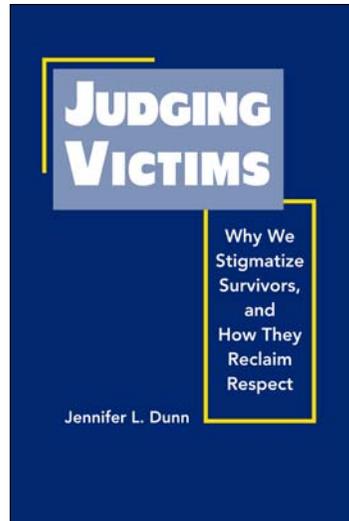


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**Judging Victims:
Why We Stigmatize Survivors,
and How They Reclaim Respect**

Jennifer L. Dunn

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telephone 303.444.6684

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1

Vocabularies of Victimization: Sympathy, Agency, and Identity

Why now write a book about victims, and what do I mean by “judging victims,” “stigmatizing,” and “reclaiming respect”? In 1992, Charles Sykes disparagingly called the United States a “nation of victims” (in a book by that name). Recently others have argued that more people than ever before are claiming to be victims, facilitated by an ever-expanding “victim industry” that makes it possible for new categories of victims to continually emerge (Best 1997; Loseke 2003). At the same time, increasing numbers of people who might legitimately assert their victimization instead insist that they are *not* victims but, rather, “survivors.” Victims have come to play an important role in our society, but it is an uneasy one. In what follows, I explore the rise of one type of victim identity, the victim of (usually) gendered violence, and the struggles for meaning that accompany this emergence. Images of these victims have not been static but have changed over time: How so, and why?

Starting in 1971, rape victims, battered women, incest survivors, and, relatively recently, clergy abuse survivors have all come to our collective attention. This is not by chance but is due to the concerted activities of groups of people who sought and seek to bring these problems into our national consciousness. In order to do this, they have needed more than statistics; they have had to personalize the issues by creating evocative representations of the types of people harmed by these problems. This book focuses primarily on the efforts of the second and third “waves” of the women’s movement to construct women and children as victims of sexual violence. This collective identity creation began as a struggle to alter what feminists argued were widespread popular and even social scientific conceptions of the time. These “myths,” in their

words (Armstrong 1978; Burt 1980; Martin 1976), included ideas that women “precipitated” (Amir 1971) or somehow encouraged rape and battering and even child sexual abuse. This simple beginning has had a number of interesting consequences for how we currently think about victims.

As I will show, people who are perceived as responsible in any way for their own victimization are not readily designated or treated as victims (Christie 1986; Loseke 1999, 2003; Dunn 2002, 2004, 2005). If we think that a person must take some of the blame for what happened to him or her, we do not feel quite as sympathetic toward the person as we might otherwise (Clark 1987, 1997).

Lacking sympathy, we may be disinclined to offer help, whether we are working in law enforcement or are simply friends of the person claiming victimization. In fact, we may even be reluctant to use the term *victim* for someone who does not meet our expectations of blamelessness. When we *judge* victims, we hold them up to a standard of innocence, and if they fall short, we treat them accordingly. And the “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979) that govern the inextricable relationship between our emotions and our actions have deep roots in our culture; change in this regard has been slow in coming and difficult to effect.

This means that the task for feminists and other activists has been to show that rape victims, battered women, and even incest survivors do not bring their injuries upon themselves. This has also been true for at least some survivors of clergy abuse. In rapid succession, the social movements associated with sexual abuse and gender violence have created images of victims and survivors that counter the myths. Drawing on lessons learned from the civil rights movement and an emergent psychological vocabulary of the self, activists in what I am calling “survivor movements” have portrayed women and children as suffering long-lasting effects of victimization and of the powerful societal forces arrayed against them. But their victimization is not their fault! It cannot be, if we are to care about what happens to them or do anything to help.

To establish (and reestablish) this necessary and fundamental claim of innocence, especially in the early stages of a survivor movement, activists and scholars and journalists portray victims as relatively helpless. Victims are trapped in their rape encounters by overwhelming physical force or in violent relationships by equally daunting sociological and psychological constraints. The images of powerlessness you will read are quite moving and continue to evoke strong emotions in audiences. As a result, we now have rape crisis centers, battered women’s shelters, therapists trained in dealing with the long-term consequences

of childhood sexual abuse, changes in the way the criminal justice system deals with crime victims, and changes in religious institutions.

Not everyone has been happy with how victims of sexual abuse and gender violence have been portrayed, however, and from the very beginning some of the survivor movements' characterizations have yielded criticism from within the movements and without, as well as ongoing controversy. Some feminists have argued that images of victims produced a kind of "victimism"—a portrait of victimization that is inconsistent with real women's agency and sexuality (Barry 1979; Lamb 1996). Others (e.g., Sykes 1992; Roiphe 1993; Paglia 1994), cultural critics, and those writers whom some have called the "media feminists" (Atmore 1999) have asserted that claims about the nature and prevalence of victimization are exaggerated, misleading, and ultimately confusing. The critics have created images of their own, which are not very sympathetic.

Survivor movements have responded to different counterimages in various ways. Victims of battering, and their advocates, struggled to explain the persistent phenomenon of women who returned to or remained in violent relationships. An explosion of public interest in incest was followed by doubts about the legitimacy of one of the sources of the increase: recovered memories of childhood abuse. Antirape activists have had to explain that "date rape" is "real rape," and how. Then, when the seriousness of various forms of women's violent victimization appeared to verge on being taken for granted, a new kind of abuse came to the fore, abuse by clergy. It is interesting that the typical victims of clergy are symbolized by men more than women, who are also victimized. As a social problem, clergy abuse has taken a new, but nonetheless contentious, course.

Why have these images been so hotly debated and so malleable? Images of victims are produced in the process of what Best (1987) and others in the sociology of social problems have called "claims-making." When seeking to persuade audiences to care about social issues such as violence against women and children, activists in social movements, for example, tell emotion-laden and melodramatic stories about the problems on which they are attempting to focus public attention. In these stories, which tend to be rather formulaic, appealing victims can elicit sympathy for the cause, provoke outrage at the harm being done to them, recruit new members to the social movement, and, ultimately, generate help in the form of public policy. Victims are so important in the construction of social problems and the work of social movements that it is hard to imagine claims-making without them (Loseke 2003).

