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# Knowing Their Audience: The Dynamics of Multiple Strategic Collective Action Frames by W.O.A.R. (Women Organized Against Rape)

## **Abstract**

Using the sociological theory of collective action frames and scholarship on the anti-sexual violence movement, the analysis discusses multiple frames (rights frames, counter frames, and injustice frames) used by Women Organized Against Rape (W.O.A.R.). It shows that in correspondence with public officials, W.O.A.R. used rights frames to advocate for reform. Meanwhile, in responses to media outlets and in their own publication, WOARpath, W.O.A.R. used counter frames to deconstruct rape culture. The final two sections of the paper place this analysis in conversation with prominent critiques of the anti-sexual violence movement: its lack of intersectionality and emphasis on victimization and vulnerability. W.O.A.R.'s activist methods and rhetoric reveal a disregard for how race complicates the issue of sexual violence. However, W.O.A.R.'s use of victimization and vulnerability rhetoric is limited to correspondence with public officials. In WOARpath, W.O.A.R. subverted victim frames through war motifs and calls for self-defense.

## **Keywords**

Sexual Assault, Activism, framing, intersectionality, content analysis

## **Disciplines**

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence | Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Politics and Social Change

## **Comments**

Written as a senior capstone paper for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

*Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies Senior Capstone*

KNOWING THEIR AUDIENCE:  
The dynamics of multiple strategic collective action frames by W.O.A.R  
(Women Organized Against Rape)

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**Abstract:** Using the sociological theory of collective action frames and scholarship on the anti-sexual violence movement, the analysis discusses multiple frames (rights frames, counter frames, and injustice frames) used by Women Organized Against Rape (W.O.A.R). It shows that in correspondence with public officials, W.O.A.R used rights frames to advocate for reform. Meanwhile, in responses to media outlets and in their own publication, *WOARpath*, W.O.A.R used counter frames to deconstruct rape culture. The final two sections of the paper place this analysis in conversation with prominent critiques of the anti-sexual violence movement: its lack of intersectionality and emphasis on victimization and vulnerability. W.O.A.R's activist methods and rhetoric reveal a disregard for how race complicates the issue of sexual violence. However, W.O.A.R's use of victimization and vulnerability rhetoric is limited to correspondence with public officials. In *WOARpath*, W.O.A.R subverted victim frames through war motifs and calls for self-defense.

## Introduction

As a result of feminist activism, sexual violence (once seldom discussed) is now a recognized social problem, prompting the creation of prevention and education programs at universities and high schools across the nation. The success of the anti-sexual violence movement has made it a frequent subject of research. Scholars have studied the movement's legacies, critiquing it for a focus on vulnerability and victimization that ultimately linked those characteristics with feminine identity and sexuality. More have studied its inadequacies, arguing that the anti-sexual violence movement failed to incorporate the experiences of black women and other women of color into its ideology. Many have analyzed how feminists redefined gender roles and sexual expectations to overturn "rape myths." Overturning these myths required both

the redefining of rape as a social injustice and an examination of gendered expectations that accepted sexual violence.

While scholars have analyzed how activism changed conversations on sexual violence, few have studied how language functioned as a political tool for activists. In the field of sociology, politicized language or *frames*, are deemed essential in order for movements to legitimate their claims (Benford and Snow 2000; Gaby and Caren 2016). If frames are effective, social movement organizations can use discourse to transform their goals into realities. This study intends to contribute to this gap in research on the anti-sexual violence movement. That is, how did activists frame sexual violence to prompt action by politicians, law enforcement, and citizens?

To answer this question, I conducted a case study on Women Organized Against Rape (W.O.A.R), an organization founded in Philadelphia in 1972. My decision to study W.O.A.R was both pragmatic and theoretically grounded. Pragmatically, W.O.A.R's archives, kept in the Special Collections Research Center at Temple University in Philadelphia, were within reasonable traveling distance from Gettysburg College. The theoretical support for my decision to use this archive is rooted in my methodology. In order to conduct a thorough content analysis, I needed to ensure that I had an adequate amount of text to analyze. Social movements are seldom well recorded, but the archive of W.O.A.R's work was large and provided more than enough material for this case study. The entire archive contains two accessions, the first with two series, the second with eight. Each series contains anywhere from 30 to 100 boxes with documents dating from the early 1970s to the late 1990s.

Finally, studies of social movements are most widely applicable (and thus helpful in understanding change) when organizations studied can be used as models to guide other social movement organizations. W.O.A.R, still active in Philadelphia today, demonstrates a durability that is valuable in developing an understanding of the long arc of social change. The success of W.O.A.R's frames are evident. In a few short years, all of W.O.A.R's suggested reforms were implemented.

The size of the archive presented challenges. Time constraints made a survey of the entire archive impossible and forced the elimination of documents from the analysis. Given my interest in understanding how W.O.A.R validated their claims to create change, I narrowed my analysis to documents that were intended for external use. A focus on these documents reflects studies of social movement frames that seek to understand how movements shape public discourse. Not only did the archive include a wide array of documents, but it also included documents from W.O.A.R's founding to its present-day activism. Given that early activism (at the beginning of the movement) is responsible for the initial recognition of rape as a social problem, I narrowed my analysis to documents dated from 1972 to 1980.

The documents used in the following analysis include press releases, press correspondence, *WOARpath*, action plans to public officials, outreach materials, and letters from community members. Such letters to W.O.A.R were only included if they cited specific lessons from a W.O.A.R program or publication. After viewing, all documents were photographed so analysis could be conducted at Gettysburg College. Some documents were discarded from the analysis based on their condition. While most of the documents were handwritten or typed on a typewriter, the ink had faded on some of the typewriter documents making them difficult to read.

Occasionally, handwritten correspondences were eliminated because of an inability to read them with accuracy.

