



CONFRONTING RAPE

THE FEMINIST ANTI-RAPE MOVEMENT AND THE STATE

NANCY A. MATTHEWS

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Nancy A. Matthews



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Confronting Rape

Confronting Rape documents two decades of anti-rape activism. From grassroots efforts to the institutionalization of state-funded rape crisis centers, the movement has changed public thinking significantly about sexual assault. Activists in rape crisis centers across the US have created a feminist success story, although not always as they would have chosen. *Confronting Rape* explores how the state has reshaped rape crisis work by supporting the therapeutic aspects of the anti-rape movement's agenda and pushing feminist rape crisis centers toward conventional frameworks of social service provision, while submerging the feminist political agenda of transforming gender relations and preventing rape.

Through a rich comparative history of six organizations in Los Angeles, Nancy Matthews explores the complexities within a movement that includes radicals, moderates, women of color, lesbians – all working within varying frameworks. Originally critical of the state's handling of rape and distrustful of co-optation, most rape crisis centers eventually came to rely on state funding for organizational survival. But have the resulting compromises gone too far? *Confronting Rape* reveals significant, often covert, local level resistance and struggle against the mainstreaming of rape crisis work. Bureaucratic routines and discourses are both the tools through which the state redefines rape crisis work and the terrain of activists' resistance.

Nancy A. Matthews is Visiting Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Oberlin College, USA.

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For Lisa

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An earlier version of much of Chapter 7 appeared in *Gender and Society*, December 1989.

Abbreviations

Alliance	Southern California Rape Hotline Alliance
BAWAR	Bay Area Women Against Rape
CETA	Comprehensive Education and Training Administration
Coalition	California State Coalition of Rape Crisis Centers
Compton	Compton YWCA Rape Crisis Center
East LA	East Los Angeles Rape Hotline
FAAR	Feminist Alliance Against Rape
LACAAW	Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women
LEAA	Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
NCPCR	National Center for the Prevention and Control of Rape
NIMH	National Institutes for Mental Health
OCJP	Office of Criminal Justice Planning
Pasadena	Pasadena YWCA Rape Crisis Service
RCC	Rape Crisis Center
Rosa Parks	Rosa Parks Rape Crisis Service
SAC	Sexual Assault Services Advisory Committee (OCJP)
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SCWAR	Santa Cruz Women Against Rape
Valley	San Fernando Valley Rape Crisis Service
VOCA	Victims of Crime Assistance
WASA	Women Against Sexual Assault
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Introduction

Twenty years after the first speak-out against rape, we are still grappling with the meaning and extent of sexual violence in women's lives. Violence against women became a fundamental issue for the new feminist movement that began in the late 1960s, and became the focus of a distinct, parallel anti-rape movement. Today, rape crisis centers are ubiquitous in the U.S.; found in cities of all sizes and in many rural counties, they offer counseling and a variety of other services to survivors of sexual assault. What began as an anti-rape movement has developed into a collection of organizations that provide a range of services. The *movement* aspect of anti-rape work is now less apparent than its character as a network of social service agencies, which are often integrated into the very institutions the early movement opposed.

This book is about the struggles and fortunes of the anti-rape movement during its first two decades of work. I begin with its birth in collectivist, radical feminism and the invention of a new service, rape crisis work. I trace the development of a new organizational form that combined politics with service provision, and its transformation as the movement matured, new opportunities arose, and rape crisis centers became more integrated into existing social service networks. The movement confronted a number of state agencies at various points – from its early critique of the state for not addressing male violence to its later reliance on state funding for organizational survival. The story of this changing relationship between the anti-rape movement and the state is central to understanding how rape crisis work has developed and helps us understand more about states and social movements in general.

This study is animated by a concern for understanding a movement that has had a profound impact on our society, yet is all but invisible, as a movement, to the broader public. How did it begin? What were its goals? What has been gained or lost? How did the context of the

movement's genesis affect its perspectives, goals, and actions? How has the changing political climate affected its impact and ongoing work? How has society responded to the anti-rape movement? In attempting to answer these questions, one of my aims is to chronicle a history that risks being lost by virtue of having been made by people whose lives have not in the past been routinely documented. I also hope to illuminate a central dilemma of activists in our time: how do we engage the powers that we wish to change? My focus is the specific political struggles, contingencies, and accomplishments of a local anti-rape movement linked to a wider movement and to centralized state agencies.