Successful creation of *sympathetic* victims is complicated, though. To begin, like all the elements of the story being told, images of victims must be consistent with what we think we know about the world and how it works, with what we believe is right or wrong, just or unjust. They must draw upon widely shared understandings and values within a culture to be emotionally moving. Among these understandings, as I noted above, are the feeling rules that instruct people when, how, and toward whom to feel sympathy (Hochschild 1979; Clark 1987, 1997). As part of our socialization into our families, playgroups, schools, churches, and workplaces, we are taught to feel outrage toward what we see as injustice and compassion for those who appear to us to be unjustly harmed. Activists and other claims-makers can use what we have learned to elicit our feelings and spur us into action.

For victims, this can become a problem when there are conflicting cultural and emotional expectations. For example, what happens when a norm for directing sympathy, the “rule” that victims should be powerless to prevent their victimization, conflicts with a broader societal value, the privilege we grant to the ideals of autonomy, strength, resistance, individualism, and free will? We blame victims if they are not helpless, but sometimes we do not respect helpless people very much or identify with them. And sometimes, the situations of actual victims are murkier and more confusing than the stories we hear and the images we hold. How do movements, audiences, and individuals reconcile sometimes ambiguous and complex behaviors, identities, and experiences with relatively simple stereotypes? If we create new images of victims, will they still be effective? For example, if we start to think of victims as “survivors,” will we still see them as needing our help (Loseke 2003)?

This book is an effort to understand such contradictions and their effects on individual and collective images of victims and victimization in survivor movements over time. In the activities and storytelling of activists fighting and victims struggling to make sense of rape, battering, incest, and clergy abuse, there is an ongoing interplay between labeling victims deviant when they do not conform to our stereotypes and the production of personal and collective identities that counter these negative and stigmatizing representations. These “victim contests” (Holstein and Miller 1997) also reveal ways in which changing representations of victims reflect larger cultural codes, especially those that draw upon what I call a *cultural code of agency*.

Sociologists view culture in a number of different ways: in her review Lyn Spillman characterizes them as emphasizing “meaning-making processes along three specific dimensions; meaning-making in

everyday action, the institutional production of meaning, and the shared mental frameworks along which are the tools of meaning-making” (2002, p. 2). In what follows, I will examine images of victims and victimization in each of these realms, but here I refer to the “mental frameworks,” what Swidler early on illuminated as part of our “toolkit” (1986) both for understanding the world and for acting on those understandings. These frameworks can concern the relatively trivial in our lives or constitute the profound, core beliefs about which we feel most strongly (Loseke 2007). Sometimes they are salient, but most of the time they are so deeply embedded we probably take them for granted.

Sociologists as well as scholars in other disciplines have given this idea many names, among them “symbolic codes, signifiers and sign systems, categorical schemas, genre, and narrative” (Spillman 2002, p. 8), and have also come up with other useful terms: semiotic codes, cultural coherence systems, symbolic repertoires, and meaning systems (cited in Loseke 2007, p. 665). According to Donileen Loseke, all these terms “reference densely packed, complex, and interlocking visions of how the world works, and of how the world *should* work” (2007, p. 665; emphasis added). I have chosen the term *cultural code* because it conveys the way in which culture *instructs* us to feel and act in particular ways according to what Alexander and Smith (1993) call a given “cultural logic.” Codes provide rules, and there are consequences for breaking them, as I will show. As Loseke says, they “surround cultural narratives of identities because they contain images of the rights, responsibilities, and normative expectations of people in the world, and of the expected affective responses to these people” (2007, pp. 665–666).

The *cultural code of agency* is central to how we understand and react to victims and victimization. When sociologists discuss “agency,” we often define it as that component of human action that is not determined by social forces and structures, that part of what we do that is our choice. Like philosophers, we debate whether there is such a thing and how much of it we really enjoy, or whether it is merely a social construction (Wallerstein 1997). The cultural code of agency, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that *all* individuals *do* have free will. According to the cultural logic associated with this code, it follows that we are *always* accountable for our actions.

The problem for victims is that because the code is foundational, and part of “background expectations” (Garfinkel 1964) that are rarely salient, we hold them to its standard as a sort of default. It is a version of “guilty until proven innocent,” an a priori judgment. It is this cultural

code that we are employing when we require victims to be innocent of any part in their own victimization, an expectation I will take up in detail in the chapters that follow. It is this code that inspires us to question any behaviors or attributes that suggest victims' agency. It is thus the source of pervasive images of victims that foster victim-blaming and a related lack of sympathy and an inability to identify with victims (Dunn 2004, 2005). I will argue that because we believe so deeply that we always "have a choice," we have a very powerful tendency to discount victims' claims and to think that they somehow "brought it on themselves." This leads us to think of them as deserving of their fate, and therefore undeserving of our compassion, and even as somehow essentially different from us.

For this reason, when people in survivor movements tell stories about victimization (the stories intended to encourage us to feel for victims and to care about what happens to them), they explain the transgressions of victims. These explanations take a particular form and make use of specific cultural codes. Mills (1940) calls this conjoining of explanation and code a "situated vocabulary of motive"—in this project (and elsewhere) I call them *vocabularies of victimization* (Dunn forthcoming). We find them in what Loseke (2001) calls "formula stories" and Davis (2005b) "victim narratives," the melodramatic, eventually well-known stories about victims and victimization told by victims, their advocates, and their opponents. Vocabularies of victimization are important because they reveal the myriad ways in which victims violate the expectations we have of them, and they show how social movements excuse or justify victimization and deflect stigma in much the same way that individuals do (Dunn 2005). Like all "aligning actions," the verbal responses potentially deviant people make when we question their motives (Stokes and Hewitt 1976), they also tell us more about the culture that is the source of the code and the source of the victim-blaming.

So too, does a different kind of story: the counternarratives told by cultural critics of the increasing numbers of people identifying as victims and the survivor movements that have facilitated victim claims. These authors emphasize the *debilitating* characteristics associated with victimization, yet they also rely on vocabularies that are built on the cultural code of agency. The critics are able to do this because there is another important component of the code: not only do we assume that people always have agency, but we place an extraordinary *value* upon it, so much so that we may lose all respect for people who claim to be helpless. This is especially true if we believe that the claim is false, but we also have a tendency to denigrate even "legitimate" victims. "There

must be something wrong with them,” we think. “I would not let that happen to me; I’m stronger than that.”