In addition to frame theory, this analysis has been shaped by research on the anti-sexual violence movement. Therefore, a defense of choices made not only in the archives, but also of supporting research is required to maintain the credibility of this study. A review of the cited literature reveals that some of my sources are from the years or a few years beyond the period covered by the documents in my analysis. However, my choice of what might be considered “outdated” literature is a necessary component to this research. Making inferences about the intent of activists based on the text in the documents requires an understanding of anti-sexual violence movement as it existed in their time. Without input from the activists who produced the documents I am studying, using literature written by their contemporaries helps me understand their perspective.

Methodologically, content analysis presents certain difficulties for feminist researchers. While the class, race, gender, and sexuality of the researcher can contribute to bias in any study, a content analysis positions the researcher as the sole interpreter of data, without input from those who produced it (i.e. W.O.A.R activists). As a result, the likelihood of the results being manipulated by my social location is high. An awareness of my identities (white, heterosexual, middle class, cisgender) and my education about sexual violence—an outgrowth of this movement—were required to conduct this analysis.

This paper analyzes W.O.A.R’s frames in four sections. The first two analyze W.O.A.R’s communication with public officials and media organizations, ending with a discussion of frames in their own publication, *WOARpath*. With public officials, W.O.A.R used statistics and statutes,

echoing scholarship on the common use of rights frames by social movements to gain acceptance and implement reforms. With media organizations, W.O.A.R used the trauma and violence experienced by victims as evidence that no woman would “ask for it” or “cry rape.” In *WOARpath*, W.O.A.R critiques gender expectations presented in advertisements and current events. Clever and concise features expose sexual violence as a cultural—not biological—behavior, and gives readers the tools to recognize rape culture.

The final two sections analyze W.O.A.R’s frames in contexts of debates about the movement’s lack of intersectionality and its emphasis on victimization and vulnerability. W.O.A.R’s activist methods and rhetoric reveal a disregard for how race complicates the issue of sexual violence. W.O.A.R’s emphasis on victimization and vulnerability gives scholars both credence and critique. W.O.A.R used victimization and vulnerability rhetoric to target the masculine identities of public officials. However, in their magazine, *WOARpath*, W.O.A.R subverted victim frames through self-defense tips and war-themed rhetoric. Thus, while W.O.A.R used previously studied collective action frames (rights frames, counter frames, injustice frames) to advocate against sexual violence, they deployed these frames strategically depending on their targeted audiences. Nevertheless, despite their effectiveness, these frames were likely produced from limited racial perspectives.

### I. In Terms They Could Understand: Conversations with Politicians, Law Enforcement, and Public Officials

Social movements are composed of both radical and reformist organizations (Collins and Whalen 1989). Radical (or revolutionary) organizations insist that institutions—built in cultural contexts responsible for injustices—must be dismantled. Reformist organizations argue that institutions need only to be restructured. In the feminist movement, the difference in tactics

between these two types of organizations have sparked debate over which is most conducive to change. In these debates, reformist organizations are accused of compromising their values to gain access to institutions (hooks 2015) and radical organizations are critiqued for a masculine militarism implied by their intended “violent seizure of government power” (Harding, 271).

W.O.A.R clearly emerges as a reform organization from the documents in the archive. In both typed and handwritten memos, W.O.A.R’s primary goals involve institutional reform; a five-step plan to improve the investigation of rape<sup>1</sup>, a proposal to the district attorney’s office to reform prosecutorial processes<sup>2</sup>, and plans to advocate for state legislation in Harrisburg<sup>3</sup>. In a matter of years, all of these proposed reforms had been enacted. This success demonstrates W.O.A.R’s ability to navigate their political context.

The navigation of political context is among a variety of factors analyzed by theorists who study social movements. When analyzing the arc followed by social movement organizations to initiate change, political process theory provides a framework to understand the interaction between frames, resource mobilization, political opportunities, and cycles of activism in social movements (Caren 2007). However, scholars who have used political process theory to analyze social movements typically focus on movement structure or political contexts rather than on their messages and language. Another sociological framework, frame theory, studies how social movements use language (i.e. frames) to achieve their goals.

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<sup>1</sup>Plan of Action for Five Step Plan and Police Proposal. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Special Handling of Rape Cases. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Priorities for Political Action for W.O.A.R. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 187 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.



Grown from the study of social movements, frame theory studies how language can transform concepts. This scholarship insists that without a strong message, social change is impossible. These messages, known as collective action frames, refer to a set of concepts used by social movements to form and validate calls for change (Benford and Snow 2000). Collective action frames can be divided into three subcategories: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. Diagnostic frames identify the problem, prognostic frames identify the cause and articulate a plan of action, and motivational frames drive community involvement. A single collective action frame can include frames from one or all three of these subcategories.

One of the most prominent frames identified by this theory is the rights frame. In this frame, social movements justify their cause by arguing that a particular injustice violates either fundamental human rights or rights guaranteed by the state. During the first wave of the women's movement, suffragists used rights frames to secure the right to vote. More recently, the women's jury movement advocated for the placement of women on juries by asserting that an individual's right to be judged by their peers was not fulfilled if a female defendant was being judged by an all male jury (McCammon 2007). Elizabeth Schneider argues that the dialectic used by activists on issues like domestic violence, sexual harassment, and reproductive rights is best described as rights discourse (1986). This strategy has been observed in women of color feminisms as well; studies of the Chicana feminist movement found that activists appropriated practices and values from their male counterparts to assert their goals (Roth 2007). The success of these movements suggests that the use of state language to combat inequality is a reliable method of activism for social movement organizations.

However, some argue that the collective nature of the women's movement is not compatible with the individualism inherent in the focus on "rights." In response, others argue that feminist activists expand the framework to argue for policy that benefits individual goals *and* newly forming feminist ends (Schneider 1986; Roth 2007). Activists advocated for women's rights to benefit both the individual and the collective. Not only did activism expand the narrow definition of rights, but by asserting rights for women, it also deconstructed a framework that for centuries was designed and used by men. Applying this logic to the anti-sexual violence movement, activists brought justice to victims, safety to women, and opened institutions to women's experiences.

