Chapter 6: Talking Back to Postfeminism? Rape Prevention and Education Films and Videos

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Talking Back to Postfeminism?

Rape Prevention and Education Films and Videos

In this final chapter I examine rape prevention and education films and videos (many of which implicitly or explicitly define their projects as feminist) that complicate even further this book's multifaceted examination of representations of rape. These films and videos self-consciously engage and reflect on the process of representation in order to work against rape and other forms of sexual assault and abuse. While the films and television shows I examine in previous chapters have an entertainment emphasis for a (relatively) mass audience, the films and videos I examine in this chapter focus on social change for a classroom, feminist group, or perhaps college dorm audience.[1] These shifts in purpose and intended audience lead me to ask with even more urgency questions about the process of representation, its social meanings, and its capacity to produce social change.

In other words, the stakes are higher in this chapter than in previous chapters because I now confront films and videos that have similar goals to my own in this book: to articulate a complex antirape politics and to be critical and analytical of cultural representations. Given these texts' multilayered (and often feminist-inclined) politicized approaches, I want to examine—with both appreciative respect and critical skepticism—the perspectives on and definitions of rape they collectively represent. How do these perspectives and definitions relate to the more mainstream material I examine in the rest of this book? What alternatives to pervasive postfeminist representations do they offer for feminist antirape activism? What options have not yet been explored in antirape activist films and videos? What other ways of representing rape might one imagine as productive avenues for antirape activism? Collectively, these questions help me to consider the political efficacy of explicitly antirape films and videos.

I collected the films and videos I examine here from several different sources in order to cover the broad range of the prevention and education programs available. I look at many of the videos held by the Violence Prevention Program on my campus, the University of California, Davis. In addition, I examine films and videos carried by an assortment of distribution companies that market their products to university communities.[2] For some of the texts produced in the 1970s that are unavailable to me, I rely on descriptions from Kaye Sullivan's books, *Films for, by and about Women* (1980) and *Films for, by and about Women: Series II* (1985). Collectively, these various sources provide a range of materials that might be available to an educator and/or activist involved in antirape activism; I believe that the thirty-plus films and videos I have seen and the fifty-plus additional descriptions I have read provide sufficient examples for the claims I ultimately make about this genre as a whole.

I divide my analysis of these programs into two sections. First, I examine dominant themes, moving through them roughly as they appear in the programs chronologically. Here, I am concerned with identifying key *repetitive* aspects of these programs and examining how those aspects define rape and women's relationships to rape. In the second section, I focus on two key modes of representation in these texts: the explicit representation of rape and the neglect of any analysis of the relationship between rape and race. Here, I draw on my own feminist critical concerns in order to challenge these films and videos as fully as I do the more mainstream films and television shows I examine in previous chapters.

Overall, through both approaches to critical analysis, I argue that despite an explicitly antirape activist purpose, these films and videos depend on and contribute to postfeminist conceptions of rape more often than they challenge them. Particularly after a mid-1980s shift from a focus on stranger rape and self-defense to a focus on acquaintance rape and therapeutic discourses, antirape prevention and education films and videos participated in a larger postfeminist cultural emphasis on individualized, decontextualized conceptions of rape as an issue of concern primarily for white, middle-class, heterosexual women. In short, while I do find many instances of powerful social critique in the examples I examine in this chapter, collectively they stop short of offering a substantial reconceptualization of rape that would have the potential to challenge significantly the ubiquitous postfeminist representation of rape throughout popular culture.

Rape Prevention and Education Films and Videos, 1970s–Present

While I specifically organize this section around themes, in order to address historical shifts I also follow a roughly chronological order. I begin with themes and arguments more common in 1970s texts and move toward those more common in recent texts, while nevertheless noting later or earlier appearances when they exist. I argue, first, that 1970s and early 1980s texts focus most often either on awareness, prevention, and self-defense or on social and legal change. Second, while overall all these programs tend to emphasize women's perspectives on rape, in the late 1970s and into the mid-1980s some texts spent considerable time exploring the assailant's view of rape. Third, texts that draw on therapeutic discourses or seek to debunk "rape myths" appear throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; however, a *primary* and overwhelmingly individualized and interiorized focus on therapeutic responses to rape experiences becomes more prevalent by the 1990s. Concomitantly, a combination of the antimyth that "rape is violence, not sex," with a simultaneous attention to the existence of acquaintance rape in eroticized contexts muddies the examination of rape myths by the 1990s. Unlike Ellen Goodman (1991) and Naomi Wolf (1991a, 1991b), who, as I discuss in chapter 3, (perhaps inadvertently) blame feminism for the muddiness of representations of rape in popular culture, I would suggest that the context of postfeminist culture (not feminist theory or activism) leads to the confused representations in the texts I examine in this chapter. Specifically, I argue that these historical shifts correspond with many of the themes in the postfeminist films and television shows I discuss in chapter 3. This mid-1980s shift toward postfeminist-informed representation is perhaps clearest in the move from representations of activism against stranger rape to representations of individualized therapeutic responses to acquaintance rape. Finally, I discuss programs, primarily from the 1990s, that address cultural contexts for rape, specifically the contexts of war, media culture, and experimental film and video. These few examples thus implicitly resist the move toward postfeminist depictions of rape in the majority of films and videos to appear after the mid-1980s. They are, however, the minority of the antirape films and videos available.

Awareness, Prevention, and Self-Defense

Awareness, prevention, and self-defense are probably the most frequent themes in 1970s rape prevention and education films and videos.[3]

Programs with these themes seek to draw the implicitly female viewer's attention to the potential for rape in her life and to encourage her to develop strategies to avoid "dangerous situations" or to cope with those situations should they occur. The texts provide interviews with police and antirape activist experts, and they define the "dos and don'ts" of how to respond to rape and how to move about in social spaces (e.g., *do* lock your windows, *don't* go out alone at night). These programs also sometimes include representations of women taking part in actual self-defense classes. Many programs stress that rape can happen anywhere to anyone (sometimes showing teen and post-fifty-year-old women to make this point); thus, they suggest that all women must take responsibility for preventing their own potential rapes by being on guard. Some examples also include interviews with actual rapists and women who have been raped to show how actual rapes occur and therefore to suggest strategies for prevention.[4] Overwhelmingly, these programs provide awareness and prevention advice for rapes that are defined as nighttime stranger rapes in which a woman is assaulted in her home or kidnapped off a dark city street by someone she has never seen before. Only two texts that focus on awareness, prevention, or self-defense address the issue of acquaintance rape—*Acquaintance Rape Prevention* (1978) and *Girls Beware* (1980)—and both address a specifically teenage audience.

The most recent film I have seen that focuses primarily on self-defense is *Give It All You've Got* (1984). This film emphasizes confrontational physical self-defense strategies over self-focused awareness and prevention strategies that appear more frequently in the pre-1984 films and videos. By emphasizing response over preparation, the film holds women slightly less responsible for eliminating rape than do the other programs in this category. *Give It All You've Got* combines staged conversations between friends with clips from a self-defense class to illustrate how even just a loud yell can prevent a rape. One sequence, for example, depicts a woman walking down a city street with the film's narrator, telling a story about how she recently was able to use her self-defense skills to prevent an attack. She describes being frightened on the street as a stranger approached her from behind and then says she remembered her self-defense training and turned quickly while letting out a loud yell. Immediately after she demonstrates this to the narrator, a cut to a self-defense class reveals a large group of women practicing the very same move. By providing a success story and, furthermore, intercutting that story with a related self-defense lesson about how to yell to scare off an attacker, this

section of the film illustrates nicely its overall argument that self-defense is a powerful and empowering way to prevent sexual assault.

Give It All You've Got is the *only* 1980s program I have found that looks at self-defense in a sustained fashion, and none appear in the 1990s. When these later films and videos do refer to awareness, prevention, and self-defense, they primarily tack these issues on at the end, usually with vague advice such as "trust your instincts." For example, *Summer's Story*: *The Truth and Trauma of Date Rape* (1992), which is almost entirely made up of one woman's therapeutic post-rape testimony, provides vague self-evident prevention advice such as "establish your limits" and "don't be afraid to make a scene." The video does not explain *how* to define limits or make a scene. One video from the early 1990s, however, does offer potentially empowering images of women who use their bodies and voices to defend themselves. While struggling with how to represent rape in the context of teaching antirape activism in the classroom, Martha McCaughey and Neal King produced *Mean Women*, a collection of clips from contemporary Hollywood films featuring women fighting back against violent men. As they suggest in their essay about the video, McCaughey and King's (1995) goal is to provide an alternative to most contemporary antirape programs that, they argue, frighten women. In *Mean Women* they provide images they hope will empower women and frighten men. While this video is not *about* self-defense per se, it does reintroduce the active and confident depictions of women that appear in *Give It All You've Got* and some of the 1970s films.