The survivor movements I report on here use vocabularies of victimization in stories about victims or told by victims to ensure that audiences will care about rape, battering, incest, and clergy abuse and, especially, about the people who serve to represent victims of these assaults. Survivor movements also use a (different) kind of rhetoric to encourage people’s identification *as* victims and thus to recruit new members who see themselves in the stories the movements tell. These social constructions might better be termed *vocabularies of surviving*, as we will see. The critics use what I call a *vocabulary of victimism* to discredit the claims of victims and their advocates and to discourage identification as victims. All of these vocabularies follow similar rules; they all find their source and their impact in the cultural code of agency. I have found these vocabularies in stories about and by victims in a wide variety of media: in the documentation of early speak-outs, in collections of stories published by activists, in victims’ interview excerpts that scholars use to represent types of victimization and account for victims’ deviance, in popular media such as books written with mass appeal, and most recently, in the case of clergy abuse, in tales of victimization and surviving posted to the Internet.

Finally, because victim narratives (Davis 2005b) are “formula stories”—that is, they adhere closely to the expectations we hinge upon the cultural code of agency—they have “stock characters.” Loseke writes of these in her analysis of the stories she heard in a battered women’s support group: “the battered woman as victim, the abusive man as villain” (2007, p. 110). I found recurring victim *types*, almost archetypes, in the stories told in the antirape movement, the battered women’s movement, the incest survivor movement, the cultural countermovement, and the clergy abuse survivor movements. Thus, there are images of *blameless* victims that oppose and contrast with images of *blameworthy* victims. There are critical counterimages constructing what I call *pathetic* victims, and in response, there are survivor stories that tell us about *admirable* victims. The ways in which movements and countermovements use these images and ideas show how victims, advocates, and critics draw upon widely shared cultural understandings for their emotional and cultural resonance. The vocabularies of victimization and surviving in these stories show how victims and their advocates respond to the cultural code of agency. Victim narratives (Davis 2005b) also show how the cultural code can be appropriated by countermovements to construct a very different kind of victimization, one

less at the hands of victims' assailants than through the efforts of those who claim to help.

In the remaining chapters of this book, I will first provide a brief historical introduction to each of the movements and try to "flesh out" the storytellers who, although they are individuals with various aims and skills, use the same language in the various stories from which I take my illustrations of vocabulary and infer the code of agency. Then, I will closely examine the four types of victim images, mostly using one of the survivor movements to illustrate each archetype but sometimes supplementing with data from the other movements (because each type of victim appears in more than one movement). To begin, however, I discuss the social constructionist theoretical approaches to deviance, identity, social problems, and social movements that inform my analysis. Although some readers may be familiar with these perspectives, others may benefit from some introduction to the lenses through which I view my topic. I also explain a little about how I have selected and analyzed texts and, last, provide a brief map of the rest of the book.

Blaming, Claiming, and Framing: Analytical Tools

The sociological story that I am telling about the stories people tell in survivor movements is rooted in several substantive areas tied together theoretically by scholars' common interest in the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966). When we say that reality is "constructed," we allude to the ways in which human beings collaborate, using language and culture (and storytelling) to come to shared understandings of what the world is like, what is important in that world, and how to respond to what "really" matters. The sociological social psychologists who call themselves "symbolic interactionists" and many people interested in social problems and social movements have focused their attention on the ways in which people do this work. We actively interpret situations—and we define ourselves and situations for others (Thomas and Thomas 1929).

These situations can be brief encounters between individuals (Goffman 1983) or social problems affecting millions of people and inspiring widespread social protest (e.g., Altheide 2006). There is a lot of overlap among the sociologists in these different areas, just as there are interrelationships among the stories people tell to construct themselves, social problems, and what to do about them. For now, however, I will briefly treat the conceptualizations that are key to my analysis one

at a time, beginning with the most individual and personal and moving outward from there to increasingly larger collectivities—all of which are linked to yet more encompassing societal and cultural sets of understandings.

Beginning with an examination of emotions and norms that dictate their socially appropriate distribution, I consider the relevance of the feeling rules that govern sympathy for understanding how victims are named as such and treated accordingly. I then turn to the sociology of deviance, specifically the ideas that help us understand how some victims may violate the normative expectations for this identity, what can happen as a result, and what they can do to bring themselves back into the good graces of the people from whom they are seeking help. There is a brief discussion of the literature in social problems that shows how the claiming of victim identities can be a collaborative as well as an individual endeavor. I then articulate each of these key ideas with the framing perspective in social movements theory, as well as a consideration of how the “narrative turn” in the latter area can inform what I am doing. I follow this with a methodological note on how I chose the narratives in which vocabularies of victimization are embedded. This serves as preparation for a somewhat more detailed description of the victim typology in terms of how the book is organized.

Emotions: Feeling Rules and Sympathy Margins

Emotions are important in the study of survivor movements because they are implicated in all social movements: when people are “moved” by the images of things that need to be changed, of injustice, and of suffering, they respond in part on the basis of their cognitions but more so owing to how they are feeling (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001). Loseke points out that because we “often have deep feelings about the immorality and injustice of specific social problems conditions . . . feeling words such as ‘outrage’ about a social problem condition or ‘sympathy’ for victims are staples of social problems talk” (2000, p. 43). Because talk provides the data for social constructionist analyses, increasingly social movements and social problems scholars have been turning their attention to the role of emotions, emotion talk, and “emotions work” (Hochschild 1979).

Emotions work refers to the activity of evoking, suppressing, and otherwise managing one’s own and others’ emotions, and activists and claims-makers engage in a great deal of this in order to get and keep people involved. Some of it is directed toward audiences, such as efforts

to recruit strangers to support or join social movements by inducing a “sense of crisis, shock, and outrage” (Jasper and Poulsen 1995, p. 499). Others use emotions to foster a sense of belonging, of being transformed, of having a new, collective identity; Lory Britt and David Heise, for example, write of how social movements redefine stigmatized identities from a deviance framing to an oppression framing. Emotions work converts shame into anger, not only at the oppression, but at the prior shaming, and through this process, movements “transform sequestration into solidarity” (2000, p. 262).