Both Roth and Schneider's work can be easily applied to the work of reformist organizations in the anti-sexual violence movement. It was within existing institutions that an investigative and victim support infrastructure developed. Working with state institutions allowed for the transformation of rape from a sex crime into a violent crime that required the attention of law enforcement and public officials. Organizations partnered with police precincts, local hospitals, and district attorneys to create legal and medical protocols for the investigation of rape. Relationships with state agencies facilitated activist efforts to change legal constructions of rape (Collins and Whalen 1989; McNickle Rose 1977; Luke 2017; Clutterbuck-Cook 2017). Procedures and policies were replaced with new practices informed by feminist theory (Matthews 1994). Prevention programs included police training sessions to teach law enforcement compassionate practices for handling victims (Gilbert 1998). Activists advocated for an end to corroboration requirements for conviction, and blocked defending counsel from

using a victim's sexual history as a cross examination strategy (Caputi 1992). Finally, legal definitions of consent aided convictions in rape trials (McNickle Rose 1977).

Once this infrastructure was established, reformist organizations could expand services to tailor to the specific experience of rape. After 1971, rape crisis centers opened throughout the U.S. and became pillars of the movement (Chasteen 2001; Caputi 1992; Matthews 1994; Collins and Whalen 1989). They provided counseling services and support to victims to work through their trauma and navigate legal proceedings (McNickle Rose 1977; Chasteen 1998; Collins and Whalen 1989).

Like their contemporaries, W.O.A.R recognized rape as a violent crime that required the creation of a specialized infrastructure to support victims through investigation and prosecution. In their proposals to create this new infrastructure, W.O.A.R used a rights frame. W.O.A.R's proposals to city officials signaled an expansion of the rights framework while mirroring the reforms proposed by the anti-sexual violence movement, harkening back to the intent of its activists. Their proposals used existing statutes to support their reforms as natural extensions of existing laws. For example, in proposals for changes to investigations of rape and medical examinations of victims, W.O.A.R prefaced the protocol in their proposals with existing legal obligations for medical professionals. The medical treatment manual outlined the responsibility of physicians to report any injury that occurred in violation of the law to the police<sup>4</sup> and the responsibility of physicians to report injuries incurred in criminal activity to the appropriate authorities to keep the public informed<sup>5</sup>. The most detailed were the instructions for reporting

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<sup>4</sup>Guidelines for Medical Treatment of Rape Victims. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

when the case concerned a minor<sup>6</sup>. At first, attaching already existing protocol in a memo addressed to officials who are aware of it might seem unnecessary. However, including these statutes not only asserts the rights of victims and communities, but also holds police officers and medical professionals accountable to existing standards.

W.O.A.R also paired legal statutes with statistics. In all documents, W.O.A.R prefaced their proposals, educational materials, and publications with statistics on the frequency of rape in Philadelphia<sup>7</sup>. In some, they present their own statistics, detailing how many victims W.O.A.R has helped since its founding in 1972<sup>8</sup>. These statistics, calculated by the FBI, perform two rhetorical functions in the rights frame. Given their origins, not only would these numbers be viewed as credible by public officials, but their existence demonstrates that rape is a crime prevalent enough to be measured by a national law enforcement agency. These statistics are then used to estimate the number of rapes in Philadelphia, helping public officials to understand their role in remedying a national crisis.

Finally, statistics are accompanied by the caveat that reports of rape are discouraged by the structure of the legal system. For example, in the introduction to the proposals for reform, W.O.A.R notes that no case should be dismissed due to an “apparent lack of victim credibility.”<sup>9</sup> Ending their communication with this reality, W.O.A.R’s appeals to city officials begin

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Letter addressed to the Members of the City Council. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>8</sup>Announcement of Press Conference. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 190 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>9</sup>Letter addressed to the Members of the City Council. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

advocacy within a basic rights frame, but leave room for its expansion to include women's experiences.

Beyond the use of statutes and statistics to advocate for reform, W.O.A.R demonstrates an understanding of political dynamics. For example, W.O.A.R begins a letter to the District Attorney by congratulating him on his campaign victory, but quickly reminds him of promises made during his campaign. In press releases, W.O.A.R notes support they have gained from other organizations in Philadelphia. By building coalitions, W.O.A.R can increase the amount of political pressure it can place on politicians. Adding statistics and political savvy to their rights framework allows W.O.A.R to appear more as an interest group, rather than a social movement organization, thus gaining political acceptance among public officials. Political acceptance, an essential resource for social movements that intend to reform existing institutions, refers to a change in public opinion that recognizes the issue and accepts social movement organizations as agents of change (Lee 2017).

Political acceptance allowed W.O.A.R to include additional services for victims as a part of the new infrastructure in their proposals. In advocating for these changes, W.O.A.R expanded legal and medical processes to accommodate women's experiences and female bodies. During the anti-sexual violence movement, many organizations sought to redefine rape in the feminine perspective, rather than a crime that harmed male property. This effort is most clearly revealed by the prevalence of speakouts during the movement. However, redefining rape required medical, police, and prosecutorial practices to be reformulated in the victim's perspective. The medical treatment manual insisted that the victim was thoroughly briefed on the exam and gave

her consent before the process moved forward<sup>10</sup>. Police officers were not allowed in the exam room, and investigative interviews were not allowed to be conducted in public<sup>11</sup>. In the courtroom, W.O.A.R insisted on a team of specially trained assistant district attorneys to prosecute rape cases, designated rooms for preliminary hearings and trials, and a rotating group of judges<sup>12</sup>. The victim's trauma is mentioned in each of these proposals, and referred to as a "crisis". Throughout the investigation, officials (law enforcement, medical, legal, etc.) are expected to consider the comfort of the victim to be their primary responsibility, rather than the sole obligation of the support volunteers.