Social and Legal Change

Another common element of 1970s programs is the representation of the immediate aftermath of rape, which includes depictions of painful emotions, suspicious police, assaultive court systems, and (usually) unsupportive friends and families. These texts emphasize the need for legal and social reform in response to post-rape experiences, and they call for awareness of and attention to women's experiences of rape, reminding the audience that someone they know may have been raped and may need their understanding and support. Some also explicitly address spectators who have experienced rape (or who may experience rape in the future) when they argue that it is important to report rape in order to help change the court system and society's awareness of rape.[5]

The most recent program that substantially focuses on the need for social and legal reform appeared, like *Give It All You've Got*, in the mid-

1980s. While *Waking Up to Rape* (1985) primarily uses testimony from three women who have experienced rape, which is a technique much more common to late 1980s and 1990s films and videos, it edits their testimony in a way that emphasizes their arguments for social reform and sometimes combines that testimony with documentary footage of the women engaging in the activities they describe. For example, a Latina woman says that learning self-defense helped her cope with her family's silence surrounding her rape. We then see her participating in a self-defense class. In another narrative strand, an African American woman discusses her struggle to work through the emotional and personal aftermath of rape, while also coping with the continuing trauma of her husband's imprisonment for murdering the man who raped her. She explicitly articulates a critique of the legal system as racist and sexist in its dealings with both her and her husband. Furthermore, she says that she is now studying law in order to help her husband get out of prison and to fight the racism of the legal system.

A related group of programs also refers to structural sexism. Rather than emphasizing negative post-rape experiences, they highlight *positive* actions rape crisis and prevention programs, various local police stations, and hospitals take to fight rape and to treat women who experience rape with care, respect, and understanding. While these programs represent community responses to rape with more optimism than do those that detail social and legal barriers to rape law reform, both groups of programs argue for more support of antirape activism and encourage women who have been raped to come forward and speak out.[6] Most shows in this category emerged in the 1970s. The most recent program I have found that primarily emphasizes the success of antirape activism and legal reform is the 1986 *Update Brazil: Women's Police Stations*. This film provides information about Brazil's new police stations for women, in which the police officers are women who fight crimes against women (e.g., rape and domestic violence). The film includes documentary footage of women coming to the police station to report crimes and to get help, as well as of female police officers learning self-defense techniques, arming themselves, and going out into the community to arrest accused men. The narrator as well as a government official argue that these stations have been successful and that more will be built.

The only 1990s video I found that addresses legal and social injustices substantially is a historical dramatization of the life of the artist Artemisia Gentileschi, who lived from 1593 to 1652. This 1994 BBC video, *Women*

Word for Word: A Reputation: The Rape of Artemisia Gentileschi, uses actual court transcripts to construct the dialogue of Gentileschi, her father, the man who raped her, and other key figures in the case.[7] Emphasizing the injustice of the male-dominated art world as well as the church-dominated court system, the video retells this historical event by highlighting Gentileschi's testimony and discrediting the testimony of the other figures in the video, and by providing a scholarly expert to fill in details about the patriarchal structure of the time period. Despite the power of its critique of institutionalized social injustice, this example represents that injustice as a historical problem (as do some of the examples I discuss in chapters 1 and 5), thus moving the problem of rape away from the present era. As a result, this video does not address contemporary social and local injustices, as do the earlier films and videos. Overall, I have not encountered a post-1986 program with a primary focus on contemporary social or legal reform.[8]

The Assailant's View

The two types of programs I have discussed so far—those that focus on awareness, prevention, and self-defense and those that emphasize social and legal change—dominate rape prevention and education films and videos from the 1970s and early 1980s. Late in the 1970s and into the 1980s another type of program became common, one that focused on the rapist's perspective. Set in prisons and mental institutions where men who admit they have raped can be found, these programs reveal the therapeutic treatment of convicted rapists in prison and include interviews with the rapists themselves. Often the men speak from shadows that protect their individual identities (but inadvertently also visually reinscribe their dangerous, threatening character), but some men, especially those who are participants in an Oregon state rehabilitation program, reveal their names and faces. Some of these men, in fact, appear in more than one antirape program.

While these men are all in therapy, most of the programs are at pains to emphasize that the abuse these men are uncovering in their own childhood, and which presumably led to their own abuse of others, should not excuse their behavior. The overarching argument of the programs is that these men's therapy is important for two reasons: to learn more about why men rape and to prevent these men from reoffending when they are paroled. Given that the majority of the men featured are serial rapists and that the psychological and psychiatric experts interviewed in the pro-

grams argue that most men who rape do so repeatedly, the programs imply that rehabilitating even just one rapist will go a long way toward preventing future rapes.[9] Some programs also include sensationalistic scenes of the therapeutic process that include group discussions (i.e., confrontations) between convicted rapists and women who have experienced rape, although not by these specific men. These sequences are particularly intense because they depict women voicing their anger and men breaking down emotionally in response. These scenes heighten the programs' overall focus on the men by revealing their emotional acknowledgment of culpability. Concomitantly, the scenes emphasize the men's villainy by including the women's expression of anger.[10]

The only video I have seen from the 1990s that represents the therapeutic treatment of imprisoned rapists and focuses primarily on men who rape is the ABC television 1992 video *Men, Sex, and Rape*, narrated by Peter Jennings.[11] Oddly enough, despite its primary focus on convicted rapists, the initial premise of the video is that the case of William Kennedy Smith (who neither admitted to nor was convicted of rape) has brought more attention to rape as a social problem. Jennings implies that in order to prevent cases such as Smith's in the future, women and men must understand why men rape and men must understand how women experience rape. The fact that Smith was *not* convicted of rape makes Jennings's premise untenable, and this confusion increases when the video turns to the small minority of men who rape—those who are convicted and imprisoned—to offer a general explanation of why Smith (or someone like him) might have raped. The contradictions pile up here: Smith's (legally defined) *non*rape case initiates a program meant to explain why "typical" men (like Smith) *do* rape, and then atypical *convicted* rapists (unlike Smith) serve as sources of information about these supposedly *typical* men.

Other than this one program from the 1990s, films and videos that focus on convicted rapists and that include interviews with them about their views on rape seem to emerge in the late 1970s but then disappear again by the mid-1980s. At that time, films and videos collectively return to a focus on women, their potential actions, and their responsibilities in relation to rape and the threat of rape.

Talk, Testimony, and the Therapeutic

Many programs that focus on women throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s include interview testimony from women who have experienced rape

and represent therapeutic talk (of which testimony is one example) as a way to reclaim one's life and self. Earlier films and videos tend to combine the testimony and therapy with other approaches to representing rape, such as challenging myths and discussing legal reform.[12] More recent films and videos, however, emphasize confessional and individual psychologized modes much more heavily than do these earlier programs. These programs intersect with what Dana L. Cloud (1998) defines as a therapeutic rhetoric, "a set of political and cultural discourses that have adopted psychotherapy's lexicon—the conservative language of healing, coping, adaptation, and restoration of a previously existing order—but in contexts of sociopolitical conflict" (xvi). Here, rape, rape myths, and rape law reform are the sociopolitical contexts in which the therapeutic not only emerges but predominates.

From 1984 on, in fact, all but two of the twenty-three films and videos I viewed include testimony, representation of therapy as imperative to survival and recovery, or both.[13] In fact, four programs from 1985 through 1992 are almost *entirely* made up of women (and one man) describing their experiences of rape and its aftermath during interviews.[14] In many of the films and videos, at some point in the interview, the woman who has been raped explicitly states that the very process of talking through the experience of rape—a process that the audience is watching and listening to—is part of her therapy. The chronological structure of many of the programs supports this claim. For example, *Waking Up to Rape, From Victim to Survivor* (1986), *Summer's Story*: *The Truth and Trauma of Date Rape, Surviving Rape: A Journey through Fear* (1992), and *Good Things Too: Recovery from Sexual Abuse* (1995) all move from descriptions of a pre-rape naive, innocent, and/or young self; through detailed descriptive discussions of the rape and post-rape despair (during which the person testifying usually begins to cry); to the final segment in which the interviewees describe their feelings of relief and joy at entering therapeutic discussion groups or individualized counseling because in these contexts they learn to speak of their rape and begin the healing process. The final stages of this healing process, are, of course, documented by the program itself. Each of these programs, then, defines individualized therapeutic discourses and practices as the primary appropriate response to rape. This individualized therapeutic management of the inevitable post-rape despair in these late 1980s and 1990s programs completely eclipses both rape prevention and social change, the two most prevalent aspects of antirape programs that appear up until the mid-1980s.