In the case of survivors as victims, the relevant emotion is sympathy. If audience members are to do anything about a problem, they have to believe that, whether it is global warming or child abuse, it is causing harm to people toward whom they can feel sympathetic. Thus, social movement activists become what Candace Clark has called “sympathy brokers” at the level of individuals and “sympathy entrepreneurs” at the collective level. The latter especially have had considerable success shifting public perceptions of problems that previously have been considered personal issues (Clark 1997). Social movements mobilize audiences, in part, by constructing sympathy-worthy victims of social problems.

This is not always a simple task, however, because of culturally derived feeling rules (Hochschild 1979) telling us to whom we should direct which emotions and when. Feeling rules, in Hochschild’s formulation, are norms dictating the appropriateness of affect and its display. We learn feeling rules the same way we learn the other expectations and requirements people hold, through socialization into our culture and subcultures and their associated systems of stratification. We are taught what kinds of emotions are acceptable to reveal and which are necessary and suitable to be experiencing, in given situations and toward specific people and *types* of people. Activists and claims-makers thus draw upon what Loseke calls “emotional discourse.” This is claims-making that, to be effective, needs to be consistent with “culturally circulating ideas about how audience members should feel about particular types of conditions and particular types of people” (Loseke 2000, p. 44).

Clark’s argument is that in order for us to potentially judge people as deserving of our sympathy, we assess their moral worthiness first, making sympathizing itself a “morality-constructing act” (1997). One crucial determinant of sympathy is blamelessness—“Is the person at fault or a victim? Does he or she deserve affirmation and reprieve, or not?” (Clark 1997, p. 22). Loseke similarly asserts that even though victims are a necessary prerequisite for social problems to exist, in order to

be perceived as victims, they must meet certain conditions. "We tend to reserve the status of victim for people we feel sympathy toward, and we feel sympathy when morally good people are greatly harmed through no fault of their own," she claims (1999, p. 77). The job of the sympathy entrepreneur, then, becomes one of constructing the virtue of victims and restoring audiences' positive emotions toward them. This can create "a halo of worth and morality around the unfortunates who fall into certain plights, or at least offer a way of understanding them that absolves them from blame" (Clark 1997, p. 125).

Thus, one of my objectives here is showing that activists in the anti-rape, battered women's, and incest survivor movements, as well as other kinds of claims-makers, have told the stories of victims in ways that appear calculated to evoke our sympathy and get us to care about what happens to people in the victimizing situations they describe. Often, the images they evoke are shocking and horrifying (Jasper and Poulson 1995; Johnson 1995). But, and this is a very large qualification, the images must also be of people for whom we genuinely care. If sympathizing reflects and signifies moral value, its lack indicates the presence of some factor that devalues a person.

Put differently, a victim whom we hold accountable for what happens to her, whose circumstances neither mitigate nor extenuate our judgment that she is somehow "bringing it on . . . herself" (Clark 1997, p. 84), has violated the expectation of innocence that is a crucial part of the feeling rule for sympathy. When this happens, we do not think of her as a victim, and we may label her something else entirely. She evokes rather different emotions, blame among them. This norm violation brings us to the contribution of the sociology of deviance to understanding survivor movements' (and cultural critics') stories of victims of rape, battering, incest, and clergy abuse.

Deviance: Labeling, Stigma, and Identity Work

I started my social constructionist look at victims by examining the emotions they might evoke, arguing that these are not inherent in victimization but are culturally shaped and assigned according to how we define people and interpret their behavior. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that being perceived as a victim depends less on what has happened to a person than on how the person herself is interpreted by others. That is, "victim" is a label and so, too, is "not really a victim." As Holstein and Miller (1997) put it in their "rethinking" of victimization, the identity is not a necessary product of any act but is an

assignation. Drawing on early labeling theory (Tannenbaum 1938), they argue: “If ‘deviants’ are constituted through public definition and ‘dramatization of evil’ . . . then we might also view the production of victims as the public articulation and dramatization of injury and innocence” (Holstein and Miller 1997, p. 28).

Labeling theory is a social constructionist approach toward “deviance,” a term we put between quotation marks to signify that it is historically and culturally relative, a matter of definition rather than of “fact” or the inherent qualities of an actor or action. From this perspective, a deviant is a person whom others have successfully labeled as such (Becker 1963), and the processes of conferring meaning and the social significance of this labeling are what is most sociologically interesting and important. The objective act is of less interest, and less consequential, than the stories people tell about it. If we apply this idea to the labeling of victims, it directs us to attend more closely to the stories of activists, claims-makers, and victims than to an “objective condition” of victimization and a victim identity that follows automatically or necessarily.

When people hear a victim narrative (Davis 2005b), the character who has been harmed only becomes a victim when the hearers of the story decide that he or she meets the criteria for being a victim. Like Clark (1997) and Loseke (1999), Holstein and Miller describe the social construction of victims as inextricable from “deflecting responsibility” (1997). This means that when a person is perceived as less than innocent in his or her injury, there is what Goffman, writing about stigma, has called a “discrepancy” between the stereotype and the actual person (1963). Our ideas about stereotypical victims, “real” victims, are pretty specific and include the expectations that they not have caused or even contributed to their own victimization.

So if a victim or her or his actions deviate from how we think victims are or ought to be, we conclude that she or he is not “really” a victim after all. The claim to victimization has been discredited. When the victim identity is lost, maligned, or clouded, our sympathy evaporates. For this reason, whenever victims and survivors are or can potentially be blamed for their own mishaps, their task is to explain whatever is problematic for their claim. In Goffman’s terms, they must engage in processes of identity “management” (1963). Among these are the stories they tell about their victimization; when relating them, they must *account* for anything that casts doubt on their blamelessness.

There is a vast literature in sociology on accounts (see Orbuch 1997 for a review). The central concept in the classical accounting literature

is that when people deviate from norms, they will be asked about it, and they must provide explanations or risk social disapproval or condemnation. In 1940, C. W. Mills called these the “reasons [people] give for their actions” or “vocabularies of motive” (1940, p. 904). These reasons, Mills argues, are culturally and historically specific, conventional, learned, and widely accepted. Because they “line up conduct with norms,” Mills implies that they function to permit or remedy deviant behavior (1940, p. 908).