Insisting on the presence of W.O.A.R support volunteers from report to prosecution not only incorporates women's experience by providing the victim with someone who will empathize with their trauma, but also physically incorporates women into male-dominated spaces. Hospital support volunteers were responsible for caring for victims arriving for examination, contacting their family members, and sitting in the exam room<sup>13</sup>. Beyond the initial report and examination, support volunteers accompanied victims to hearings and trials to ensure victim comfort<sup>14</sup>. Finally, W.O.A.R asked the police department to build a sexual assault investigation unit composed entirely of women<sup>15</sup>. The detailed outline of support volunteers

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<sup>10</sup>Guidelines for Medical Treatment of Rape Victims. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Special Handling of Rape Cases. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>13</sup>Guidelines for Medical Treatment of Rape Victims. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>W.O.A.R program for improved handling of rape cases in Philadelphia. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

responsibilities takes up nearly a page in the document. Yet, these proposals were intended for reading by medical professionals, attorneys, and law enforcement officials. Arguably, extensive lists of responsibilities for the support volunteers were unnecessary, the only information officials would have required was that support volunteers would be present. Additionally, the duties of support volunteers could have been easily communicated in separate prints to the volunteers who filled these positions. The space dedicated to the responsibilities of the support volunteers is an indicator of the role they would have in these investigations.

## II. Counter Arguments: Deconstructing Rape Culture

While W.O.A.R functioned as a reformist organization and focused on institutional change, success of the anti-sexual violence movement also depended on reform of a culture that supported and accepted sexual violence. As the feminist movement grew in the 1970s, theorists and activists considered how culture contributed to expectations of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity was defined by action, strength, and dominance. His sexuality was rooted in the evolutionary drive to reproduce. Femininity was defined in opposition to masculinity. It was equated with passivity, weakness and submission. Her sexuality was confined to expectations of purity. Activists argued that the dichotomy between the sexes that asserted masculine strength and feminine vulnerability was the root of gender inequality and sexual violence.

The supposed vulnerability of the feminine and aggression of the masculine made women responsible for preventing their victimization and absolved perpetrators of accountability. Women who were assaulted “asked for it,” by exhibiting “risky” behaviors: walking alone at night, having drinks with a male colleague, going on a date, or wearing revealing clothing.

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Meanwhile, men were incapable of controlling their sexuality. “Risky” behaviors combined with social expectations for feminine purity to produce another myth: women “cried rape” to protect their reputation (McNickle Rose 1977; Cahill 2001). Beliefs about gender and sexuality had created a discourse in which the only cases that resulted in convictions were those where a criminal man assaulted an upstanding woman (Chasteen 1998; Brownmiller 1975; Spivak 2011). This myth became so prevalent that rape was considered a consequence incurred only by reckless women. As a result, rape—as it was then constructed—was not a common crime.

Activists recognized that invalidating these misconceptions was essential to eradicating sexual violence. Feminist theorists proved that gender expectations were cultural, not biological. In response to victim blaming discourse, feminists asserted that rape was a violation that no woman would ask for. The myth of false accusations was negated by arguments that the legal system humiliated women to such a degree that no woman would willingly put herself through court proceedings. The lack of convictions, a point pushed by antagonists of the movement, was subverted by feminists who argued that this was a result of bias, rather than lies or lack of evidence.

In its correspondence with media and in its own publication, *WOARpath*, W.O.A.R contributed to the deconstruction of rape myths and gender expectations by presenting a victim’s perspective through a feminist lense. In these documents, W.O.A.R problematized misconceptions by emphasizing the violence experienced by victims and blamed societal expectations around gender and sexuality for teaching behaviors that caused sexual violence. In frame theory, this presentation of an alternative reality by a social movement organization is known as counter framing (Benford and Snow 2000).



Relationships with media played a pivotal role in W.O.A.R's activism. From the beginning, W.O.A.R seemed aware of the media's ability to influence public opinion and its value as a resource and ally. The archives contained a typed list of media organizations continually updated via handwritten notes. W.O.A.R kept track of its media appearances, noted programs that were friendly to their goals and those that were not. They thanked news organizations for positive, accurate coverage of their cause and actions, and reprimanded negative portrayals and false information.

In correspondence with media organizations, W.O.A.R emphasized violence and injury experienced by rape victims as a method to deconstruct rape myths that prevented victims from gaining justice. Most frequently, W.O.A.R responded to media that perpetuated the myth that women "asked for it". A clipping from *News Delaware County* claimed a woman would prefer to discuss her assault with a male police officer because women were more likely to assume that the victim asked for it<sup>16</sup>. The article was written in response to a letter to the editor that insisted victims would prefer to speak to a woman who can identify with her experience. In line with the lack of attention to male rape of the time, W.O.A.R explained that women would in fact be more comfortable discussing their trauma with a woman. W.O.A.R explains that men struggle to identify with an experience they might never have. Then, W.O.A.R writes that the "she asked for it" myth, is a "male fantasy and an easy excuse for those who commit the hideous crime of rape." W.O.A.R's response to *News Delaware County* used gendered constructions to subvert the rape myth the newspaper had perpetuated. Clearly, the experience of a "hideous crime," is not an experience a woman would ask for. Rather, this misconception is based on notion that women

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<sup>16</sup>To the editor of *News Delaware County*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 192 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

are expected to police their behaviors so they are not used against them in court by men who lack control.

Another response to this myth asserts that the violence and injury incurred during rape is reason to believe that no woman would “ask” to be assaulted. In a program broadcast by a Philadelphia radio station, a doctor was featured making the comment: “90% of rape victims were women under 25 who were friendly to strangers”<sup>17</sup>, implying that victims are responsible for their assault. W.O.A.R responded in a dense letter, beginning with a note that children are a large portion of rape victims (debunking the “90%” statistic given in the program) and emphasized the trauma that women (and children) are subjected to. Continuing to unravel the “asked for it” myth, the letter details other brutal forms of violence that victims experience (i.e. beating and mutilation). W.O.A.R insists that this violence is not invoked by “seductive behavior on the part of the victim” (original emphasis). The final paragraph asks that if the program would like “facts, [W.O.A.R.] would be happy to supply them.” It reiterates that the information presented in the program is in fact a “myth” (original emphasis) and refers to the statements not only as wrong, but “blasphemous.”