Rape Myths: Rape as Violence, Not Sex

Films and videos that identify and counteract what they define as rape myths, such as "no means yes" or "what women wear can cause rape," are, like the therapeutic texts, prevalent throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Up until the mid-1980s, these films and videos tend to use the term "myth" in the more limited sense of "false," as opposed to in the sense of cultural narrative or mythos.[15] *Rape: An Act of Hate* (1986) even literally prints "myths" on screen as true/false questions for the audience to try to answer. For example, one statement reads, "Rape occurs mostly among strangers," to which the program answers itself: "False." By far, the idea that rape is "just bad sex" is the most common falsity addressed in these programs. These films and videos seek to replace this definition of rape with the idea that rape is "violence, not sex" and the related argument that men rape for "control" and "power" rather than for sexual pleasure. Many films and videos, in fact, address only this one "rape myth."

Despite sustained attention to the argument that rape is violence, not sex, collectively the programs contain many contradictions as they struggle to articulate simplified true/false arguments about rape while simultaneously attempting to acknowledge the complexity of women's (and occasionally men's) experiences of rape, including sexualized experiences. These contradictions are particularly pronounced in films and videos from the 1990s that focus on rape myths in relation to date rape.[16] *Dating Rites: Gang Rape on Campus* (1991), for example, emphasizes that rape is about power by providing interviews with an expert who says that gang rapes tend to be planned and that the most likely victim will be the most vulnerable woman, not the most sexually attractive woman. The program then goes on to dramatize a gang rape that includes a pre-party planning process. However, the dramatization focuses considerable attention on the men's discussions of sex before the party, thus contradicting the expert's earlier argument that rape is entirely about power. Furthermore, the women in the dramatization, during their pre-party preparations, spend the bulk of their time talking about what they are going to wear in order to appear attractive to the men in whom they are interested (and who turn out to be rapists). By including the women's sexualized preparations, the video reintroduces the idea that what a woman wears *is* (somehow) connected to rape.

In one segment of the video, a group discussion among actual male and female college students, who appear to be enlightened (they discuss

how to educate men about women's experiences and they discuss their own antirape activism), includes a particularly powerful close-up of one woman lamenting the fact that the existence of rape means not that some men abuse power as the expert claims, for example, but that she has to watch what she wears. This college student's more personal and emotional delivery, as well as her status as similar to the implied college student audience, potentially makes her perspective (that it matters what she wears) more salient than the "talking head" expert's theoretical claim that rape is about planned power, especially since the context in which she speaks, an enlightened group discussion, adds to her ethos. Furthermore, the explicit context of flirting and sexuality that runs throughout the dramatization similarly undermines the expert's authority on the subject.

Overall, then, rape prevention and education programs have addressed rape myths consistently since the 1970s, but with *increasing* levels of contradiction and confusion, particularly around the issue of defining rape as being about power, not sex. No matter what the experts say, women in the programs, whether they have experienced rape and/or are "typical" college students, tend to take responsibility for rape instinctually by focusing on what they wear, where they go, whether or not they drink at parties, and what they say. While their overall goal may be to define rape as violence, not sex, the programs reinscribe a connection between rape and sex by including men who discuss rape in sexualized terms and by including women who take responsibility for preventing rape by reining in their own expression of sexuality. As Monique Plaza (1981) argues,

> In order to combat this naturalist ideology [i.e., it is in men's sexual and biological nature to rape] we have asserted that rape is not ascribable to sexuality. But we must also assert at the same time that rape is sexual, insofar as it refers to social sexing, to the social differentiation between the sexes, and because we must not dissociate heterosexual sexuality from violence. (33)

The films and videos do not, however, take this opportunity to explore or analyze the complex and contradictory relationships among rape, sex, and violence to which they themselves contribute. Marketed to college student audiences, these programs implicitly instruct both men and women on how to behave in eroticized date situations, while simultaneously insisting that rape is not about eroticism or sexuality.

From Stranger Rape to Acquaintance Rape

Perhaps the clearest distinction between programs produced before and those produced after the mid-1980s is a shift in focus from stranger rape to acquaintance rape. Up until the mid-1980s, programs tend to suggest that rape is much like other violent crime that requires preventative measures such as locking one's doors and windows and never traveling alone at night. Even *Give It All You've Got*, which offers a particularly empowering narrative of successful self-defense, reinforces the myth that rape is most often perpetrated by strangers. After the mid-1980s, programs (either directly or indirectly) generally counter this myth by (over)emphasizing acquaintance rape. While a few of the early programs actually do implicitly acknowledge the existence of acquaintance rape because many of the actual rapists and women who have been raped that they interview tell stories about raping or being raped by someone they know, the first program I found to address acquaintance rape directly is the 1978 *Acquaintance Rape Prevention*.[17]

The 1986 *Someone You Know*, while arguing that "you" are more likely to be raped by "someone you know," depends on modes of representation standard to the earlier programs that evoke the stereotypical stranger rapist trope.[18] This program thus functions as a transition from the earlier stranger rape programs to the later acquaintance rape programs. For example, the show begins with a dark night shot of a seemingly empty city street, while a police audiotape of a 911-type call of an in-progress stranger rape plays on the soundtrack.[19] After this tape plays and a transcript of the dialogue between the police officer and the caller appears on the screen, a male correspondent in a typical "journalist's trenchcoat" appears and says that the case we have just heard is *atypical* because it is a stranger rape. Nevertheless, the real police tape has set the stage for the program, and the later interviews with prison rapists (in shadow) reinforce the image of the shadowy, dark rapist who plots to rape any stranger who appears to be vulnerable (as opposed to representing a date culminating in sexual violence).

By the 1990s, films and videos that directly address acquaintance rape replace these frightening dark and shadowy images and sounds of stranger rape with bright images of women and experts talking openly about their experiences of and perspectives on acquaintance rape. *No Means No: Understanding Acquaintance Rape* (1991), for example, dramatizes an

acquaintance rape trial as a way to reveal myths about rape (through the voice of the defense attorney and some members of the jury) and to counteract those myths through the dialogue of the prosecutor and the nonscripted discussion of some of the jury. *The Date-Rape Backlash: The Media and the Denial of Rape* (1994) also seeks to clarify, but turns its attention not to acquaintance rape itself but to the *media's representation* of "date rape," arguing that the popular U.S. media acknowledged acquaintance rape as an "epidemic" in the late 1980s but then almost immediately reversed their position. In particular, the media started quoting as fact Katie Roiphe's 1993 book *The Morning After*, in which she argues that date rape accusations are primarily a result of women's regret or bad sex, not rape.[20] Finally, *Summer's Story: The Truth and Trauma of Date Rape* seeks to reveal the "truth and trauma" of date rape entirely through Summer's testimony. Explicitly naming Summer and placing her in a brightly lit setting with soft orange and blonde colors, the video creates a friendly and safe atmosphere in which the truth can be safe and trauma can be healed through therapy. This open and revealing context for telling the story of acquaintance rape can be understood as the opposite of the rapist-in-shadow image from *Someone You Know*.[21]

While, like most late 1980s and 1990s programs, these examples emphasize women's experiences of and perspectives on rape, many also address men's perspectives as *potential* rapists in order to elucidate how it is possible for a formerly trusted acquaintance to rape. Using group discussions among college students, these films and videos seek to reveal the stereotypes and myths that some men hold about women, dating, and rape. Rather than including interviews with convicted rapists, many of whom knowingly hide their identities in shadows, these programs depict men who *unknowingly* reveal what the programs depict as their problematic attitudes toward women and thus who are not even aware that it might be in their best interest to be depicted in identity-hiding shadows. For example, *No Means No: Understanding Acquaintance Rape* depicts groups of same-sex students in two separate collective discussions about rape, intercutting the discussions with each other. The women express fairly mainstream rape reform ideas about rape; for example, they state what the overall video claims—that acquaintance rape is real rape. The men are a different story. While they do not discuss actual rapes in which they have participated, their conversation reveals attitudes (such as "no means yes") that suggest they might "inadvertently" rape (or have raped) a woman. These attitudes directly contradict the overall video that, for example, provides talking head experts who offer

more accurate "facts" about rape, such as the actual title for the video: "no means no." In this context, the men, who appear to be typical college students, become threatening when they themselves articulate as "truths" the "myths" about rape that the video challenges. Overall, the acquaintance rape programs seek to reveal the existence, "truth, and trauma" of acquaintance rape, while often simultaneously depicting men as unknowingly contributing to the problem through their attitudes and ostensibly the behaviors that might follow from those attitudes.