The idea of accounts is built on this foundation, what Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman have termed the forms of talk people use “whenever an action is subject to valuative inquiry” (1968, p. 46). Accounts and other “techniques of neutralization” (Sykes and Matza 1957) are employed to preserve normal or repair deviant identities. They resolve problematic situations by showing that deviant actors recognize the norms they are violating. They make the deviance consistent with cultural expectations and thus are a type of “aligning action” (Stokes and Hewitt 1976). When providing accounts, people who risk being interpreted as deviant must come up with excuses and justifications.

Of most importance to sociologists, people must choose their accounts carefully on the basis of their social appropriateness. There is an available “vocabulary of motive” that people can draw upon, but this is cultural and historically specific, or “situated” (Mills 1940). Successful accounts indicate that the deviant recognizes the norms and how to make his or her behavior consistent with expectations; for this reason, this class of definitional phenomena is sometimes called “aligning actions” (Stokes and Hewitt 1976).

Somewhat more recently, building on Goffman’s (1963) idea of “identity management” among the stigmatized, sociologists have used the term *identity work* to capture what happens when the “demeaned” in a society “attempt to generate identities that provide them with a measure of self-worth and dignity.” They define identity work as “the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept.” Identity talk is one of the vehicles through which identity construction can take place (Snow and Anderson 1987, pp. 1336, 1348). That is, the homeless tell stories that are like accounts; Snow and Anderson have called this “salvaging the self” (1993). Victims and survivors do this too, as I will show.

Because salvaging is so specific, we can often deduce the norms from the identity work and accounts that appear in narratives and learn about cultural meaning this way. So when rape victims repeatedly

explain why they did not sufficiently resist their attackers, we can guess that in our culture, we expect them to resist (Burt 1980). When social scientists come up with multitudinous hypotheses for battered women's "unexpected" behavior of remaining with their abusive partners, this suggests that we consider leaving the best or only solution to violence (Loseke and Cahill 1984; Dunn 2005; Dunn and Powell 2007). When adults who relate that they recover memories of experiencing incest as children (or women who tell others about being raped by people whom they know) become fodder for social critics' characterizations of them as deluded or overreacting, we might presume that we have norms that distinguish real victims from people who are merely the victims of unscrupulous or overzealous therapists (or feminists). In the process of examining how victims and their advocates create sympathy, we will also attend to what they do when their claims and identities are called into question and to what this reveals about ourselves as a people.

Social Problems Work and the Accomplishment of Victimization

In addition to considerations of sympathy and of accounts that foster positive or deflect negative attributions and emotions, my analysis is helped by ideas that link the identity work of individuals to the significant audiences in their lives and that serve as a bridge from the particular victim to a collective victim identity. Turning again to Holstein and Miller's discussion of victim identities, they refer to victimization as "interactionally constituted" (1997). The construction of victims is a collaboration, a joint practice, a social process, and when successful, it is something we "accomplish" with the help of others. In an earlier essay, Miller and Holstein (1993) call this process "social problems work," because as a form of identity work, it is active and interpretive, it involves claims-making, and it results in the production of victims. Holstein and Miller point out that this is a categorizing or "typifying" process (to use the terminology of Best 1995). Loseke describes a kind of matching up of the actual person with the stereotype; this work occurs, she says, "when we evaluate and categorize *unique* experiences, conditions, and people as instances of *types* of experiences, conditions, and people" (2003, p. 20; emphases in original).

Social problems work occurs whenever victims of any kind seek help from people whom I think of as "eligibility workers." If a person is too poor to manage the expenses of daily life, he might apply for public assistance. If the social worker reviewing his circumstances is

able to determine that he meets the criteria for eligibility for this kind of aid, that is, that he represents the type of person (poor) and social problem (poverty) for whom the aid is intended, the assistance will be forthcoming. This becomes collaboration when the social worker elicits the right information from the applicant, perhaps suggesting what to include and what to leave out of the application. The victim advocates in the prosecutor's office where I researched intimate stalking victimization did social problems work of this kind when they directed their resources toward the stalking victims whom they found the most "credible." These victims were the ones who conformed to advocates' ideas about "genuine" stalking victims (women who had left abusive relationships, obtained restraining orders, and tried to enforce them, for example).

What happens if the match is not easily made? Holstein and Miller talk about "victim contests," in which "victim status is openly negotiated, contested, and even imposed," adding that "both injury and responsibility may be at stake in such disputes" (1997, p. 37). In other words, just as there can be a discrepancy between the actual and the expectation (Goffman 1963), a deviation from norms requiring an account (Scott and Lyman 1968), and identity work that takes place when selves need salvaging from the realms into which we cast the lowest among us (Snow and Anderson 1993), there can be forms of social problems work that people direct toward accomplishing victimization in the face of questioning, skepticism, and even opposition. Importantly, this happens when group identity as well as individual identities are at stake. The ways in which social movement actors tell stories about victims are sometimes social problems work of this type.

Social Movement Framing, Collective Identity Work, and the "Narrative Turn"

Thinking about victims and vocabularies of victimization from a social problems perspective encourages the inclusion of a variety of claim-makers in identity work. Activists and mass media as well as individual victims tell stories accounting for victims' deviance, that is, that construct the morality of collective representations as well as of particular people. Thus, in what follows, we will also think of victim narratives (Davis 2005b) as intended to foster interpretations of rape, battering, incest, and clergy abuse as social problems. Narratives produce instances of the problems and exemplify the problems, and they are stories that establish and dramatize not only the harm done to victims but

especially the “exoneration from responsibility [that] accompanies victimization” (Holstein and Miller 1997, p. 43).

Victimization is a claim, and its vocabulary serves to bolster claims, especially in the face of counterclaims and other kinds of contesting. Victimization is also a collaboration in which not only victims, but also their advocates, play an active role. And because advocates can have such a significant effect—and more so when they are part of social movements with intensity and impact, such as the ones this book is about—I make use of theory in the sociology of social movements related to framing, collective identity work, and the “narrative turn.”