In another example, W.O.A.R uses a local newspaper’s coverage of an assault to demonstrate that rape is rarely the only form of violence inflicted on victims. In response to the coverage of the rape, stabbing, and burning of two women in the Philadelphia area. W.O.A.R wrote that this horrific act is just one in a larger trend of many brutal crimes against women in the city. They state that sexual violence is often accompanied with many other forms of violence:

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<sup>17</sup>“Letter to W.F.L.N”. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 194 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

“Rape is often accompanied by beating and mutilation (. . .) Perhaps this will convince the public that rape is a serious crime which must be stopped.”<sup>18</sup>

The horrific violence experienced by rape victims not only deconstructs the notion that a woman would ask to be raped, but its severity redefined rape as a violent crime that was not merely an unfortunate sexual encounter. This redefinition prompted the attention of policy makers to punish rape with the same severity as assault. In addition, these responses were frequently written as letters to the editor. The gruesome nature of the descriptions of violence gave newspapers headline worthy content, increasing the likelihood of the responses being included in the following edition. Meanwhile, the republication of W.O.A.R’s responses in following editions of these papers would have allowed sexual violence to maintain relevance in public discourse.

In other letters, W.O.A.R countered the myth that women “cried rape.” Responding to “Policewoman,” a film produced by NBC studios in New York city, W.O.A.R problematizes the narrative of a hysterical woman who falsely accuses a man of rape. Their response quickly presents a statistic that estimates the number of false reports at a mere four percent of all rape cases. The final paragraph asks the director to consider the gravity of their decision to present “stereotypes and stagnant ideas” in the future when dealing with “grave matters such as rape”<sup>19</sup>. A final point of analysis regarding these letters is that W.O.A.R responded to myths regardless of the time lapsed between publication and response, or the size or location of the organization they

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<sup>18</sup>Letter to local news papers. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 192 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>19</sup>Letter to NBC Program Director. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 194 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

contacted. Instead, W.O.A.R, knowing that media had the potential to reach a large audience, prioritized responding to incorrect information in media.

While the deconstruction of myths was a central component of their media correspondence, *WOARpath* used analysis of advertisements and current events to deconstruct expectations around gender and sexuality that legitimized rape. These analyses gave victims and allies the tools to move past trauma and helped them understand that rape was a cultural—not biological—phenomenon. A regular feature titled “Rapism Around Us” contributes to the understanding of rape as a culturally produced behavior. “Rapism,” one consonant from “racism,” alludes to a system of prejudice that is rooted in culture, not biology. Beginning in the title, W.O.A.R asserts that sexual violence is not natural. It is learned, and can be unlearned.

“Rapism Around Us” criticizes ads and clippings collected by the staff or sent in by readers that eroticized violence against women, contributed to aggressive masculine behavior, or the objectification of the female body. The use of advertisements helped expose sexual violence as a learned behavior by demonstrating how violence against women is entrenched in social structures, then reproduced and maintained by human actors. One of the ads is awarded The Rape and Sexist Horror (TRASH) award, after a brief section called “Envelope Please” where *WOARpath* writers sarcastically thank all the ads for their contributions to the section, and condescendingly note that the competition was “fierce.”<sup>20</sup> The TRASH award, included at the end of “Rapism Around Us”, reiterates the prevalence of rape culture.

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<sup>20</sup>Envelope Please. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

An ad that was covered both in “Rapism Around Us” and in its own feature, was pulled from an airline advertisement. A Finnish airline ad opened with the headline “How Vilho Vatanen, a Finn, created the world’s first sauna when he locked his wife in the smokehouse, set it on fire, beat her soundly with birch leaves and discovered she loved it.”<sup>21</sup> In this ad, violence against women has no consequences, in fact, in this example, it has a positive outcome. The ad was displayed in “Rapism” and in a longer feature, “Women Finish Finn Air Ad,” and prompted W.O.A.R to engage in a demonstration with three other organizations to protest the ad.<sup>22</sup> As a result, Finn Air and their advertising agency agreed to remove the ad from circulation. However, unable to understand how it might have caused offense, officials did not take responsibility for the ad. At the end of the article, *WOARpath* readers are encouraged to write to officials from Finn Air and Degarmo, the advertising agency, to explain to them why the ad was inappropriate.

Organized protests against ads were exceptional, but critique of similar ads to Finn Air’s were commonplace in “Rapism Around Us.” For example, a staff writer responded to a Hanes ad that showed women receiving objectifying stares from men and closed with the line: “Gentlemen prefer Hanes.” Another response critiqued an ad for lipgloss in *Glamour* that featured a young woman looking at herself in ecstasy, saying: “Look ma, I’m a sexpot!”<sup>23</sup> Subversive responses were found in other sections of *WOARpath* besides “Rapism Around Us.” A small article titled “Self-Defense Ad Walloped” discusses an advertisement for a beauty

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<sup>21</sup>Women Finish Finn Air Ad. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid

<sup>23</sup>WOARpath. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

product with the phrase “A pretty face isn’t safe in the city—Fight Back with Self-Defense.”<sup>24</sup>

W.O.A.R.’s course of action looks similar to the Finn-Air case: W.O.A.R officials reached out to the beauty product retailer after several women called to inquire about the non-existent self-defense classes. The feature titled, “Knock Out Pills KO-ed”, details the decision of the postal service to pull the pills from postage.<sup>25</sup> The pills, advertised in men’s magazines, claimed to knock women out so they could “not resist advances.” Ultimately, the post office pulled the pills, not because of their purpose, but because they did not work. In these features, W.O.A.R demonstrates how rape culture is present not simply in advertisements, but in the everyday actions of individuals.