Rape in Cultural Contexts: War, Media Culture, and Experimental Film and Video

Other than the 1970s and early 1980s programs that address social and legal change, the majority of antirape programs do not address cultural aspects of rape. Even the acquaintance rape videos that reveal young men's unwitting beliefs in rape myths tend to represent the problem in individual and psychological terms. Similarly, the programs that set out to debunk rape myths do so by separating those myths from the cultural and institutional contexts that produce and maintain them, using true/false statements for effect instead. There are, however, three additional important types of antirape films and videos that appear occasionally, all of which place rape in a larger cultural context and appear mainly in the 1990s.

The earlier *Women's Political Dance* (n.d.) and the more recent *Calling the Ghosts* (1996), *In Harm's Way* (1996), and *In the Name of the Emperor* (1994 or 1995) all put rape in the context of war. *Women's Political Dance* represents Vietnamese dances as responses to U.S. bombings, one of which is an "antirape dance [that] demonstrates a deep sensitivity to the needs of women and the earth" (Sullivan 1980). *Calling the Ghosts* depicts Muslim civilian women whom Serbian soldiers imprisoned and repeatedly raped during the Bosnia-Herzegovina war. Drawing on these women's testimony, journalist-collected footage of male prisoners from war camps, interviews with family members and various journalists, depictions of these women's post-imprisonment activism, and the war tribunal, the documentary defines rape as one aspect of war that can function as both torture and genocide, and it calls for international activism. *In the Name of the Emperor* is similar, although it focuses on the historical example of rape in the context of World War II. Using interviews with professors, journalists, and Japanese officials; excerpts from diaries of Western missionaries who chose to stay in

China during the war; found footage from newsreels and from private films taken by one of these missionaries; and testimony from soldiers, missionaries, children of those missionaries, and civilian survivors of the war, the documentary details the metaphorical rape of Nanjing and the literal rape of the women of Nanjing by Japanese soldiers. Placing these rapes in the context of global war, the documentary traces a link between the invasion of Nanjing, the international response to the brutality, and the subsequent policy of the Japanese military of providing "comfort women," primarily from Korea, as replacements for the civilian rapes they had previously implicitly encouraged. The documentary does not equate rape with forced prostitution; rather, it places both forms of sexual violence in the context of international relations and draws attention to the ease with which these forms of sexual violence replace one another.

Finally, *In Harm's Way* places rape in the context of the cold war. The first half of the film details the complex and sometimes ironic ways fear of the cold war was instilled in the narrator/filmmaker: images from educational films, television, and newsreels teach "duck and cover" techniques and the supposed "danger" of reading comic books or looking at pornography. The second half of the film is markedly different, shifting to a detailed description of a stranger rape the narrator/filmmaker neither expected nor had been taught to fear. Throughout each section, the film repeatedly intersperses an image of a young girl skipping in a playful manner, presumably happily, away from the camera. This image serves as a link between the two sections of the film, highlighting the incongruity between what young women are taught to fear and the complexities of their actual experiences, in this case a rape experience.

In Harm's Way fits into another category as well: texts that understand rape in the context of a larger media culture. While *In Harm's Way* addresses the inadequacies and inappropriateness of culturally produced fears when it comes to avoiding rape, other programs look directly at what they often term "rape culture," examining how media images, advertising, bar scenes, and social expectations about exchanging money (from men to marketers for products to give as gifts to women) for sex (from women to men) on a date collectively produce a culture that accepts, if not encourages, rape.[22] Perhaps the most interesting example here, *After the Montreal Massacre* (1990), addresses links between the murder of female engineering students and social attitudes about women, feminism, and violence. The video weaves together testimony from a woman who survived the massacre, comments from people on the street attending

memorial services for the murdered women, interviews with journalists who covered the massacre, self-defense lectures, group discussions with college students, and public presentations on the global context in which the continuum of violence against women exists. Not specifically about rape per se, the video still draws attention to a specific cultural context in which rape, fear of rape, and other forms of sexual violence both respond to and seek to contain changes in women's social existence.

Finally, some of these films and videos about rape are experimental. More recent experimental texts about rape include *In Harm's Way, Philomela Speaks* (1996), and *Rape Stories* (1989).[23] As does *In Harm's Way*, *Philomela Speaks* draws attention to Hollywood images and sounds, such as those from the television show *Bewitched* and the film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), that encourage women to be generally fearful and to remain vulnerable. It then opposes those images to home movie footage and narration that documents the stealing of women's voices. Drawing on the myth of Philomela, whose brother-in-law cut out her tongue to prevent her from revealing that he raped her (but who resistantly wove a tapestry in order to tell her sister of the rape), this video "speaks" the story of rape on multiple narrational levels. And *Rape Stories* takes one rape event, which happened to the filmmaker years before she finished the film, and tells the story several times, from several different perspectives. Addressing post-rape experiences in more complexity than do any of the other programs I have seen, *Rape Stories* represents fantasies of killing the rapist, fears of elevators, ironic images of the futility of running/exercise, and an intuition the filmmaker had that she would be raped. Filmed in part two weeks after the rape and in part ten years later, the film repeatedly intercuts between these two very different stories about the rape in ways that avoid the typical chronological progression from pre-rape naïveté to post-rape recovery that most films and videos that depend on testimony reproduce. Furthermore, the film does not take up the pedagogical or argumentative voice that many of these rape prevention and education programs use. Instead, *Rape Stories* invites the spectator to reflect on the contradictions, pain, anger, long-lasting effects, and even humor that often follow rape.

Overall, while not all programs fit within a strict chronological order, and while certain themes (such as therapeutic discourses and dispelling rape myths) appear throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, in general, as the above analysis reveals, a definite shift occurs in these antirape programs'

focus in the mid-1980s. Specifically, the majority of the films and videos from the 1970s and early 1980s emphasize stranger rape and the need for awareness and self-defense. While focusing on these topics, the programs incite fear by emphasizing convicted serial rapists' perspectives and the painful experience of being disbelieved by friends and the courts after a rape, but they then often suggest that women can overcome that fear by learning self-defense techniques and taking advantage of new rape crisis centers and legal reforms. Almost always, the programs present an argument for reporting rape and engaging in antirape activism, an argument that (like the emphasis on self-defense) primarily holds women responsible for preventing and responding to rape. Furthermore, they seek to redefine rape as "violence, not sex." While contradictions emerge when later videos make such a claim while simultaneously defining rape as a potential part of an eroticized date or party context, the logic in these earlier videos is primarily consistent. They depict rape as taking place between strangers, and the rapists who speak from prison articulate a desire to have power and control over another person as their reason for raping. Additionally, both the rapists and the women who have been raped tend to describe extremely violent rapes that almost always include a weapon such as a knife or gun.

By the late 1980s, rape prevention and education programs shift their attention from stranger rape and self-defense to acquaintance rape and therapeutic responses to rape. Rather than encouraging women to report their rapes and friends and family to believe and support someone who has been raped, as do the 1970s and early 1980s programs, these films and videos encourage women (and now sometimes men) to seek therapy after being raped and remind friends and family members to play an active role in the therapeutic process. This stronger emphasis on therapy over social and legal reform in the more recent programs still tends to hold women (rather than society, for example) responsible for dealing with rape, in this case through personal, therapeutic transformation.

Similarly, while the modes for inciting fear shift, the programs continue to draw on fear as a means of persuasion. The earlier programs often insist that rape can happen to anyone, anywhere, but they tend to represent both rape and even journalistic reporting about rape as taking place late at night, and they frequently depict convicted serial rapists, often protected by identity-hiding shadows. Hence, while the earlier films and videos do use scare tactics to encourage the audience to "pay attention" to rape, by representing limited locations and depending only on

convicted serial rapists, they do not really suggest that *anyone* in the audience could actually be raped or could commit a rape. The more recent films and videos, however, spread anxiety about rape further by representing rape as taking place not in dark and so-called dangerous neighborhoods but on sunny college campuses. The shift here from areas one could presumably avoid (by being aware) to areas the implied college student audience could not possibly avoid does suggest that "anyone" could be raped or could commit a rape.[24] Furthermore, the shift to a focus on acquaintance rape evokes ambivalence and confusion about rape by emphasizing poor communication and conflicting interpretations as reasons for rape, although many of the films and videos do juxtapose the women's personal testimony with reenactments that emphasize their experiences and thus implicitly shore up their perspectives.