Social movement framing and victimization. When social movement activists are trying to convince their audiences that a social problem exists, their success depends upon the power of the stories they tell about it. In terms of mobilizing actors, the presentation of the problem, or the way in which activists “frame” it (Goffman 1974; Benford and Snow 2000), is as important as or even more significant than the objective characteristics of the problem. Frames tell us what type of problem a condition is, why we should care, who should be blamed, and what to do about it. For example, if stalking is something that happens mostly to celebrities, it is a “fame problem” associated with deranged fans, and we need to make it harder for them to get access to the objects of their obsessions. Because it is rare and affects people with many resources, we may not care a great deal about it or do much if anything to intervene. But if stalking happens mostly to women trying to leave abusive relationships, it is a “domestic violence problem,” and we are likely to assign responsibility, feel sympathy, and take action in the ways similar to how we have responded to activism for battered women.

Frames are thus strategic versions of reality for mobilizing people to help or join the movement, and frames that move audiences are those that draw artfully from the culture in which they are situated. When they resonate with their intended targets, they do so in part because they are consistent with the feeling rules that govern the emotions (including sympathy) that activists seek to evoke. In this way, they are like aligning actions, which work best when they are carefully chosen from appropriate vocabularies of motive. The “cultural resonance” of frames occurs when they make effective use of cultural “repertoires” using symbols whose meanings are widely shared (Williams 1995; Williams and Williams 1995; Benford and Snow 2000). In order for survivor movements to accomplish victimization, especially when the people who are in need of champions do not nicely fit our preconceptions of what they

should be like in order to qualify as victims, they must frame victims in ways that generally incline people to forgive them their transgressions. Cultural resonance and emotions are linked: Loseke says that the “cultural coherence system producing ‘victims’ . . . is the same as the feeling rules producing ‘sympathy’” (2000, p. 49).

Collective identity work in social movements. This brings us again to the topic of identities, which Robert Benford and David Snow argue are inherent and central to framing processes. A number of social movement theorists focus on how critical the construction of a collective identity—“the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity”—is for recruitment and, according to Taylor and Whittier, for “*all* forms of collective action” (1992, p. 104; emphasis added). Examples of collective identities that social movements have constructed are of oppressed minorities (e.g., blacks, women, homosexuals, fat people), activists (feminists, antiwar protesters, pro-lifers, environmentalists), and victims of abuse (children, animals, the elderly). The collective identities of “rape victims,” “battered women,” “victims of incest,” and “clergy abuse survivors” are the focus of this book, along with the counteridentity I call the “pathetic victim.”

In research and theorizing on new social movements, scholars have noted that collective identities are sometimes “transformative,” because activists “work to resist negative social definitions and demand that others value and treat oppositional groups differently.” Victims are one such category, and this study examines how an effect of the survivor movements has been to, as Taylor and Whittier put it, “reconstitute the experience of victimization” (1992, p. 115). Collective identity work is like individual identity work; it too provides us with excuses and justifications and with reasons for the seemingly inexplicable.

Like other elements of frames (and emotions, and accounts, and social problems work), collective identities must have “narrative fidelity,” the degree to which frames “resonate with the targets’ cultural narrations” (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 622). This is an important factor in their appeal to potential members, to larger public audiences, and, ultimately, to people with the power to create and implement policy. Collective identity work takes place in stories that respond to the cultural code of agency, a “cultural narration” that threatens to discredit victims’ claims, denies victimization, or diverts responsibility back to claimants.

Another interesting feature of collective identity work is that it cre-

ates commitment and solidarity among members of a social movement (Hunt and Benford 2004), in part through how it encourages victims of stigma and oppression to see themselves as victims—not because of who they are as individuals but because of the categories to which they belong (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Gagne 1998; Taylor 2001; Whittier 2001). When this is done meaningfully and well, it also serves to usefully engage the emotions of others. Collective identities move members “from shame to pride” (Britt and Heise 2000) but are constructed in public as well as within social movement organizations. Vocabularies of victimization in social movements’ narratives facilitate “victim work” (Holstein and Miller 1997), especially when, as I will show, they redefine victims as “survivors” (Dunn 2005).

This last is important because in addition to ways in which victims may deviate from the blamelessness and innocence we require of the true victim, they must sometimes answer to a whole other set of cultural expectations—those that make being a victim *itself* deviant. People may need to be seen as victims, but they may not want to be defined or to define themselves as weak, passive, or diminished in the process. The same is true for the uses to which images of victims are put, and as it happens, there are more emotions than simple sympathy at stake, more expectations than blamelessness to meet, more aligning to do, and additional stereotypes with which to contend. The cultural code of agency and its offshoot, vocabularies of victimization, spring from a larger story and engender a set of stories, or narratives. Another component of the perspective I am taking toward the social construction of victims and victimization is inspired by recent sociological attention to the importance of narrative when studying social movements and identity. Although my own emphasis is on the language people use when telling stories and constructing themselves, their “grammar of motives” (Burke 1969), this rhetoric is of course situated (Mills 1940), and the concept of narrative is helpful here.

The “narrative turn” in social movements theory. There is a natural fit between social constructionist theoretical approaches such as the ones I develop in this book and narrative analysis, because reality construction necessitates the telling of stories (Berger and Luckmann 1966). It has been almost twenty years since Laurel Richardson examined the role of narrative in sociology, arguing that “*narrative* is the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes” (1990, p. 118; emphasis in original). Thus, it provides access to the things in which sociologists are most interested, including

personal biographies such as the stories rape victims tell at speak-outs, “cultural stories” like the ones informing and upon the cultural code of agency, and the transformative “collective stories” in which social movements “resist the cultural narratives about groups of people and ‘tell’ alternative stories” (Richardson 1990, p. 128). Vocabularies of victimization are important at each of these levels, and because the personal stories of victims are the source of the collective story of victimization and of surviving, narratives are the setting for the analysis I undertake.

The emphasis on narratives in social movements has been recently taken up by Joseph Davis, who says that “social movements are dominated by stories and storytelling” (2002, p. 4) and who has argued that their use is strategic, emotional, and persuasive. Davis goes on to argue that narrative overcomes the cognitive bias of framing theory and that in some contexts “stories precede frames, stories make frames compelling, and stories overshadow frames in mobilizing power and as a political resource” (2002, p. 25). And like Richardson (1990), Davis points to the oppositional character of movement narratives that counter larger cultural and institutional narratives.