A CHANGING MOVEMENT AND THE STATE

The anti-rape movement was founded on two notions: first, the radical political insight that violence against women is a fundamental component of the social control of women, and second, that women should try to do something to turn victims into survivors. Early activities included confrontations with individual rapists, street theater, and pressing the police in public forums. The movement tended to be anti-state, stemming both from its roots in the leftist counter-culture and the particular violations of rape victims by the police and criminal justice system. Nevertheless, over the first decade of the movement, anti-rape groups became increasingly oriented toward providing services to individual women.

One important strand in this story is the anti-rape movement's changing relationship to the state. The fact that the movement addresses violence meant almost inevitably that the state would be involved. Feminists' anger about inadequate law enforcement action on behalf of women victims of male violence led to an ambiguous stance toward the state. From the beginning, the failure of law enforcement effectively to prevent, control, or punish rape was a target of the movement's activity, but at the same time, many feminist anti-rape activists saw their work as an alternative to relying on or being involved with the criminal justice system. Skepticism toward the state extended to careful scrutiny of possible funding sources – early activists often refused money that required too close a relationship with suspect state agencies, particularly law enforcement. This changed, and over time, increased reliance on state funding has had a contradictory effect on the movement, both effectively promoting the movement's survival and contributing to its transformation from grassroots activism to professionalized social service provision.

A second strand in this story is the dynamics of feminist movement organizations. The anti-rape movement's genesis in the radical, countercultural feminism of the early 1970s meant that its earliest form of organization was collectivist. These feminists' critique of how unequal power relations are embedded in institutional structures led them to create alternatives. Early rape crisis centers were egalitarian, non-hierarchical, and attempted to operate by consensus. But as a result of internal processes of development and external pressures to conform, conventional organizational structure supplanted the early collectives. Today rape crisis centers have a variety of organizational forms. Some are part of larger institutions, including hospitals, community mental health centers, and even district attorneys' offices; some are located in YWCAs or other community organizations, others are in women's centers on college campuses, or are projects of battered women's shelters; some are free-standing organizations. The common structure, though, is some version of the private, not-for-profit corporation. They often look more like social service agencies than social movement organizations.

Paralleling structural change has been the professionalization of rape crisis work. In keeping with their roots in the counterculture, early activists were suspicious of authority and expertise, and in an effort to respect and empower the women they aided, they emphasized the ability of any woman to do rape crisis work. Peer counseling has been partially replaced by professional counseling and this is still a matter of debate within the movement. Ironically, these anti-professional activists developed expertise which in part drew on the professional skills of social workers and other human service workers who were part of the movement. In turn, these professionals worked to legitimize what they were learning and developing within their professions, creating a specialty in treating sexual assault that has gained recognition and furthered the understanding of the related phenomena of rape, child sexual abuse, and battering. The legitimization of concepts such as rape trauma syndrome, which is now sometimes used in rape trials to explain victims' behavior, are part of this process. Professionalization of rape crisis work thus has occurred in two related senses: one is what social movement theorists observe about the increase in paid, "professional" movement leaders, and another is the adoption of some of the work the anti-rape movement started by established professionals, who locate it within their niche, as work they have special and exclusive claim over.

While rape crisis work originated as an expression of the new feminist politics, today it is also a manifestation of a therapeutic society. The framework of therapy has become a mode for dealing with

numerous social problems in the late 20th century United States and has thus become a mixed blessing. For all their liberatory potential, therapeutic frameworks often disguise social ills as personal trauma (Polsky 1991). Connecting the emergence of professionalized rape crisis work with funding of such services by the state, I argue that state agencies prefer and promote the individualized treatment model of addressing rape, rather than the more political analyses developed by early activists. State sponsorship of services and the related ascendancy of service-provision are a conservatizing influence on the movement because they shift the focus to therapeutically managing the aftermath of rape rather than to changing social relations in order to prevent rape.

The choice of certain kinds of action comes to characterize a movement; movements are identified by their services, lobbying, educational work, or civil disobedience. The chosen work itself embodies demands that influence other decisions and frame subsequent choices. The selection of hotlines as the centerpiece of their work had consequences for the anti-rape movement, in that it produced hybrid organizations that were both political and service-oriented. Recruitment of volunteers to staff these hotlines meant drawing in people who did not necessarily share the political analysis of the founders, which helped tip the scale toward service. The process of professionalization and increasing dependence on external funding also pushed the movement's identity away from a political orientation as the work became shaped by the social service and bureaucratic concerns of the state. An understanding of the tension between politics and service helps to explain ongoing tensions in the movement.