In short, while the majority of these texts incite fear and hold women responsible for preventing and/or responding to rape, they do so through themes and modes of representation that shift in the mid-1980s. This shift ironically *intensifies* the incitement of fear and the level of personal responsibility women are to claim in the more recent programs, as rape appears everywhere and women must now individually move into their own psyches—rather than take activist steps collectively to challenge the legal system, for example—in order to deal with rape. Furthermore, over time what rape is becomes *less* clear in these programs as they introduce eroticized dates as contexts for rape without giving up the now clichéd "fact" that rape is violence, not sex, and without developing an analysis of how violence, power, and control relate to the institution of heterosexual dating and coupling in ways that can lead to rape.

These shifts in the strategies and themes of antirape films and videos, shifts that move *away* from feminist activism and arguably place women in a worse relationship to rape than do earlier programs, clearly intersect with the emergence of postfeminism in the larger popular culture. By the mid-1980s, feminist activism for rape law reform already had experienced some success.[25] Furthermore, as I illustrate in chapter 3, mainstream postfeminist representations of rape had begun to absorb some rape law reform arguments, making them widely accessible to a general audience.[26] As a result, it would be redundant for rape prevention and education programs released after the mid-1980s to seek to prove that rape exists, that it is horrific, and that one must speak out in order to change social and legal injustices. These were givens of both law reform and postfeminist popular culture by the mid-1980s. Additionally, by this time

postfeminist cultural representations had begun to redefine not only rape but also what feminism and feminist activism might mean. Since post-1980 postfeminist discourses in popular culture implied that feminism had already been successful and was hence no longer needed, if antirape films and videos were to argue for continued social activism against rape, they would need to argue simultaneously *against* this larger cultural assumption that feminist activism was no longer necessary.

While a few 1990s programs, such as *The Date-Rape Backlash*, do challenge postfeminism's complacency, films and videos produced after the mid-1980s primarily sidestep issues of activism, reform, and transformation in favor of an emphasis on individualized therapeutic talk. As I argue in chapter 3, the therapeutic is an aspect of postfeminist representations of rape that helps to depoliticize feminism. From this perspective, despite their antirape challenges, the late 1980s and 1990s rape prevention and education films and videos function as *part of* postfeminist media culture much more than they provide an activist challenge to that culture. In other words, they participate in popular culture's general emphasis on the individual and de-emphasis of social analysis and activism. Furthermore, they target women themselves as in need of individualized and psychologized personal transformation, drawing on and reiterating the kinds of discourses found in television, film, magazines, and the rest of popular culture on a daily basis.

Only the few more recent texts that examine rape's role in war, address a link between rape and the organization of media culture, or use filmic experimentation to explore the complexity of rape move toward a more nuanced understanding of rape that does not reinscribe an individualized postfeminist subject as victim, survivor, or self-aware avoider of rape. Instead, these texts suggest that rape is an embedded aspect of an international militaristic, media, and voyeuristic culture. Unfortunately, these films and videos are the clear minority of those available to educators and antirape activists.

Representational Strategies

While I describe a large number of antirape films and videos in broad thematic and historical terms in the previous section, I turn now to more specific elements of these texts that raise questions about the process of representing rape as an antirape strategy. The topics I address in this sec-

tion—rape scenes and constructions of race—are two that emerged for me repeatedly as problematic aspects of these programs' representations of rape, and thus seem to call for careful critical analysis. These topics in particular are disturbing because they illustrate ways I think these texts ultimately work at cross-purposes with their own goals, drawing on particular representational strategies in order to achieve antirape, antisexism, and antiracism goals but often reinscribing rape, sexism, and/or racism in the process. My goal here is not to discount these individual programs altogether, especially since I share many of their goals in relation to rape. Rather, my hope is to identify sometimes insidious representational practices that appear in numerous programs and that can inadvertently undermine those very perspectives and goals.

The Presence of Rape, Eroticism, and Violence

Many of these programs represent the act of rape itself in ways that can increase spectatorial anxiety and intensify the spectator's experience of rape. Whether through dramatizations, reenactments, descriptive detail in testimony both from convicted rapists and from women or men who have been raped, or the sound of a police tape of an actual rape as it is taking place, these depictions are horrific in their violence and detail. I acknowledge that these representations occur in an antirape context, one that uses explicit representations in order to convince an audience that rape exists, that it is horrific, and that "something must be done." These representations are not "gratuitous" violence or "excess" in the sense of moments in the texts that are irrelevant to the flow of the narrative or the structure of the plot.[27] This filmic violence has a specific antiviolent political purpose. Nevertheless, the specificity and detail in these representations do reproduce and extend the violence in the acts being described.[28]

In almost all the films and videos, both women who have been raped and rapists provide detailed, descriptive information when telling their stories. Many programs add reenactments or dramatizations of rape scenarios to these descriptions, intensifying the representation. For example, *Rape: An Act of Hate* includes a dramatization of a man jumping through the open window of a woman's house as she prepares for bed. Before the man enters her house, the camera shows the woman walking past the window from the rapist's point of view, repositioning slightly as though the rapist is moving to get a better look. Next, a low angle shot shows him

jumping through the window with a bandanna covering his face, and several quick shots (edited in rhythm with the nondiegetic music on the soundtrack) show him grabbing her and pulling her toward himself. The sequence ends as it begins, with a shot from the rapist's point of view as the woman screams. This sequence not only provides explicit details, but it also aligns the spectator's vision with the rapist/attacker's. It is shot and edited to heighten spectatorial anxiety and discomfort and to illustrate the danger of leaving one's window open and unlocked. As Carol J. Clover (1992) argues in relation to horror films, texts that provide the spectator with an attacker's point of view do not necessarily *equate* the spectator with the villain. Rather, the representation of the attacker's visual point of view provides the spectator with more knowledge than the vulnerable woman in the text, using suspense to increase anxiety for and identification with her. To put it somewhat reductively, these scenes encourage the spectator to yell "Watch out!" rather than "Here I come." In this antirape context, providing this point of emotional identification with the woman under attack through a rapist's visual point of view of her insists that rape is violent and horrific but does so by transmitting some of that horror to the spectator.

In opposition to rapists' visual point-of-view sequences, some more recent films and videos emphasize the point of view of the woman who is raped. This shift corresponds loosely with the mid-1980s shift from films and videos that depict stranger rape and interviews with admitted rapists to programs that emphasize acquaintance rapes and therapeutic testimony from the women who have been raped. Despite the shift, however, the programs continue to show characters' point of view to increase spectators' sense of vulnerability. For example, the last shot of the dramatization in *Dating Rites: Gang Rape on Campus* shows a group of men in a darkened room from a low angle as they approach a bed on which a woman (and in this shot the camera/spectator) is lying. Thus, the spectator literally sees what the woman sees. *Women Word for Word: A Reputation* takes the emotional, although not visual, point of view of Gentileschi. When the video arrives at the point in the narrative when the villain first rapes her, it cuts back and forth between her testimony (which is a dramatization itself) and a dramatization of the rape. For example, on the one hand, when she says she scratched his face, the video cuts to a close-up of his face with bloody scratches, doubling her perspective. On the other hand, when he testifies in court that he never had "carnal intercourse" with her, the video cuts back to the dramatized rape scene, showing him to be lying. Thus, the structure of

the narration emphasizes and supports the perspective Gentileschi articulates in her courtroom testimony, despite several other characters who testify that the rape never took place. While these examples provide the woman's point of view before and during the rape, *Rape: An Act of Hate* provides one sequence of the woman's literal point of view during a medical exam following rape. The video does not identify the woman as either a real person or a specific character in a dramatization; hence, she can more fully stand in for the spectator. The handheld camera moves into an examining room, moving from the face of the (male) doctor to the (female) nurse, and then subsequent shots show a woman's hands in the foreground moving nervously, her knees in the middle of the frame, and the doctor toward the back of the frame patiently explaining what will take place as he examines her. Her missing head and face (replaced by the camera) further invite the (implied female) spectator to place herself in the vulnerable position of the woman who has been raped and now faces a post-rape exam.

