

Bad Girls Caught on Camera

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Moments of public outrage can be opportunities to consider deep-rooted cultural assumptions.

There's been moral outrage lately over a popular YouTube channel called [Drive Thru Tours](#). Launched in 2020, the channel started out by posting videos of tours through parts of New Jersey and New York. It hit paydirt last year when it began showing videos of police arrests, with titles such as "[Rude 19-year-old Girl Arrested for DUI in Pullman, WA](#)" (recommended if you want to get a flavor of the site) and "[Belligerent Woman Arrested for DWI after Police Pursuit and Taken to Jail](#)" (not recommended—very disturbing). The channel owner obtained the content—which until recently has focused exclusively on female offenders—from police bodycam recordings, now publicly available through freedom of information requests.

Bodycam footage was originally made accessible to the public so that American citizens can hold police accountable for their actions. Scrutiny of police behavior is widely considered a public good. Scrutiny of female behavior, however, is quite a different story—as responses to the channel demonstrate.

According to a small flurry of recent news reports, New Jersey police are warning that *Drive Thru Tours* is [harming "vulnerable" young women](#) by posting the evidence of their arrests. The bodycam footage was never intended, they protest, for such a purpose. In consequence, the Association of Chiefs of Police of New Jersey is calling for legislation against what they are describing as "[online sexual predators](#)," and lawmakers in that state are considering a bill that would prohibit publishing the footage except within narrow parameters, including with the written consent of the subject.

Quite apart from whether such a bill is a good idea or not (I favor public access but have not given the matter serious thought), the language used in the articles is remarkable for its gynocentric sentimentality and misplaced sympathy.

One of the most vocal on the subject is Montville, New Jersey Police Chief Andrew Caggiano, who is quoted as stating that "It was never the intent of OPRA [the Open Public Records Act] to create such a platform that preys on young women and takes advantage of them at a time when they are vulnerable." He also expressed a personal repugnance: "As a law enforcement professional and the father of three daughters, I am sickened by the fact that people are abusing OPRA to post these types of videos on social media sites."

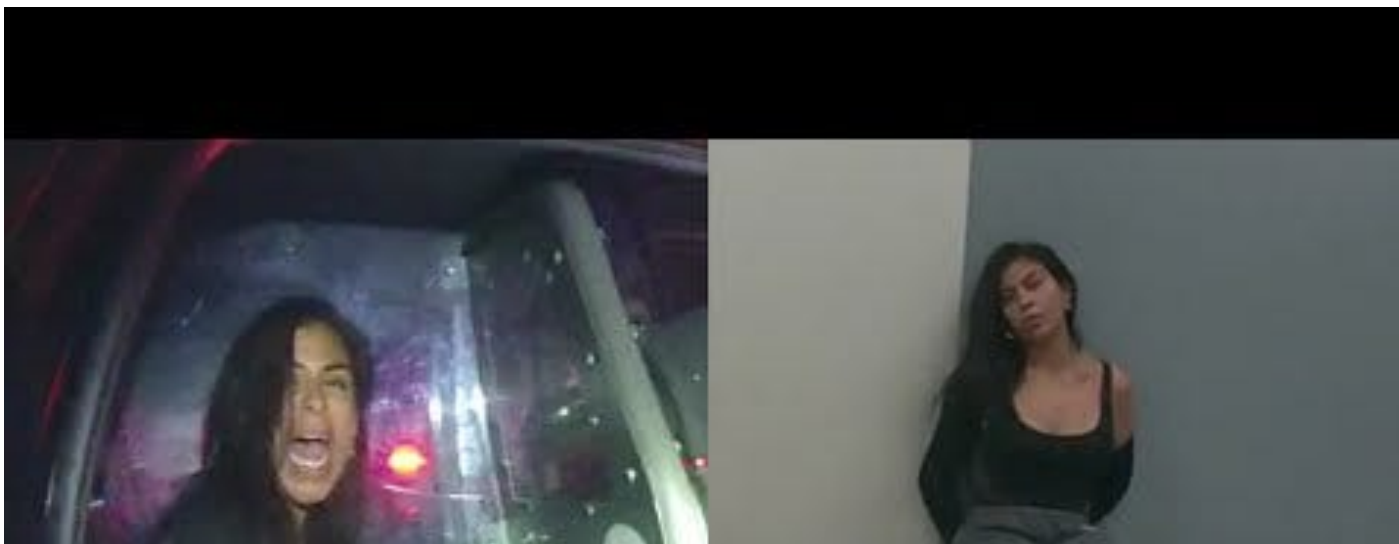
Given that it is not (yet) illegal to use bodycam material in the manner described, Chief Caggiano's dramatic reaction seems overstated. One wonders in what sense the reckless and self-absorbed young people shown in these videos are "vulnerable." Wouldn't such language be better suited to their victims? Perhaps Caggiano knows something about his daughters that we don't know (there is a video in which a "[Cop's Daughter Gets Arrested for DWI after Fleeing Accident Scene](#)"): one would not normally expect a chief of police to so quickly substitute in imagination his own daughters for the inebriated and flagrantly dishonest women shown on *Drive Thru Tours*.