In all of these features, critical responses use identical language to debase rape culture in advertisements and current events. Both the Hanes ad and Glamour ad assert the idea that women exist for male pleasure. Writers respond by connecting the image in the ad to an expectation of femininity or masculinity that contributes to “rapism.” The response reads “gentlemen, as well as rapists, may prefer Hanes but we do not prefer the methods of advertising they use”. Here, “gentlemen” becomes synonymous with “rapists”, suggesting that sexual violence is not the result of a few sick or violent men, but an inevitable consequence of how all men are taught to view women. To the Glamour ad the critic writes: “Hopefully ‘Ma’ will take her daughter aside and show her why [she should not follow this example].” “Ma” becomes a wise mentor, a witness to the potential harm that can come to her daughter if she performs to this expectation, a

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<sup>24</sup>“Self Defense’ Ad Walloped. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>25</sup>Knock Out Pills KO-ed. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

character that reflects the role played by W.O.A.R activists. The analysis of ads demonstrates how violence against women is entrenched in social structures, then reproduced and maintained by human actors and cultural tradition. In their responses, W.O.A.R takes the language used to perpetuate rape culture and flips it to fit their message. The tools used to build a culture are used to dismantle it.

After consuming several analysis of this kind, readers learn to identify examples of “rapism.” An ad for a hair salon features a woman’s guillotined head in a basket. Behind it, a man leans against the guillotine looking smugly at the head: “Now you know where he’s been busily cutting all those great heads.” The critique by W.O.A.R officials is just a description of the ad and a jab at “shoddy camera work.”<sup>26</sup> Published in a later edition of *WOARpath*, the concise analysis indicates that readers developed critical thinking skills to understand the problematic nature of this advertisement without prompting; W.O.A.R’s counter frames, their alternative reality, has become the reality of their readers.

### III. A crime based only on sex<sup>27</sup>: Race in W.O.A.R

My analysis now pivots to focus on prominent critiques of the anti-sexual violence movement: its lack of intersectionality and its emphasis on victimization and vulnerability. Black feminists have argued that the anti-sexual violence movement did not acknowledge the role of race in sexual violence and that white feminists failed to understand how U.S. racial history constructed black female sexualities (Washington 2001; Chasteen 2001; Greensite 2009; Caputi

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<sup>26</sup> A Hideous Ad for Thunder. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>27</sup>W.O.A.R Speakers Outline. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 187 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

1992; Smith 1990; Crenshaw 1991). For centuries, slavery had made white men the owners of not only black bodies, but their sexualities. Black women had children at the will of their masters to maintain the slave system. For black women, rape was not a form of theft, as white women saw it, but rather an act of personal destruction (Chasteen 2001); a reminder of their subordination in a hierarchy dominated by white men. Continuing to contribute to differing conceptualizations of sexual violence, the trauma of slavery had constructed black women with strength and resilience (Crenshaw 1991; Smith 1990). The construction of the “strong black woman” caused black women victims to feel that they had failed to protect themselves. Rather than reacting to rape with distress (a white behavior, according to an interviewee) black women felt ashamed of expressing vulnerability (Washington 2001).

Originally, I intended to use information about W.O.A.R’s staff members to assess the presence or absence of racially diverse participants and thus diverse frames. Unfortunately, information on staff was limited. However, even without the identities of W.O.A.R staff, inferences can be made by analyzing the content of the archived documents. In both *WOARpath* and an outline for public speeches, W.O.A.R asserted that rape was a crime that only discriminated based on sex<sup>28</sup>. Victim stories and court case updates in *WOARpath* did not include any references to the race of the victim or attacker. While this absence would help minimize stereotypes or stigmas about the black community, it indicates an erasure of racial dynamics in accusations of rape. For example, during the period of Reconstruction, false accusations of rape were used by raiders to justify crimes against newly freed blacks and their families. W.O.A.R’s medical treatment manual only briefly mentions differences in victim experience and reaction to

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



sexual assault. However, this mention is a generalization, it simply recognizes (obviously) that individuals react differently to trauma, but does not mention how race could cause these differences. Unfortunately, a lack of discussion most likely indicates an erasure of race, a foundational dynamic in U.S. society and hierarchies of power.

This erasure is also present in W.O.A.R's reformist strategies. W.O.A.R advocated for institutional reform in a racial climate where access to politicians and institutions was reserved for those who already had considerable power and status. It is doubtful that W.O.A.R would have had much success as a reformist organization if it was composed of minority women, or was represented by them during meetings with public officials. Additionally, the focus on law enforcement as a tool for ending sexual violence demonstrates, at best, a lack of understanding of the likely animosity between state organizations and black communities. W.O.A.R did not recognize that their reforms might only be effective for white women in a justice system that privileges whiteness. The reform of rape investigation and rape prosecution protocols disregards the criminalization and (the more recently recognized) mass incarceration of black men by the U.S. justice system; a result of racist stereotypes. These same stereotypes fostered the idea of the sexually potent black man as a "rapist in waiting," particularly for white women (Hill Collins 2004). As a result, black women who were assaulted by black men may not feel comfortable talking to law enforcement for fear of supporting racist ideologies (Washington, 1268).

#### IV. Defying Expectations: Vulnerability and Victim Frames

While the critiques of racial erasure in the anti-sexual violence movement are supported, an analysis of W.O.A.R's use of victimization and vulnerability rhetoric has a more complex outcome. Numerous scholars insist that the movement's emphasis on victimization and trauma

conflated victimhood with womanhood, reinforcing associations of weakness and vulnerability with femininity. As a result, the movement's ultimate effect was the disempowerment of not only victims, but of all women, their identities conceived as either "pre-" or "post-assault"(Koelsch 2014; Wheldon 2002; Cahill 2001; Gilson 2016; Burr 2001).