Overall, then, programs primarily from the 1970s and early 1980s use the horror film convention of a rapist's point of view sequence to highlight the vulnerability of women and construct fear for the spectator. While spectators see in parallel with the rapist, that *physical* positioning only strengthens their *emotional* positioning with the vulnerable and victimized woman who faces rape. In the context of antirape programs, this use of rapist point of view shots in the process of representing rape scenes asks the spectator to be aware of the extreme violence and criminality of rape. Nevertheless, this representational strategy also encourages the spectator to arrive at that awareness by *increasing* an experience of fear either for one's self as a woman or for women generally. After the mid-1980s, the programs tend to replace the fear of an impending attack revealed through the stranger rapist's point of view with the attack itself, experienced from the visual and/or emotional point of view of the woman who faces rape. While this shift in representational strategy and emotional positioning of the spectator offers a more complex understanding of an experience of rape than do the earlier films and videos, it nevertheless does so by potentially heightening the fear of rape for the spectator even more. To put it somewhat reductively again, these later representations encourage the spectator to yell, "Oh no, here he comes!" rather than the more protective self-defense response evoked by the earlier programs that represent the rapists' point of view: "Watch out!" In short, I am arguing that the visual and emotional point-of-view shots/sequences in all these films and videos expand, heighten, and perpetuate

the experience of rape, as well as its (representational) existence. These shots/sequences work, at least in part, at counterpurposes with the programs' overall antirape goals of decreasing the existence of rape. Instead, these sequences augment the violence and power of the rapist and intensify the victimization of the woman he assaults.

While it is theoretically possible for a viewer to resist the fear encouraged by the film or video and/or even to derive erotic pleasure from these rape scenes, the structure of the programs I discuss above tends to define the rape scenes as "violence, not sex," and they do so in part by inviting the spectator into an experience of violence devoid of any explicit sexuality. A few examples, however, do draw on more erotic images of women's bodies to argue against sexualized violence. For example, both *Men, Sex, and Rape* and a series of Los Angeles Commission on Assaults against Women public service announcements (1996) show women wearing revealing clothes in order to argue that no matter how erotic these images appear to be (e.g., giving away a phone number, kissing, wearing sexy clothing), "This is not an invitation to rape me." (The public service announcements explicitly print this phrase in red lettering that appears over the black and white imagery at the end of each spot.) Sut Jhally's *Dreamworlds* (1994) also uses sexualized images of scantily clad women, intercutting clips of women from MTV videos with the rape scene from the film *The Accused* (1988) to suggest that "images of this kind [the easy sexual availability of women in the media, particularly MTV] might cultivate attitudes that could legitimize rape" (represented by the fictionalized rape scene from *The Accused*) (Jhally 1994, 153).

Both the Los Angeles public service announcements and *Dreamworlds* are powerful critiques of rape; by using aspects of media culture (such as fashion photography and music videos) against themselves, they argue that media can lead men to *think* (erroneously) that the way a woman dresses may be a sexual invitation. They identify a source of a particular rape myth without reducing that myth to a true and false dichotomy. Unlike the films and videos that depict frightening and *de*contextualized (although horrific) rape scenes, these examples emphasize the relationship between rape and the larger masculinist media culture in order to make a theoretical point about the media's symbiotic relationship to cultural attitudes about women's sexual availability, while still insisting that rape is horrific.

Nevertheless, while the red lettering that appears on the screen at the end of the public service announcements insists the images are not an in-

vitation to rape, they do not go so far as to suggest, for example, that they are not an invitation to have sex, or not an invitation to attract the heterosexual male gaze. In fact, they themselves explicitly *address* the heterosexual male spectator: The red lettering says, "This is not an invitation to rape *me*" (emphasis added), drawing a distinction between the spectator and the women the ad depicts and acknowledging that someone (i.e., a heterosexual man[29]) is looking at something (i.e., an objectified woman) that is not to be read as an invitation. In short, while these images may not invite rape, they *do* invite a heterosexual male gaze.[30]

Relatedly, in *Dreamworlds*, while the juxtaposition of the MTV images with *The Accused* invites the spectator to see MTV in a new and critical way, unfortunately, this re-representation of sexually violent images actually can perpetuate representations of rape through repetition. McCaughey and King, for example, argue that because *Dreamworlds*' goal is to shock its audience by rendering television as defamiliarized "entertainment," the video may provide—even encourage—the same kind of pleasures for men and fears for women that MTV videos do and that *Dreamworlds* attempts to criticize.[31]

In response to their dissatisfaction with *Dreamworlds* as a pedagogical tool, McCaughey and King created an alternative video for use in rape prevention and education contexts: *Mean Women*. In their essay on rape education videos, they describe their strategy of constructing a teaching video out of a collection of film clips of what they call "mean women" to use in place of videos such as *Dreamworlds*, which emphasize "dangerous men." They argue,

> Images of "mean women" in film are uncommon. Thus the experience of seeing these images collected reminds many viewers of their rarity, and has the same effect as traditional consciousness raising about the aggression faced by women. . . . The promise of the "mean women" fantasy, then, is not that women may be driven to oppressive violence but rather that men may gain a different sense of women's responses to assault. (385–86)

Here McCaughey and King explicitly state that their goal in producing *Mean Women* is to shift responsibility for changing rape culture from women to men, in part by imagining alternative responses to men's sexualized violence. They edit together various clips from Hollywood films of women fighting back against assault, without the derogatory scenes of sexual violence against women that precede and/or follow the vengeful acts. By showing moments in which "bitches from hell" (to evoke

Thelma and Louise, two prominent figures in this video) protect themselves, McCaughey and King hope to engage in rape prevention education that reverses what they argue is *Dreamworlds*' paradigm of women's fear and men's pleasure. Furthermore, they hope that Hollywood images of men's violence against women will become more strange, less naturalized, for the viewers as a result of this recontextualization of gendered violence.

Although *Mean Women*'s thirty minutes of sustained women's power can and does provide pleasure and empowerment for some women viewers, I would argue that this critical strategy of "reversal" will work only when the spectator is able to maintain an unusually high level of suspension of disbelief.[32] Some of *Mean Women*'s images of women fighting back are so well known that even if a viewer has not seen the original film s/he may remember the violent attack that precedes (e.g., Harlan's rape of Thelma in *Thelma and Louise* [1991]) or follows (e.g., the alien's attack on Ripley in the *Alien* series) the woman's powerful resistance. The *Total Recall* (1990) clip clearly illustrates how excerpts of women's revenge in the video exist outside the context of the overall violence against women in the original film: *Mean Women* shows Sharon Stone fighting back against Arnold Schwarzenegger, but, immediately following the clip included in *Mean Women*, in the actual film he pulls out a gun and shoots her, declaring in an oft-quoted line: "Consider that a divorce." As in this example, *Mean Women* decontextualizes the images and thus disavows the original films' association of women's power with men's increased violence against women. Furthermore, at least in the *Total Recall* example, the video might even suggest to viewers who recontextualize the clip of Sharon Stone within the entire film (in which she is quickly murdered in response to her aggression) that *not* fighting back is safer than using self-defense. Finally, because popular culture texts in which men attack women sexually far outnumber the relatively few clips re-represented in this short video and because the video may remind the viewer of this fact, *Mean Women*—like *Dreamworlds*—inevitably draws attention to the problem of representations of sexual violence against women in a way that may contribute to it (through implicit reference) rather than provide a significant challenge to it, as McCaughey and King intend.

Overall, then, these rape prevention and education programs *heighten* the representation of rape and sexualized violence when they include descriptive detail, duplication of details on image- and soundtracks and through testimony combined with reenactments of that testimony, visual

point-of-view shots for both the rapist and the woman being raped, emotional point-of-view sequences of women who have been or are being raped, eroticized images of women, and occasionally the physical self-defense of either actual or fictional women who experience sexualized violence. Importantly, this heightened representation takes place in the context of films and videos that are primarily produced, marketed, and exhibited as antirape activism. From this perspective, explicit onscreen/onsoundtrack violence is *de*sensationalized and arguably *under*stated in relation to the general social problem of rape to which these programs respond. These aspects of the programs seek to approximate the experience of rape in order to evoke the horror of the act of rape. This argumentative narration addresses the spectator both emotionally and intellectually as an agent of social change and as a political actor who can use fear and anger to work toward awareness, self-defense, legal reform, and therapeutic transformation in both social and personal ways.

Nevertheless, these representations also "give" rape to the spectator, in the sense that their argumentative narration is *based on* "transferring" an aspect of the experience of rape to the spectator in order to increase understanding and to fulfill an educational goal of informing the general public about rape. The underlying argument of such programs seems to be, "If people understand what rape is like, maybe they will do something to stop it." Paradoxically, however, this aspect of the texts also ultimately increases the existence of rape in the larger culture. I want to emphasize that I am *not* arguing here for a metaphorical understanding of rape in which one might say the films and videos "rape" the audience. This perspective would only add one more layer to the proliferation of rape by *using* rape (as a metaphor) to respond to rapes (as film and video representations) that are already responses to rape (as a physical act). Rather, I am arguing that paying careful attention to the *effectivity of representation in antirape films and videos* is, itself, an antirape strategy. As some of these programs suggest themselves, rape is embedded in media culture and exists not only in people's lives but also in a larger representational field that in turn shapes the understandings and experiences of rape that people often encounter. These programs are also part of this relationship between media representation and the existence and social understanding of rape, and thus they necessarily contribute to an ever expanding set of rape representations.

