to me innocent, his friends got me into a corner. The leader in the group, who was the oldest and biggest, the one the other boys looked up to, took the ball and approached me menacingly, as if I was the basket. Terrified by the looks on the faces of the boys and the stillness in the room, I ducked under their outstretched arms and ran, without looking back, all the way home. Later I learned that the boy whom I idolized as my first date told his buddies I was “hot” for him because it was I, not he, who asked for the first date. In terms of the boy sexual culture I encountered in the gym that day, my interest in him was de-
fined as “she wants it.” Because of my girlish (or he would have said not-so-girlish) aggression in asking him out, I was fodder for the boys’ sexual talk.

Within the context of this sexual culture, the male projects his own sexual tension on to the female, fetishizing her desire as being reducible to “wanting it.” I first heard the phrase “she wants it” at this time. For a long time I was perplexed about what the “it” I supposedly wanted was. Later, I learned that the it was the male member. Much later, after I had read the French theorist Jacques Lacan, I understood that the it in question was the signifier of the lack that all women are supposed to feel because they do not have a penis. In Fraternity Gang Rape I suggested that the presumption of the lack (or penis envy, as Freud called it) has nothing to do with psychosexual development but a great deal to do with socialization for male dominance and power in patriarchal societies. What Freud and Lacan described as a hardwired psychological problem experienced by all women was in reality a cultural doctrine that functioned to give men a stage on which to socialize one another for power. The it embodied (stood for) the male power which women were denied solely because they were female. Boys who buy the idea that only power counts in the adult male game are much more likely to think in terms of “she wants it,” because they know how much they themselves will be defined by power. These boys also assume that the closest most women will ever get to power is through sex, because it is mainly through sex that women have power over men. Thus, when anyone says “she wants it” they are talking more about a male-defined power game than about female desire.

For women of the late 1960s the sexual freedom of the second sexual revolution meant many things. An increasing number of young women liberated themselves from the idea that they had to save themselves for their husbands. They also began to think more in terms of give and take in sexual relationships. This was the period when women reclaimed their right to sexual pleasure. Women consulted one another and books about how to have an orgasm. Their male partners, on the other hand, were mostly concerned with “getting laid,” a euphemism for release of sexual tension. Both sexes were concerned with the mechanics of sex. With one difference. Women tended to look for sexual release in the security of a relationship, while men tended to look for sex wherever they could get it. Men used the new sexual freedom as a ploy to get women in bed. Women who didn’t rush into a man’s bedroom at
the first request were labeled frigid or lesbian. If she didn’t want it, it was allowable to coerce and cajole her either by verbal pressure, alcohol, or physical force.

Rather than leading to greater sexual freedom and peaceful relations as Reich had theorized, this kind of thinking was associated with an increase in the incidence of acquaintance rape. Beginning in the 1970s, scientifically designed surveys replicated the same statistic: one in four women on college campuses reported that they had experienced unwanted sex by the age of twenty-one (see summary of studies in Sunday 1996:184–207). During the 1960s women found that their private experience of sexual abuse stood in sharp contrast to the civil rights rhetoric of the time. Talking to one another about their sexual experiences in consciousness-raising groups gave women the power and strength to start a separate women’s movement. This movement, of which I was a part, was the ground in which the third sexual revolution took root.

THE THIRD SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Today, few people realize that the feminism of the 1960s got its impetus mainly from women’s shared experience of sexual abuse. There is nothing like the experience of threatened or actual sexual abuse to impress the social meaning of male dominance permanently on the brain. When I saw the faces of those boys in the gym illuminated by the setting sun as they turned menacingly toward me, reaching out, pinning me against the wall wanting to have their way, the American dream of equality and freedom was smashed in my psyche. In a few seconds I went from human being to object—the deer they had lined up in their sights, the centerfold they were about to share, the glue that would bring them together in shared abuse. In that one split second the phrase liberty, equality, and fraternity for all took on an entirely different, male-defined meaning. Being made the object of shared male lust in such a grossly unequal situation, I lost all sense of myself as subject.

The sexual freedom encouraged by the work of Reich, Kinsey, Hefner, and Mailer et al. meant that although the women of the sixties were having sex in greater numbers, they were not seen as equal sexual partners with the enforceable right to say No. While the so-called sexual revolution together with easy access to birth control might have freed women to have sex, it was on male, not female, terms. Getting to-
together in consciousness-raising sessions, women began to discover the degree to which sexual expression for them was marked by either “giving in” or being forced. Few of them could say that they were in egalitarian sexual relationships characterized by mutual consent.

The discovery of the ubiquity of acquaintance rape led to a significant lobbying effort in the early to mid-seventies that resulted in rape-law reform in most of the states. “Earnest,” “sufficient,” or “utmost” resistance was abolished as being necessary to indicate nonconsent in most states. The legal reform was an attempt to equalize rape trials so that fear of false accusers and examining a woman’s reputation no longer played decisive roles.

The reform changed outmoded laws and practices that had remained on the books since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, in many states the death penalty for rape persisted up to the 1960s, making convictions highly unlikely. Another holdover from the seventeenth century was the practice of reading to the jury the pro-defense cautions of the seventeenth-century English judge Sir Matthew Hale. Defining rape as the “carnal knowledge of any woman above the age of ten years against her will, and of a woman-child under the age of ten with or against her will,” Hale warned juries that

rape is a most detestable crime, and therefore ought severely and impartially to be punished with death; but it must be remembered that it is an accusation easy to be made, hard to be proved, but harder to be defended by the party accused, though innocent.

By giving semilegal status to the fear of the false accuser, Hale’s warning was read verbatim to jurors in many states until the 1970s, being removed, for example, from the California code of criminal procedure only in 1975 (Sanday 1996:58).

The innovation introduced by feminism to the American sexual culture was female sexual choice and affirmative consent. Women sought to return a passion to women that was on a par with men. The role of the clitoris was rediscovered and women rejected Ellis’s and Freud’s belief that female passion needed to be passive to spark the fire of male lust. The basic proposition was that “No means No” and that sexual consent was to be established through discourse. Although articulated in the 1970s, these ideas only began to reach the American public in the 1990s. Today, the anti-rape movement on many college campuses
teaches men and women the necessity of **affirmative verbal consent**. The latter development is the most significant change in American sexual discourse of the past three centuries. It brings us back to the one-sex model with a difference: the equivalence of sexual appetite it assumes for both sexes is now joined with a corresponding call for female sexual choice and sexual equality in all aspects of social life. In the Afterword, I call this the new sexual revolution.

**NOTES**