Further, they argue that identity was solidified in the "rape script" produced in speakouts (Cahill 2001; Marcus 1992; Haag 1996). In these speakouts, victims recounted their assaults, but rarely did these stories include a successful defense or escape, making resistance seem impossible and victimization inevitable. In response, women hearing these stories internalized the possibility of victimization and adjusted their behavior and feminine expression to prevent assault (Chasteen 1998). Other scholars have argued that the theoretical explanations of sexual violence produced at the beginning of the movement blamed sexual violence on a woman's anatomical vulnerability to penetration. Thus, rape was the result of a natural, biological difference between men and women. Some theories asserted that rape was not only a part of women's biology but their history: an act of war committed by men against women for centuries to maintain patriarchy. From the perspective of movement critics, the association of sexual violence with women's history strengthened the link between womanhood and victimhood.

In the manual to city officials providing suggestions for a new infrastructure in the investigation and prosecution of rape cases, the victim frame is apparent, and without a doubt seems to support these critiques. Trauma and fragility of the victim are the central focus of these manuals. Throughout, references are made to the emotional well-being of the victim, and emphasis at the procedural level is placed on ensuring victim comfort. For example, in the medical exam protocol, the support person is tasked with greeting the victim, contacting family

and friends, arranging transportation, and victim follow-up as the investigation continues<sup>29</sup>.

During the exam, the physician is required to explain procedures step-by-step and only female personnel are allowed in the exam room.

Investigation guidelines ask law enforcement personnel to conduct their investigation with caution. Police officers are not allowed to interview victims in public and are forbidden from the exam room<sup>30</sup>. All personnel involved in these investigations are supposed to be trained to handle the “special treatment of rape victims and crisis counseling” and to have a supportive and “non-judgemental attitude”<sup>31</sup>. The responsibility to care for victims is emphasized in the guidelines for the creation of a rape investigation unit. One of the main responsibilities of law enforcement is to rescue the victim from any location, person or situation that is causing them distress.<sup>32</sup>

While it would make sense to read these moves through the critical lens of victim and vulnerability frames used by the movement, feminist studies of affect in social movements provide an alternative lens for analysis. Indeed, similarly to the rights frame discussed in the first section, injustice frames are another common collective action frame used by social movements to enact change. Using injustice frames, social movements identify a collective experience of trauma (i.e. victims) and amplify it to incite action. The vulnerability of this group prompts action by public institutions that are responsible for protecting them. In this case,

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<sup>29</sup>Guideline for the Medical Treatment of Rape Victims. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Guidelines for the Management of Rape Cases by the Philadelphia Police Department. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

vulnerability is transformed from a weakness into a powerful political tool (Langle de Paz 2016). This is particularly valuable in women's movements where collective emotions have helped women recognize injustice (Lutz 1996). Feminist theorists have argued that when channeled appropriately, a collective feeling of injustice can lend itself to the creation of a collective accountability that causes officials to feel responsible for remedying injustices identified by activists (Gilson 2016).

These arguments lead us to consider the audience targeted by this manual. Theorists who present victim and vulnerability critiques are concerned with how the movement's rhetoric affected victims and women. However, while victimization and vulnerability were present in these manuals, they were not intended for public view. These proposals were targeted towards public officials, written to force community leaders to protect women in their community. Here, it seems that the emphasis on trauma and violence is a strategic choice to provoke feelings of responsibility and accountability in public officials.

Another characteristic of the intended audience, their gender, is likely to have been targeted by victim and vulnerability rhetoric. Critics of the movement focus on reactions that victims and women might have had to victim and vulnerability rhetoric. However, they do not consider how this strategy could work to the advantage of activists when the targeted audience is male politicians and male law enforcement officials. In the manuals, vulnerability is juxtaposed with masculine expectations of strength and leadership. W.O.A.R demands that Philadelphia mimics the structure of a rape investigation model in New York City, and notes that W.O.A.R is the only organization in the nation to work within state institutions<sup>33</sup> and calls on leaders to have

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<sup>33</sup>Special Handling of Rape Cases. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 196 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

a strong response to this violent crime<sup>34</sup>. Calls for strength and leadership in response to vulnerability work together to paint community leaders and law enforcement as male protectors. Given W.O.A.R's knowledge of gender expectations, it is likely that this was not a coincidence, but a targeted tactic.

In addition, changes proposed in the medical treatment and police investigation manual also subverted victim stereotypes by transforming these protocols to give victims agency and control. Throughout the manual, we are constantly reminded that the victim's consent to all processes is a prerequisite to medical examinations. Following the victim's arrival at the hospital, a general exam asks the victim about their gynecological history, takes note of any external injuries, and asks the victim if they are in need of emergency contraception. An entire section discusses the necessity for consent regarding evidence obtained during the exams<sup>35</sup>. Following the exam, all notes taken during the procedure are read back to the victim<sup>36</sup>. Placing in the hands of the victim the ability to choose how procedures continue, whether they continue, and what steps to take next, gives the victim a sense of control over their body that was taken from them by their attacker.

Violence and vulnerability critiques also assert that there was a conflation of victim identity with feminine identity. However, close examination reveals that the manuals resist presenting a generalized victim in its detailing of professional protocol. W.O.A.R's manual notes

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<sup>34</sup>Letter to local newspapers. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 192 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>35</sup>Guidelines for the Medical Treatment of Rape Victims. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

that all victims are individuals who will exhibit their own degree of distress.<sup>37</sup> Thus, while there is a generalized expectation for the behavior of staff, their response ought to be tempered by the observed state of the victim. Maintaining that women can react to assault differently prevents distress and vulnerability from being conflated with feminine identity.

While victim and vulnerability rhetoric in communications with city officials and law enforcement partially supported scholarly critiques, in *WOARpath*, rapable identities are subverted with a replacement of trauma with active—almost militaristic—frames. This is not surprising given the organization’s name. “W.O.A.R” said aloud, is “war,” painting an image of women in combat. The full name of the organization is Women Organized Against Rape. While other organizations named themselves “alliances” or include “against” in their name, the use of “organized,” an active verb, is notable. The organization name and acronym invoke action, rather than a passivity that would be more characteristic of the feminine.