I am also *not* arguing that the best way to decrease rape would be to cease producing and showing antirape films and videos. A structured

absence of attention to rape is only another way of representing rape; indeed, as I discuss in the book's introduction, it is a particularly problematic long-standing way of representing rape (Higgins and Silver 1991). Rather, I am arguing here that the *particular* ways these programs tend to represent the act and experience of rape are troubling because they distill (in the sense of bringing together and intensifying within a text) and personalize (in the sense of making emotional and visceral for the spectator). The conundrum is that to do the opposite—to dilute (and therefore disempower) and defamiliarize (and therefore excise) rape—is virtually if not literally impossible in the cultural context (detailed throughout this book) in which rape is pervasive, not only in our everyday lives but also in our representational worlds. Antirape films and videos cannot will rape away. Nevertheless, the many programs that depend on explicit representations of rape, eroticized sexual violence, and/or decontextualized media images contribute to (even as they challenge) the representational existence of rape.

The Absence of Race

A second troubling aspect of many of these antirape films and videos is the way they curtail attention to the cultural relationship between rape and race. This is troubling, not only because of the lack of attention to antiracism work, but also because it corresponds so directly to the whiteness of postfeminist representations. Like the presence of therapeutic discourses, the absence of race in these programs draws on and supports relatively acritical postfeminist representations of rape. In these films and videos, experts, rapists, and those who have experienced rape are overwhelmingly white, and when they are Asian American, African American, or Latina/o, for example, the texts rarely address any specific way racialized identity might play a role in their experience of rape. On the one hand, much like in postfeminist representations of rape in mainstream film and television, the lack of men of color as rapists in these programs can be understood as an implicit rejection of the long-standing "myth of the Black rapist" (Davis 1981a), which depends on a cultural stereotype of African Americans as overly sexual, presumably leading African American men to rape and African American women to be "unrapable."[33] Concomitantly, a cultural stereotype of white men as in control of their sexuality and white women as simultaneously sexually desirable and passively asexual makes the white man the idealized protector of the white woman,

the idealized victim. The representation in almost all these programs of all rapists as white implicitly challenges the part of this cultural narrative that is about men.[34] In these films and videos, men of color cease to exist as rapists (but also as people altogether), while white men become villains and thus lose their privileged status as protectors by definition. Women in this narrative, on the other hand, remain firmly in their racialized roles, with African American and other women of color seemingly unrapable (through their absence) and white women the idealized, standard victim.[35] White women become the primary object of sympathy and care—the ones who deserve spectatorial attention.

Despite this overwhelmingly dominant, although unarticulated, representation of rape as an event that takes place almost entirely among white people, a few of the films and videos do address race more directly. For example, during the dramatization of the planning stage of a gang rape in *Dating Rites: Gang Rape on Campus,* the only man who objects to the plan and refuses to attend the party is African American. All other characters in the dramatization are white. While this video is similar to the films and videos that include one or two token people of color without addressing the issue of race, it does more directly counter the myth of interracial rape of white women by men of color by casting an African American man as a detractor. He is a passive detractor, however; he simply disappears from the dramatization, taking with him the momentary and oblique attention to the cultural racialization of rape and leaving the white men behind to carry out the rape.

Good Things Too: Recovery from Sexual Abuse (1995) also addresses race, but without dialogue or narration to counter the racism embedded in many social understandings of rape. Because race is nevertheless central to the organization of the video, I offer a somewhat extended analysis of this example. Rather than casting a man of color as the (momentary) hero as does *Dating Rites*, this video makes the unusual move (for the 1990s) of casting an Asian American man as the ultimate villain. Furthermore, it represents an Asian American teen, this man's daughter, as the least idealized post–sexual abuse subject in the video.

This video is a dramatization of a fictional teen therapy group, complete with a sympathetic counselor and two male teens and three female teens who have experienced abuse. The counselor's primary role in the video is to assure the teens that their feelings of guilt, responsibility, self-hate, and loneliness are "typical" but unnecessary, since the abuse is not their fault, they are good people, and they now can depend on each other

in a therapeutic context. Taking place across several months, the video's segments show the passage of time during the healing process, representing a different character telling her or his story to the group at each session. As they tell their stories, animated flashbacks represent their memories while quick intercuts to brief shots in the present show them talking and their groupmates listening sympathetically.

Given this obvious repetitive structure, it is clear very early in the video that each of the five teens will tell their stories. However, Melissa, an Asian American teen, seems reluctant to do so. Furthermore, while everyone else looks at each other during their reaction shots and smiles, cries, or nods sympathetically, Melissa never looks up during her reaction shots, performing a stereotypical passive Asian American popular culture identity. Given that the entire video's therapeutic structure suggests that it is important to speak about one's experience of sexual abuse in order to achieve "good things too" through "recovery," Melissa's silence makes her the least ideal example of a therapeutic subject because she refuses to engage in a "talking cure." Furthermore, the video's implicit promise that each story will be told constructs a spectatorial desire to hear and see the story of Melissa's abuse. In this way, it not only represents Melissa as the least ideal member of the group, but it also demands that she leave her (stereotypical) racial and cultural specificity behind and conform to the majority model. Inevitably, she does.

When she tells her story, two aspects of how the video represents what she says are particularly troubling in relation to race. First, her response to her abuse is not self-destructive; rather, she throws herself into her schoolwork. While this presumably is a "real" response that some people have to the experience of sexual abuse (and while lack of self-destructive behavior is generally a good thing), by dramatizing Melissa as the only character who responds in this way, the video draws on and reinforces the myth of the Asian American model minority.[36] For example, the fact that she works hard might imply that she will be okay, and thus she does not need the kind of support and care that the other teens do.

Additionally, the representation of Melissa's father, the man who assaulted her, is troubling. While the assailants in the other stories sometimes appear, often as shadowy figures, the emphasis in the other characters' flashbacks is on the person having the memory and her/his family's response to the assault. For example, during the blonde woman's flashback we never see her abuse or the man who abused her (her brother). Instead, we see her alone in her room, looking frightened, and we see her

consume an entire pan of brownies as an example of her bulimia. We also see her mother catch her eating the brownies and respond in a sympathetic way that leads to her ultimate entry into therapy and hence recovery. In Melissa's flashback, however, not only do we see her father, but we see him in a particularly menacing way. Shot from below to appear huge, he hovers over her, placing his hand on her shoulder. Then we see him again, speaking to her in a threatening way as he insists that she sit on his lap. While touching her shoulder and asking her to sit on his lap could be relatively innocuous actions between a father and a daughter, his threatening voice and the low camera angle together construct Melissa's father as the most frightening of all the characters who sexually abuse in this video. He is also the only assailant of color to appear in the video.

One of the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults against Women's public service announcements similarly reinscribes racialized cultural identities. The press release materials as well as several articles in mainstream and alternative Los Angeles papers all claim that these spots, as well as coordinated posters, are powerful critiques because they represent "almost every possible target and situation of rape" (Nichani 1997, 10).[37] Yet, the kinds of rape that appear break down along racial lines. The fashion model images of women who wear sexy clothing that is not an invitation of rape all feature white women. They are beautiful, but aloof; the most they do (not to invite rape) is give their phone number or smile. The one image that expresses eroticism and sexuality through action rather than fashion and clothing, however, features an African American heterosexual couple kissing passionately. Thus, at least in relation to the other announcements, this spot reinforces a cultural stereotype that African Americans are more sexually expressive than are whites, while white women are more erotically appealing, more to-be-looked-at, than are African American women.

Overwhelmingly, rape education films and videos from the early 1970s through to the present simply ignore race by portraying the social world as primarily if not entirely made up of white people. When people of color do appear or the programs do directly address race, as in the few examples I discuss here, the moment is either brief or tends to reinscribe, rather than challenge, racist ideology. Through tokenization, many of these images suggest that a few individuals can represent whole groups of people. Overall, the best the films and videos do is *ignore* the historical links between racism and narratives about rape, leaving those links to continue to operate at an insidious, unspoken level and thus to reinforce

an overall cultural tendency to see whiteness as simultaneously invisible and pervasive.

Conclusion: Alternatives?

