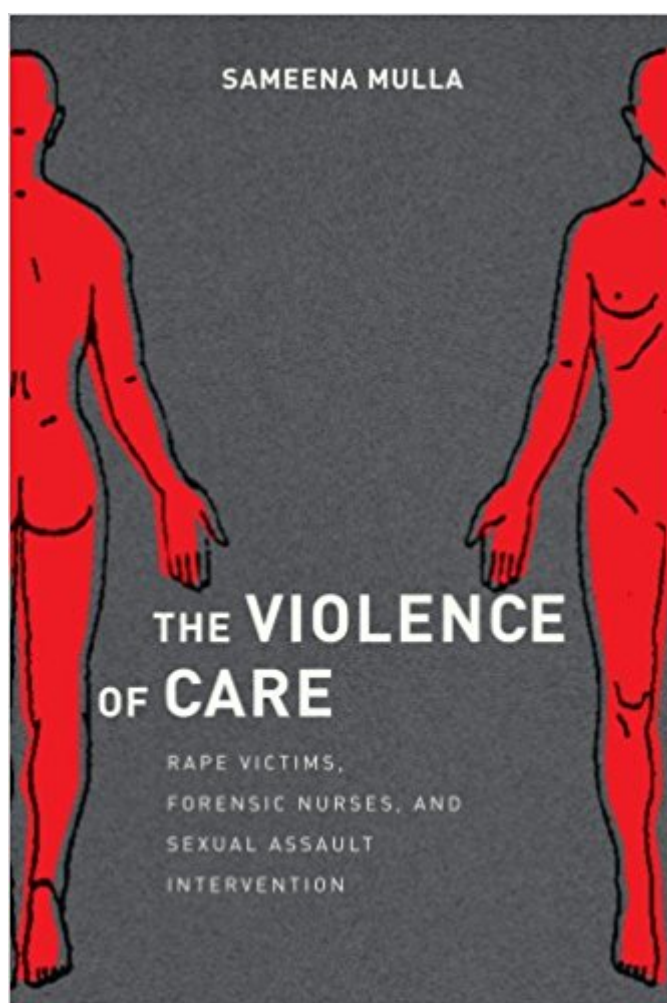


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# The Violence Of Care: Rape Victims, Forensic Nurses, And Sexual Assault Intervention



## Synopsis

Honorable Mention, 2015 Eileen Basker Memorial Prize presented by the Society for Medical Anthropology

Every year in the U.S., thousands of women and hundreds of men participate in sexual assault forensic examinations. Drawing on four years of participatory research in a Baltimore emergency room, Sameena Mulla reveals the realities of sexual assault response in the forensic age. Taking an approach developed at the intersection of medical and legal anthropology, she analyzes the ways in which nurses work to collect and preserve evidence while addressing the needs of sexual assault victims as patients. Mulla argues that blending the work of care and forensic investigation into a single intervention shapes how victims of violence understand their own suffering, recovery, and access to justice—in short, what it means to be a “victim.” As nurses race the clock to preserve biological evidence, institutional practices, technologies, and even state requirements for documentation undermine the way in which they are able to offer psychological and physical care. Yet most of the evidence they collect never reaches the courtroom and does little to increase the number of guilty verdicts. Mulla illustrates the violence of care with painstaking detail, illuminating why victims continue to experience what many call “secondary rape” during forensic intervention, even as forensic nursing is increasingly professionalized. Revictimization can occur even at the hands of conscientious nurses, simply because they are governed by institutional requirements that shape their practices. *The Violence of Care* challenges the uncritical adoption of forensic practice in sexual assault intervention and post-rape care, showing how forensic intervention profoundly impacts the experiences of violence, justice, healing and recovery for victims of rape and sexual assault.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this richly detailed ethnology that draws from anthropology, science and technology studies, law and society, philosophy, and literary theory, Mulla subjects the sexual assault examination to exacting scrutiny." *Contemporary Sociology*

"Vivid instances of humor, spunk, and frustration provide a fuller sense of the personalities and lives of nurses and rape survivors than case details can capture." The book demonstrates an exemplary use of ethnography as a method for witnessing the gaps in the workings of criminal law.

"The book is a masterful call to reflection and reform. It deserves to be read by scholars in any discipline concerned with institutional responses to sexual violence and how they transform patient-provider encounters in spaces where medicine and law converge." *Theoretical Criminology*

"Mulla's identification of the reductionism of the victim's biography, implicit in the forensic medical examination, as well as the implications of that reduction, is fascinating and wholly troubling; through her ethnographic observations as a victims advocate she is able to identify a deeply entrenched problem, well-disguised within the more traditional debates in this area over the primacy of the medical or the legal or the importance of professionalism and evidence-based practice. Using an ethnographically-rich approach, focusing upon the temporal and indeed the spatial, Mulla sophisticatedly expresses the violence of reductionism." *Book Forum, Gethin Rees*

"What is truly noteworthy of this work...is far more than just its honesty: instead, it is the way in which sexual assault is shown to be something that doesn't just create victims that can be treated as a single entity, but rather individuals with distinct experiences, whose suffering and hardship does not simply disappear when the perpetrator does." *Journal of Gender Studies*

"The Violence of Care is eye opening and truly interesting, as it presents examples from the trenches of sexual assault care that would otherwise be difficult to come by." *SIGNS*

"Once in a while comes along a book that not only adds a new dimension to existing knowledge of a phenomenon but changes our angle of vision on it. The Violence of Care is such a book. Through the lens of forensic nursing, Sameena Mulla rearranges categories of law, violence, care, kinship, and obligation, shifting our horizon of thought and allowing new aspects of these familiar categories to dawn on us. A stunning

achievement."-Veena Das,Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University"[A] book that is both personal, critical, profound and at times difficult to read."-Metapsychology"A fascinating and important study of practices in the emergency room dealing with alleged rape victims paints a stark picture of the confluence of medical and juridical regimes that shape not only the emergency room intervention but also the experience and credibility of the victim and thus the potential criminal case."-Anthropology Review Database  
"Sameena Mulla's remarkable new book about rape victims and forensic nursing is tightly woven, compelling in its ethnography, and so carefully thought and cumulative in its analytic structure that for me reading it felt like one extended epiphany. It also left me with a profound respect for Mulla's work as a rape counselor and an anthropologist. Rarely do we see participant observation on this order of participation, rarely do we see a writer strike such a perfect tone when addressing such deeply fraught material."  
-Book Forum,Julie Livingston  
"Mulla's book is a highly engaging and valuable contribution to work on sexual assault, gender, power, and the intersection of medical, juridical, and criminal justice worlds."  
-American Anthropologist  
"Mulla has made a very important contribution to understanding the phenomenon of rape. In her diligent study of and research on rape victims, she provides insight into seeing how boundaries are blurred in the medical and legal treatment of the rape victim undergoing emergency care. . . . The book is a wake-up call for professionals/practitioners who work with rape victims."-Choice

Sameena Mulla is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Marquette University (WI).

The author has a completely distorted view of the Forensic Nursing community and how the whole system works. Is she were truly educated in this team approach that has been diligently worked on by so many for so long she would know this isn't a one women show. The Forensic Nurse is never alone, there are always advocates to support the victims and whomever the victim personally may chose to be with them. The Advocates are there to walk them through the whole process from the door of the examination room to the interview with law enforcement to the prosecutor to the court room. that is what we established a team approach so there would be a person to be their support and sounding board since every other component had a very specific job. This author needs to get better educated.

Well-written discussion of a challenging situation. Accessible to non-academic readers. We all have

a role in understanding and improving the rights and experience of victims. Better would be a society which prevents victimization in the first place.

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