The title of their publication, *WOARpath* continues this theme. *WOARpath*, in addition to critiquing gender roles in media, presents news from “the front.” It contains updates about legislative changes both inside and outside communities, stories of victims and perpetrators, calls for letters, volunteers, and asks for participation in protests. Volunteers are asked to “serve” as a support person, or insists that they sign up for “duty” answering phones on the crisis hotline. W.O.A.R calls for volunteers in an ad titled “W.O.A.R Needs You!” next to a sketch of a hand, pointing towards the reader, recalling Uncle Sam ads asking young men to enlist.<sup>38</sup> Passages like these encourage readers to contribute to W.O.A.R’s effort.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>W.O.A.R Needs You. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

Continuing the theme of war, *WOARpath* includes victories from the “front lines” by incorporating self-defense devices and tips into the publication to help readers protect themselves. Celebrating the victories of those on the “front lines” is also empowering for women. A section called “From Mother’s Knee” tells women to be alert if two men on the sidewalk part ways as you walk towards them, allowing you to pass in the middle.<sup>39</sup> Another, from a letter sent in by a reader, encourages women to kick their assailant in the groin.<sup>40</sup> They publish the findings of a study that finds women who are able to scream are more likely to escape from an attacker.<sup>41</sup> Another, called “Lemon-Aid” tells women that carrying store bought lemon juice with them can help them fight off their attacker by squirting it into their eyes.<sup>42</sup> They also publicize where readers can buy items to help defend themselves. They advertise a freon horn,<sup>43</sup> and a keychain whistle with a flashlight<sup>44</sup> after the devices were recommended by readers.

These pieces of advice reassure women that they can protect themselves, that assault is not inevitable. The method of collection and presentation of self-defense tips help guard them from critiques and provide an alternative narrative to the “rape script.” In contemporary

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<sup>39</sup>From Mother’s Knee. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>40</sup>Dear Sisters at W.O.A.R. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>41</sup>Scream if you Can. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>42</sup>Lemon-Aid. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>43</sup>Walking Alone at Night. *WOARpath*. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

<sup>44</sup>Fantastic Fundraiser for Rape Crisis Centers. Accession 438. Series 2. Box 8. 197 and Women Organized Against Rape Records. Urban Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Library, PA. 26 January 2018.

conversations self-defense programs for sexual violence prevention have been critiqued for placing the responsibility of assault prevention on the potential victims, rather than teaching perpetrators not to rape. In *WOARpath*, rather than being made responsible for preventing their own victimization, women sharing tips for safety builds solidarity among women in the community. This is not men teaching women to protect themselves, but women encouraging each other that *they can*.

## V. Conclusion

This case study of W.O.A.R has yielded the following ideas. When working for institutional reform, a social movement organization must demonstrate its knowledge of systems already in place and then build on these to achieve changes they seek. W.O.A.R's communications with public officials recalled the tactics of political interest group. They demonstrated expertise in legal statutes for medical examination and police investigation and incorporated statistics to demonstrate both the local and national relevance of sexual violence.

W.O.A.R deconstructed rape myths and gender expectations in their relationship with media and in their own publication, *WOARpath*. Letters to radio stations, broadcast companies, and both local and non-local news outlets were written to falsify rape myths and demand their removal from public discourse. W.O.A.R's subversive critiques highlight the gruesome violence and horrendous trauma experienced by victims. This work not only assisted in the deconstruction of rape myths, but also maintained the relevance of rape as a social issue. In *WOARpath*, features on advertisements and current events used counter frames to deconstruct discourse that produced gender expectations and maintained rape culture.



Situating the analysis within prominent critiques of the anti-sexual violence movement was a difficult task. Access to personal information about members and W.O.A.R staff was restricted. Unfortunately, the lack of specific mentions of race in the documents combined with a focus on institutional reform indicates an erasure of how race complicates the issue of sexual violence. In regard to criticisms of victimization and vulnerability, their focus on the vulnerability of victims and women was a strategic choice to generate action. Here, W.O.A.R triggered masculine expectations for protection, strength, and leadership, to target the masculine identities of policy makers and law enforcement. W.O.A.R was careful to recognize individuality in victim reactions to prevent the conflation of womanhood and victimhood and restructured procedures to give victims agency. *WOARpath* abandons the use of victim and vulnerability rhetoric and empowers readers with war-themed rhetoric and calls for self-defense.

There is more to be learned from this case study than what can be included in the scope of this paper. First, this paper would not exist without the vast archive that W.O.A.R left behind. In the future, activists should be more proactive about recording social movements so we may continue to learn from them. Second, most of the scholarship on social movement frames generally limits the categorization of frames to a single dominant theme. Yet, this paper demonstrates that W.O.A.R used different rhetorical strategies and communication styles depending on the audience. The style of writing in *WOARpath* and the message to victims and allies was much different from their messages to institutions, such as the police department, district attorney's office, and medical establishments. Future studies of social movements and organizations ought to compare communication between different audiences, at different events,

or at different times in the movement. This might yield frames that are most conducive to legislative action, or others that are more likely to incite public protest.

Of course, frames must also be studied across racially diverse organizations. Due to the difference in perspective and political contexts (particularly in the United States), it is essential that we understand how privilege puts pressure on frames used by activists of color, while freeing the words of white activists. How do activists incorporate or negate racial constructions in their messages?

Finally, this analysis has limitations. Many of the social movements that have been thoroughly studied so far were fostered in response to what most now see as obvious violations of lawful protections or fundamental human rights. While many of these injustices still occur today, larger (and I would argue more difficult), changes are still ahead. What frames will emerge from the study of movements that seek to change cultural constructions about race, gender, sexuality, and all the other identities that are subjected to trauma that is not violent in the physical sense, but rather in a mental and emotional one. But, given an example like W.O.A.R, it is clear that a careful attention to language is an invaluable asset for social movements seeking to create change.

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