Linking social movement theory and the sociology of emotions, using narratives as a site of inquiry, is particularly appropriate for the task I am undertaking. I wish to show the ways in which elements of victim narratives (Davis 2005b) told in the context of social movement framing and claims-making can deflect blame and evoke sympathy, pity, contempt, or admiration. Francesca Polletta has tied narratives to movements’ “emotional resonance,” for example:

Stories are used strategically by activists to elicit emotions, say, the righteous indignation that propels someone into a march, or the anguish that generates financial contributions. At the same time, people make sense of their experience, and respond to it emotionally, based on familiar narratives. (2002, p. 48)

It is this *familiarity* that is of key importance in the formulation I am presenting, and it stems from the ways in which how people talk about victims creates images and explains behaviors we understand and to which, on that basis, we know how to react. Jeffery Tatum suggests that narratives do not have to be rational but instead “can bestow moral legitimation through pathos,” making them all the more persuasive for wider audiences (2002, p. 182). For Joshua Yates and James Hunter, narrative links frames and emotions; it “bridges the social and emotional distance between framing . . . and the striking of a collective nerve” (2002, p. 128).

Also important for my purposes are the ways in which narratives in social movements “constitute” and “create” identities (Davis 2002; Loseke 2007). The stories people tell about themselves, especially the accounts they provide for attributes and behaviors that might result in the imputing of deviant identities, are self-constructions and therefore part of their presentations of self (Goffman 1959). But the vocabularies people employ in narratives extend beyond the personal to shape the meanings attached to individuals *and* to types of people. Loseke, for example, has recently discussed not only personal narrative identity at the microlevel, but “organizational,” “institutional,” and “cultural” narrative identities as well, even going so far as to argue for better understanding of the relationships “between and among” levels of narrative, or what she terms their “reflexivity” (2007, p. 675). We can work toward an understanding of this reflexivity by first examining what the narratives have in common, that is, their shared vocabularies and the cultural logic that constrains them.

People draw upon cultural narrative identities when they do the kinds of accounting and countering I am analyzing, and social movements sometimes begin with the stories of individuals, which can become collective identities through claims-making and framing. This is a theme for Davis (2005a) too, and one I will take up in Chapter 7. For now, I will note that narrative identity at all levels can be created, maintained, and transformed through the offering of accounts, through social problems work, through identity work. Rape victims, social scientists dramatizing the plight of battered women, social critics decrying “victim feminism,” and clergy abuse survivors redefining the sanctity of the church all work from the same script and take up the same props. Their rhetorical tools come from a shared “toolkit” (Swidler 1986). The cultural narrative identity of the victim comes already endowed with agency, and the language of the stories reflects this. Ultimately, perhaps, the storytellers may succeed in modifying the script, or shaping the conditions under which it exerts its power (Ewick and Silbey 1995) (something else to consider as my story concludes).

In *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds*, Ken Plummer examines, among other things, rape stories and “recovery” stories, arguing that such stories are “successful” and in order for them to be, “there needs to be a strong community of support waiting to receive them,” and if so, the stories “perform political tasks” (1995, pp. 16–17). For Plummer, these stories constitute a genre because of their common features: their focus on what Plummer calls “sexual suffering, surviving, and surpassing” (1995, p. 50). Initially secret, the suffering is told and

through the telling, creates change in the individual, who becomes a survivor and in some cases identifies politically (the “surpassing”).

Plummer is interested in the way the stories function as consciousness raising and argues that as private suffering is made public, these stories may then serve, although not necessarily, as the basis of collective identity and political action. Plummer talks about a “survivor world,” a world “waiting to hear” a new story that, however radical, nonetheless fits into “the most accepted narratives of that society: the dominant ideological code” (1995, p. 115). To write this book, I began with the sexual stories of rape survivors and added those of abuse survivors as well. From them, I have extracted the language and the form of account that connects them all to this dominant ideological code, as I show how victims and their advocates use vocabularies of victimization in individual and collective identity work.

“Telling” Stories and Their Sources

The last bit of foundation I want to lay before describing how this book is organized has to do with how I chose the particular narratives whose common theme is a shared vocabulary hinging on such a pervasive and powerful cultural code. When I began this research, I was interested in what seemed at the time a rather mundane question arising out of interviews and participation in a group of women who called themselves River City (a pseudonym) Survivors of Stalking. How is it, I wondered, that women who were working so hard to claim victim identities in order to get the support they needed from the criminal justice system, nonetheless preferred to call themselves “survivors” rather than “victims”? At the time, I wrote about how the language revealed victims’ understanding of the shame they felt about being victims and their need to represent themselves as strong, capable, and empowered to “move on” with their lives (Dunn 2002). But where did this language come from? It certainly was not unique to the women I knew, and I set out to find out its source.

This ultimately led me to the earliest published works on rape, battering, and incest. These works are theoretically important because they are historically the closest to the time prior to the successful construction of any of these issues as social problems and the framing of those harmed by the problems as truly victims. As I read them, it became clear to me that first-person victim stories of varying length comprised significant portions of the books, often with little commentary but standing

virtually alone without interpretation. Sometimes they are the briefest of explanations in response to an interviewer's question, and other times they go on for pages. Either way, they are examples of what Loseke calls "personalizing victims," a claims-making strategy used to "encourage audience members' feelings of sympathy" (2003, p. 82). Of course, the stories were often edited for more impact. For example, stories from the first speak-out on rape in 1971 appear to have been published verbatim in an early New York Radical Feminists (NYRF) chronicle of that event and of other antirape activism (Connell and Wilson 1974) but are somewhat more dramatic in Susan Brownmiller's famous manifesto, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975). Accuracy of transcription is less important than the uses to which the stories are put, however, which is my interest here.

More important, though, is that these early stories in the antirape movement, told well before survivor language emerged, are clearly responsive to victim-blaming, in ways that are likely much more subtle now, even as victim-blaming itself is these days. Having looked first at the early stories, I found that they reveal the cultural terrain on which the survivor movements fought their first battles. Gail Sheehy's account of the first NYRF speak-out (1971), Susan Griffin's influential article in *Ramparts* (1971), the transcriptions of the speak-out and consciousness-raising groups published in Connell and Wilson (1974) and in Brownmiller (1975), and the interviews Diana Russell published in 1975 all comprise the foundation of the early collective identity work in this survivor movement, and all the stories help to construct a *blameworthy* victim in the process of deflecting blame (I will say more about types of victims shortly).