Several years ago, as part of my ongoing research on and activism against rape, but before studying rape prevention and education programs as closely and critically as I do here, I decided to become a rape crisis line counselor. I did have some trepidation about this decision because I feared that the kinds of narratives I encountered in popular culture and that I discuss throughout this book might resurface in this antirape training context, despite its explicitly feminist goals. Unfortunately, while I did learn many useful skills during the training, one day late in the four-week course some of my original fears about the representational power of rape narratives were confirmed. After discussing the "facts" of rape repeatedly over the four weeks (e.g., rapists are most likely to know their victims and to be of the same race as their victims), the instructor decided to show an episode of *20/20* (or perhaps it was *60 Minutes* or *Primetime Live*). This episode directly contradicted the "facts" the instructor had been articulating. Specifically, the episode told a story about an African American man who had been convicted of committing a series of rapes and was now up for parole. The correspondent's deep and serious voice, the backdrop of the dusty, wind-blown, empty prison yard, and the entire episode's trajectory toward the *unresolved* narrative climax of whether or not the man would be granted parole all encouraged spectatorial anxiety about the violence of the dark-skinned serial stranger rapist who was likely to jump out from behind the nearest bush or car during the night to attack an (implicitly white) innocent victim. Furthermore, the episode's structure and focus on a relatively unusual case of a "convicted serial rapist" reinscribed racist and anti–civil rights discourse about locking away those "animals" for good.

The conversation after the video did not turn to how the ideas in the video might or might not be useful to us when we got our first crisis line call; instead, we discussed with fear and anger the then recent case of a man a grand jury had initially refused to hold over for trial because the woman he had allegedly raped (who was a stranger to him) had asked him to wear a condom (thus presumably implying consent). This conversation was no more helpful than the video; in fact, it only intensified the

anxiety about and attention to the type of case we were least likely to get on the crisis line and encouraged racist and simplistic thinking about rape. Despite the four weeks of training, the conversation reproduced U.S. cultural stereotypes that feminist and antiracist activists have been arguing for years inhibit rape prevention, fair court practices, and successful counseling for people who have been raped.[38]

At the time, I wondered why the instructor had not chosen a feminist rape prevention and education program, one that would resist standard postfeminist narrative forms for rape and focus on a variety of skills for fighting and responding to both representations and acts of rape. But, as my discussion in this chapter hopefully illustrates, the "perfect" feminist antirape film or video that I wished for during my own training does not exist. While some of the programs do seek to shift the social definition of rape—away from men of color as rapists or toward a critique of rape culture, for example—they also often heighten anxiety, reproduce a masculine gaze at women's sexualized bodies, recenter whiteness, and individualize rape by providing women with strategies for awareness, prevention, and therapy rather than social action. Furthermore, they leave the institutions of heterosexuality and the male gaze intact and uncriticized. In short, while antirape films and videos have explicit goals different from those of mainstream postfeminist texts (educational and activist goals rather than entertainment-focused and market-driven goals), the antirape programs draw on and contribute to postfeminist culture more than they challenge its circumscribed depiction of rape. In particular, their mid-1980s shift away from stranger rape and self-defense and toward acquaintance rape and therapeutic discourses corresponds to a postfeminist absorption of feminist antirape activism into depoliticized representations of rape. Thus, while these programs' acknowledgment of acquaintance rape illustrates an important shift in feminist arguments, it also undermines that acknowledgment by disconnecting it from the more activist inflection of the earlier videos. Focusing on acquaintance rape goes only so far when the problem is defined as one that affects only middle-class college-educated white women and that can be solved by a turn to individualized therapeutic practices.

Even empowering self-defense models, such as *Give It All You've Got* and the more recent *Mean Women*, tend to individualize rape, thus separating it from its cultural contexts. Shannon Jackson (1993) argues that some self-defense courses teach focused and ritualized narratives about and performances of self-defense and that these narratives and

performances leave students unprepared for a variety of experiences that exist outside the scripted encounters, during which instructors at times intentionally leave openings so that students can "successfully" defend themselves. Furthermore, she points out that at least the self-defense classes she studied leave the implicit model of the stranger rapist uncriticized. Certainly, her critique of the self-defense classes she studied can be applied to *Give It All You've Got*.

Yet self-defense culture is much more complex than it appears to be in the films and videos I study here or the model mugging classes Jackson studies. As Martha McCaughey (1997) argues, women's self-defense is becoming more and more popular, not only through more traditional classes like model mugging, but also through women's use of guns, courses that fuse aerobic and self-defense (such as "Cardio Combat"), and I would add television characters like Buffy the Vampire Slayer and television episodes about self-defense (e.g., episodes of *Designing Women*, *Ellen*, and *Sister, Sister*, to name a few). I would argue that this popularity of women's self-defense links it to postfeminist representations of women who can have it all: both physical power and feminine sexuality. From another perspective, however, McCaughey urges feminist theory and criticism to take self-defense culture seriously by considering how it can help locate theories of self and gender viscerally in the body, can help give them materiality and corporeality. McCaughey offers a powerful argument for a task I am willing to take on in relation to my own examination of antirape films and videos, but only with a concomitant historical awareness of the gaps in what these programs offer and an imagination for what else they might offer.

For example, I have argued that the mid-1980s shift from stranger rape and physical self-defense to acquaintance rape and therapeutic recovery in these programs can be understood in relation to the emergence of postfeminist culture in the 1980s. In this way, antirape films and videos, like McCaughey's self-defense culture, are embedded in popular media culture, and thus are a part of the very thing against which they at least initially and implicitly struggle. What would a video that combined attention to acquaintance rape and self-defense look like, for example? If a program combined attention to sexual violence in the everyday contexts of institutions like family, education (high school, college), waged work, and dating with attention to the possibility of self-defense, the definition of both dating and self-defense would have to change. Rather than reifying an image of heterosexual dating as the norm and seeking to help

women and men participate more happily in this institution, as do most contemporary antirape films and videos, the video I imagine here might offer ways to defend oneself against the institution of heterosexual dating. Indeed, what if a video addressed sexual violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered relationships? Could it do so without stigmatizing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as somehow prone to violent sexuality and without dissociating that violence from violence in heterosexual relationships; celebrated violence against women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people in popular culture; and the absence of nuanced cultural representations of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people? Or, what if a video not only analyzed how the media contribute to a popular culture that disbelieves women who report rape, as does *The Date-Rape Backlash*, but also acknowledged that the women who get to speak about rape publicly so that they can then be disbelieved in the media are almost always white and thus that the "date rape backlash" is both antiwoman and pro-whiteness, both sexist *and* racist?

Since I have not found these videos yet, on a very practical pedagogical level, as someone who teaches both film studies and women and gender studies, I would choose to show my students some of the videos I discuss here that address rape in various social contexts and encourage their audiences to think beyond the boundaries of both the crazed stranger seeking control over women (not sex with women) and the heterosexual, middle-class, white college acquaintance rapist. *After the Montreal Massacre,* in particular, places rape and sexual violence in both the very local everyday contexts of the home and the street and links those forms of violence to global contexts in which rape is used as a tool of war. Furthermore, by linking the murder of the Montreal women engineering students to rape and other forms of sexual violence, the video is able to make a historically specific argument about how sexual violence is related to antifeminism, which in turn is linked to misogyny. This video is thus simultaneously about rape, feminism, activism, and the structure of media culture itself.

Nevertheless, given that even this complex video separates rape from cultural narratives about race and sidesteps a careful examination of everyday violence within the formerly all-male institutions (such as engineering) into which the video itself points out women are now entering, I would argue that an even more productive approach to using, teaching, and producing rape prevention and education films and videos would be not only to seek out projects like *After the Montreal Massacre* but also to

combine two or more of these kinds of programs or approaches in an attempt to invite viewers and students to understand rape in multiple ways *simultaneously*. Monica Chau (1993) makes a similar argument in relation to a 1993 Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition on "the subject of rape" that she helped curate. She chose videos that "bespeak the need for a new cultural literacy that acknowledges different voices, contesting the silence, myths, and fallacies that surround representations of rape" (80). Collectively, she argues, the videos she curated "represent multiple vantage points on the part of the women and men who are both the speaking subject(s) [and] object(s)" (84). In short, I argue here that in order for an antirape program to make good on its promise to challenge rape, it must struggle not only against rape, but also against the pervasive and persuasive power of the cultural narratives about rape and the cultural imperatives to represent it in particular ways. Finally, when teaching film (so much of which includes rape and attempted rape), studying rape in women and gender studies, and participating in antirape activism, I would ask, How else might we represent rape, how else might we use the power and politics of representation against itself?