Caggiano’s bluster is, of course, all too familiar in a culture that [cannot bear to hold women fully responsible for their bad actions](#)—no matter how anti-social or potentially lethal—and must habitually frame them as innocent victims. It’s impossible to imagine such outraged sympathy being expressed for any male offenders in similar situations.

As the news reports admit, arrest stories have been popular viewing for a long time. [Cops](#) (with its theme song about [bad boys](#)) has been, with a hiatus after the death of George Floyd, one of the longest running shows in the history of American television. [Dog the Bounty Hunter](#) added suspense and a Christian theme of second chances, often humanizing the men on the run whom Dog and his family hunt down. The only difference between those popular shows, never to my knowledge condemned by police or media experts, and [Drive Thru Tours](#) is that the latter focuses primarily on young women. And why shouldn’t it?

But that, according to police and pundits, is precisely what makes the channel “[exploitative](#),” turning ordinary arrest footage into something approaching soft-core porn. “The most popular videos,” we are told, “[feature intoxicated-seeming \[sic\] women in bikinis at the Jersey Shore or form-fitting dresses on the side of the road](#).” In fact, this is not true. Some of the most popular videos feature rather unattractive women in baggy sweat pants. The most watched video of all, “[Officer Pulls over Couple Minutes before Fatal Crash](#),” with 3.2M views, does not feature a female offender at all.

But the pundits are drawing on familiar themes. Kelly McBride, described in one report as a “nationally recognized expert on media ethics,” and undoubtedly marinated in feminist contentions about the [male gaze](#), called out the videos as “voyeurism.” Even an expert who argued that they should not be criminalized was comfortable calling the channel’s owner a “random creep.”





Here is modern chivalry in a nutshell, fueled by the feminist conviction that whenever anyone looks at a young woman, it must be to “sexualize” her against her will (and thus harm her, possibly criminally) by allegedly turning her into an “[object](#).” It is now all but impossible to acknowledge that men naturally enjoy looking at young women’s bodies, that women often explicitly invite such looking, and that most of it is not at all predatory.

But what does all that have to do with women being arrested for drunk driving and other offenses? Comments under the videos (such as [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) do not bear out the voyeurism angle. Many viewers simply express satisfaction that law-breaking women were treated as offenders rather than innocents: “[We just witnessed an adult being held responsible for her actions for the first time in her life.](#)” Some think the women should have been dealt with more harshly: “[This girl doesn’t appreciate the fact that she could have been treated sooo differently. She got a good, patient, and understanding cop ... she still treats him like shit. Ungrateful brat, I would have left her in jail for 6 more hours.](#)”

Many are disgusted by the women’s seeming lack of seriousness in the moment of their arrest: “[It’s all cute and funny until your family gets t-boned or head-on’d by one of these drunken fools,](#)” wrote one angrily. “[They get to go on with their lives while your spouse is dead and your kids maimed.](#)” “[19 year old is NOT A GIRL. She is an adult woman who needs to have consequences for her actions.](#)” “[It’s astonishing how entitled she feels and the complex of superiority she has.](#)” Many commend police officers for [patience and self-restraint](#).

And yes, there is an element of unholy enjoyment. Most people like to see wrongdoers caught out, especially when they seem to consider

themselves above the law, as many of these young women seem to do. Glee may not be the most salutary response, but it is human and quite distinct from the alleged sexual predation that so haunted Chief Caggiano.

The fact is that there are plenty of internet videos and images—hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions—[made by women themselves](#) and [designed to exploit](#) the [perennial male fascination](#) with [nubile female bodies](#). Many show a lot more skin and [sustained erotic posing](#) than the arrest videos, most of which are quite dull, showing police officers dealing with quarrelsome and uppity young women who seem to have reached the age of majority without ever hearing No or learning to control themselves. Many are incapable of uttering a sentence without the f-bomb, and repeatedly fail to follow police instructions, yet evidently feel very sorry for themselves.

And here we get closer to the likely source of interest: the videos show women at their worst. In that sense, they are, [as the channel owner claimed when contacted by the media](#), “educational,” and in a specifically anti-feminist way. They show what the culture denies: that women not only do bad things, but do them with a smile on their face and an apparent lack of shame.

Many of us have known women like this personally and have seen the devastation that they wreak in their own and others’ lives. We have seen them get away with their bad behavior in societies that are all too ready to forgive them, that accept their after-the-fact rationalizations and sob stories. Now here they are, exposed for all to see in their selfish pride and contempt for authority: not victims but victimizers, and appalling in their lack of decent remorse. Showing that is not exactly a public service, but it’s not hard to understand the itch that it so compellingly scratches.

Of course, it’s possible that the police are not really outraged over the alleged exploitation of vulnerable young women. Caggiano may well have his own reasons for preferring that police bodycam footage be less easily accessible; he may simply have reached for the fail-safe narrative of our time.

If feminism were at all committed to its origin story of equality with men, feminists would protest the infantilization (and/or deification) of women. Instead, they amplify and extend the rationalizations and excuses, airbrushing away evidence of female irresponsibility and malevolence. For the millions who have tuned in to *Drive Thru Tours*, the spectacle of bad girls being shown without filters constitutes a reality check that feels long overdue.

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