Internal factors converged to make the hotline and counseling services the centerpiece of their projects. These factors included the activists' value on bringing the political down to the personal level; the way in which counseling drew on traditionally feminine skills; the reliance on voluntary labor; and the many social workers who were involved. The political environment was a further catalyst to these groups' transformation from social movement organizations into social service agencies because the state was the most likely source of needed financial help; the state, in response to increasing demands for services, had an interest in having volunteer groups provide them at relatively low cost; and adopting the structure of non-profit status was necessary in order to participate in the state's grant economy.

Reliance on state grants constituted a new structural relationship to the state: these groups were partially absorbed into the network of service organizations existing on the periphery of the state. As a result, rape crisis services have become a contested terrain on which

organizational and ideological autonomy are disputed with the state agencies that now claim such services as their own. Oppositional ideology is maintained through the educational programs the groups offer (both the intensive training of volunteer members and public workshops). These struggles have implications for our understanding of the state's relationship to women, and to feminism, which are developed in the final chapter.

RAPE CRISIS SERVICES TODAY

Rape crisis services have evolved considerably since they were first started, but the core activities have remained constant. Although rape crisis centers vary in their organizational location quite a bit, they are associated with a surprisingly consistent set of services (Gornick, Burt, and Pittman 1985; Byington, Martin *et al.* 1990), although what is actually delivered may vary. The rape crisis centers in this study have the following kinds of services in common: they offer crisis intervention through a 24-hour telephone hotline and face-to-face counseling for rape victims and their families and friends. Trained volunteers take calls, which are forwarded to their homes, during four to six hour shifts. Women may call the hotline soon after an assault, or they may wait years before calling. The hotlines follow up after the first contact, and sometimes this results in the rape survivor coming to the center for in-person counseling, being referred to a private counselor, or joining a support group organized by the center. In addition, rape crisis volunteers or staff provide accompaniment and advocacy services; they will go with the caller to the hospital, the police, through court-related appointments, or appointments with other agencies, and if necessary intervene with these agencies on their behalf.

In addition to crisis intervention services, rape crisis centers organize and provide community education about sexual assault. Members go to schools, churches, community groups, and businesses to do workshops on rape and rape prevention. Some organizations have more elaborate programs that specialize in teaching women self-defense. A major project of the anti-rape movement in southern California for the past decade has been to develop a training and certification program for women self-defense instructors. This has been important to women in the movement because they are able to teach a feminist approach to rape prevention that emphasizes empowering women rather than merely protecting them. Self-defense instruction also has been an avenue for reaching new communities. For example, deaf women first became

involved in Los Angeles' oldest rape crisis center through this training in 1988.

Direct services to women and community education about sexual assault are the basic activities of all the rape crisis centers. In recent years some have expanded and diversified their programs to address related issues, such as child abuse prevention. Some also serve battered women, but in most of Los Angeles, those services are offered by separate organizations. The uniformity in services among hotlines is a product of both the movement's evolution and specification of standards by the state funding agency.

THE RESEARCH

Unlike other studies that focus on a population of extant rape crisis centers at a given time (e.g. Burt, Gornick, and Pittman 1984; Gornick, Burt, and Pittman 1985; Byington *et al.* 1991; Martin *et al.* 1992; Martin 1993),¹ this study follows the development of a few organizations over a long period of time. In Los Angeles the movement could be studied in microcosm. Los Angeles County is a large area of 8 million people encompassing diverse racial and cultural communities, a wide array of individuals and groups with differing ideologies and politics, and yet which is related geographically, politically, and socially. Certainly there are unique features to how the anti-rape movement and rape crisis centers developed there, as there are in any city, but the range of problems, solutions, debates, successes and failures of the movement there largely mirror what has been found in the national scene. I pay careful attention to the particularities of the situation in Los Angeles, and in California. Indeed I wish to emphasize that local conditions affect the choices activists can and did make in organizing their movement. My emphasis is on the process of change and active creation of an institution over time within a particular context, but at more than the usual case study level. By studying several related organizations that share place and time, I can offer a more comparative analysis than a case study, and exhibit a more realistic picture of the range of work that was done by anti-rape activists. On the other hand, I offer a more richly detailed, historical, and processual view of these organizations than a large-scale national study could.

