



Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America (Alternative Criminology)

By Jeanne Flavin

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Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America (Alternative Criminology) By Jeanne Flavin

Winner of the 2009 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title and the 2010 Distinguished Book Award from the American Sociological Association

The intense policing of women's reproductive capacity places women's health and human rights in great peril. Poor women are pressured to undergo sterilization. Women addicted to illicit drugs risk arrest for carrying their pregnancies to term. Courts, child welfare, and law enforcement agencies fail to recognize the efforts of battered and incarcerated women to care for their children. Pregnant inmates are subject to inhumane practices such as shackling during labor and poor prenatal care. And decades after *Roe*, the criminalization of certain procedures and regulation of abortion providers still obstruct women's access to safe and private abortions.

In this important work, Jeanne Flavin looks beyond abortion to document how the law and the criminal justice system police women's rights to conceive, to be pregnant, and to raise their children. Through vivid and disturbing case studies, Flavin shows how the state seeks to establish what a "good woman" and "fit mother" should look like and whose reproduction is valued. With a stirring conclusion that calls for broad-based measures that strengthen women's economic position, choice-making, autonomy, sexual freedom, and health care, *Our Bodies, Our Crimes* is a battle cry for all women in their fight to be fully recognized as human beings. At its heart, this book is about the right of a woman to be a healthy and valued member of society independent of how or whether she reproduces.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Bolstered by quotes and firsthand accounts, Flavin delivers eye-opening reports on topics including abortion rights, infant abandonment and battered women, detailing little-noticed or taken-for-granted policies that restrict and remand women. Written in a flowing academic style, Flavin’s attention to historical detail and unfailing moral compass make her progressive reexamination of women’s rights thorough and convincing.”

-*Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

"Flavin's book shows how American women, especially those who are poor or incarcerated, face societal pressure, stigma and even legal procedures in attempts to force them to become the "right" kind of mothers—if they are deemed worthy of motherhood at all."

-*Conscience: The Newsjournal of Catholic Opinion*

“*Our Bodies, Our Crimes* is one of the most compelling books I've read in recent years. Flavin’s writing is exquisite and her documentation is careful and thorough. Whether informing the reader about reproductive freedom, battered women, or incarcerated women, she does so even-handedly and ably captures the complexities and depravities that real women and girls encounter every day in this country. Flavin draws on high profile cases, unknown cases, laws, policies, history, criminology research and much more to explain how her cases are decided by race, gender, class, and sexuality. Her book will help students, legal professionals, gender and legal scholars, and lay people to understand the common themes and threads of violence against women and girls and the sexism, racism, and classism in labeling girls and women deviant and criminals.”

-Joanne Belknap, author of *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*

“In *Our Bodies, Our Crimes*, Flavin traces the life-and-death power that the little-examined patriarchal assumptions informing our common life can have—especially among poor, nonwhite women. Flavin . . . supplies a sobering primer on the laws and social constraints that keep women from fully controlling their bodies. The case studies she surveys in *Our Bodies, Our Crimes* make it painfully clear that the freedom to decide how and when to reproduce is, for a huge swath of American women, just as important as the much more fervidly discussed question of how and when women can choose not to reproduce.”

-*Bookforum*

“*Our Bodies, Our Crimes* is a beautifully written and well researched book that makes an original and important contribution to the emerging social science literature on reproductive politics. I strongly recommend it.”

-Carole Joffe, author of *Doctors of Conscience: The Struggle to Provide Abortion before and after Roe v Wade*

“Illuminates the dark corners of a public polity that holds pregnant women accountable for all aspects and outcomes of their reproduction without offering the compassion, education, or control necessary to produce happy endings—or beginnings.”

-Jennifer Reich, author of *Fixing Families: Parents, Power, and the Child Welfare System*

“At last, a book that recognizes that reproductive rights encompass more than abortion rights. *Our Bodies, Our Crimes* covers all of the essential and highly controversial topics regarding the intersection of reproductive rights and criminal justice.”

-Claire M. Renzetti, co-author of *Women, Men, and Society*

“Highly recommended.”

-Choice

“*Our Bodies, Our Crimes*, Jeanne Flavin’s thorough examination of the criminalization of female reproduction in America, is dense yet provocative.”

-make/shift

About the Author

Jeanne Flavin is a Professor of Sociology at Fordham University in New York City. She is author of the award-winning *Our Bodies, Our Crimes: Policing Women's Reproduction in America* (NYU 2009), co-editor of *Race, Gender, and Punishment: From Colonialism to the War on Terror* (Rutgers, 2007), and author of more than two dozen other scholarly publications. She received a Fulbright research award in 2009 to study gender, family, and crime in South Africa. She also is the 2013 recipient of the Sociologists for Women in Society's Feminist Activism Award. Currently, she serves as president of the board of directors for National Advocates for Pregnant Women. Jeanne grew up on a farm in rural Kansas.

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