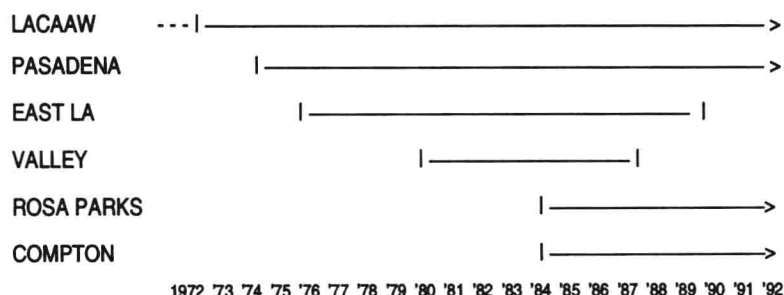
I study six organizations in detail, which are listed in Table 1 along with their dates of founding. The first four are movement organizations by virtue either of their explicit ideological grounding in feminism or their time of origin. The last two organizations started later and were

Table 1 Founding dates of rape crisis centers in Los Angeles

<i>Center</i>	<i>Date</i>
Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW)	1973*
Pasadena YWCA Rape Crisis Service (Pasadena)	1974
East Los Angeles Rape Hotline (East LA)	1976
San Fernando Valley Rape Crisis Service (Valley)	1980
Rosa Parks Rape Crisis Service (Rosa Parks)	1984
Compton YWCA Rape Crisis Center (Compton)	1984

Note: *The Anti-Rape Squad that was a precursor to LACAAW started in 1972

less directly products of the feminist anti-rape movement, but emerged from organizations in the Black community, and thus had a more activist orientation than more establishment RCCs that originated at the same time. Individual organizations have their own political and institutional histories – who founded them, when, with what resources, but all of them have been affected by the broader movement, even those whose founding was not directly from the grassroots movement. I did not include rape crisis centers whose origins were more institutionalized; in Los Angeles, primarily those located in hospitals.² Selection of organizations followed an inductive method, which was historically sensitive, so some organizations that could have been included were not – smaller

**Figure 1** Period of operation of rape crisis centers in Los Angeles

Note: The East Los Angeles Rape Hotline was reorganized in 1990 into a multi-purpose organization called Avance, which provides bilingual Spanish–English AIDS-related services in addition to rape crisis services and other community work.

RCCs farther from the geographical center of Los Angeles, or those that were more active long before I commenced my study.³ Figure 1 shows the time periods for the groups I studied.

Human agency, and especially women's activism to change the conditions of their lives, figured prominently in the questions I asked and the methods by which I sought to answer them. I thus set out to analyze the variety of experience among communities – mediated by gender, race and ethnicity, and geography – at the points of connection to a particular issue. The issue – rape – was not chosen for abstract theoretical reasons, although it has theoretical implications, but because there were concrete events, the social fact of a movement and its resulting organizations that posed compelling questions. In studies of violence women are commonly conceived as victims, both of individuals and of social forces; my study approaches them as social actors, resisting and reshaping the social relations that constitute their lives. Thus, I was interested in what people did in those communities about the issue of rape, what happened as a result of what they did, and how it was affected by events and processes outside and within those communities.

While institutionalized structures document themselves as a side effect of how they are organized, emergent structures, such as social movements, are “recorded primarily in the memories of the participants” (Roy 1989). The data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews with participants in the movement and officials of the Office of Criminal Justice Planning. I also examined archival materials from the organizations studied, and conducted field research, attending meetings, special events, and conferences related to the movement. I was committed to recording a history that would otherwise be invisible. In the oral history tradition, the interviews were designed to “give voice to the voiceless” (Di Leonardo 1987: 3), recording rich detail that would otherwise be lost. I hoped that the women I interviewed would view telling their stories as an extension of the action they had engaged in.

I was acutely aware throughout the study that the women I interviewed were offering an interpretation, an understanding, of their experience, which I was then reinterpreting through my construction of an account of the movement, based on my understanding of their stories. My method is rooted in the interpretive and feminist epistemologies that embrace reflexivity, a self-consciousness about how we are embedded in social relationships even as we conduct research (Oakley 1981; Emerson 1983). The identities I brought with me to the research and those of the women I interviewed mediated the interaction. Being a white, middle-class, academic, feminist, activist woman facilitated my access to some kinds of