I have long been interested in social scientists as claims-makers, and when I realized that many of the foundational stories in the battered women's movement had been written by scholars (Straus 1992), I began a systematic review of this vast literature. And it is in the response I chronicled to movement images of battered women—later constructions of battered women as survivors (e.g., Gondolf 1988; Hoff 1990)—that the seeds of my concerns with the implications of taking agency away from victims were sown (Dunn 2004, 2005). Of these many stories, I have chosen the most widely cited early books as sources of exemplars of *blameless* victim construction, in addition to the earliest books by other kinds of activists. Thus, I draw from Pizzey (1974), Martin (1976), Dobash and Dobash's research (1979), Walker's research (1979), Davidson's journalistic account in 1978, and Pagelow's 1981 research, all of which explain why battered women who "stay" are trapped rather than freely choosing to do so.

Here, it is very important to note that just as the rape activists above use the speak-out stories (or pieces of them) that individual women told to tell a story about rape victims more generally, the social scientists and other “experts” (Loseke and Cahill 1984) do the same for battered women. Thus, despite their scientific credentials, I treat them as storytellers as well, constructing a reality that may have been more widely credible than that of the early antirape activists but is nonetheless constructed, and according to the same blueprint. For this reason, throughout the book, I treat the first-order victim narratives (Davis 2005b) and the second-order expert and other narratives about the latter as occupying the same ontological and epistemological realm. In some cases, I begin with the first-order stories, and in others, I set the stage with the stories *about* the stories.

On the topic of stories about stories, the decision to examine counterimages, those of *pathetic* victims, was a product of my exposure to the “victim feminism” versus “power feminism” debates in graduate school. *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism* (Roiphe 1993) generated considerable controversy just as I was interviewing undergraduate women about unwanted sex for my seminar in field methods. Roiphe and others—the popular books of Naomi Wolf in 1993, Christina Hoff Sommers in 1994, and Camille Paglia in 1992 and 1994—became quite well known in my academic setting but also achieved considerable notoriety in wider circles, as evidenced in part by critiques of their arguments in *The New Yorker* (Pollitt 1993) and *The Nation* (Stark 1994) among other venues. To these I have added the earlier critiques of Elshtain (1982), Rieff (1991), and Sykes (1992). To this group, more authors could certainly be added (e.g., Kaminer 1993; Tavis 1993), and of course the same is also true of each of the survivor movements only partially represented here. My hope is that the excerpts I have chosen are compelling; my argument is that they reveal what is *ubiquitous* in stories about victims and thus the choice of storyteller may not matter so much.

From this beginning, I started to research other victim-related controversies and came upon a more recent (1994) book, *Rocking the Cradle of Sexual Politics: What Happened When Women Said Incest*, by Louise Armstrong, one of the first people to use victims’ stories to bring the problem of incest into the public realm (Armstrong 1978). This in turn introduced me to the “memory debates” taking place in academic psychology and popular talk shows, where issues of recovered and false memory were hotly contested in the early and mid-1990s. When I read *Confabulations*, written in 1992 by Eleanor Goldstein, a parent and

founder of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, I found additional stories to supplement pathetic victim constructions. If the first books and articles countering images of blameworthy victims and constructing alternate, sympathetic versions of victims represent an early phase in changing accounts over time, the work of the self-described “power feminists” and other critics provide access to images that are far less appealing (albeit they conform to the same code, use the same vocabularies, and are foreshadowed in some of the stories that precede them).

These latter piteous and even contemptible images reminded me of the young women and stalking victims who disavowed victim identities in favor of being and presenting themselves as survivors. Having written about the emergence of survivors in the battered women’s movement (Dunn 2004, 2005), I decided to choose for an exemplar of *admirable* victims the images narrated by a new and dramatically successful social movement, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). In keeping with changing times and new kinds of venues for storytelling, my data for Chapter 6 are drawn from the pages of SNAP’s website. In 2007 and again in 2008, SNAP held a contest “asking survivors to write a short story about the good things that have happened to them on their journey of healing” (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests 2007–2009). Called “Stories for Living,” the fifty-four stories submitted in 2007 and the twenty sent to SNAP in 2008 are archived on the website and available for inspiration (and quotation). Both years, SNAP members voted for the ten stories they considered “most inspiring.” These stories work quite well for my purpose, as they have been selected by the SNAP “community” as representative of images that presumably embody an ideal, the person who transcends mere survival to truly live.

More survivor rhetoric comes from a book titled *Victim to Survivor: Women Recovering from Clergy Sexual Abuse* (Poling 1999), a collection of six victims’ stories published by United Church Press as a resource for survivors and their advocates as well as to educate others in the church. A third source is a 1995 book titled *When Ministers Sin: Sexual Abuse in the Churches*, by Australians Neil Ormerod (a theologian) and Thea Ormerod (a social worker and domestic violence advocate), that includes a chapter called “From Victim to Survivor” (pp. 33–52). I chose these last two books because they specifically construct clergy abuse victims as survivors; rape victims have been called survivors for quite some time now (Rutenberg 1983) as have victims of incest (*New York Times* 1982), and I have elsewhere documented the emergence of the term to describe battered women (Dunn 2004, 2005).

Vocabularies, Movements, and Archetypes: Organization of the Book

To help the reader understand why I have organized this book as I have, I now will introduce a typology of sorts, which provides a scaffolding for the analyses I take up in subsequent chapters. In previous work, I used the term *political empathy* to describe social movements' evoking of emotions that leads to their growth, the engagement of their audiences, and, ultimately, social change in the form of public policy (Dunn 2004). This book relies upon a slightly modified version of the model I developed. In the history of the survivor movements I chronicle, various types of victims have played varied roles at differing times. My conceptual framework develops four ideal typical possibilities for the social construction of victims. Each type has different degrees of agency (choice, free will, responsibility, accountability) associated with it and, because of this, different feeling rules and different emotional responses. Ultimately, this suggests likely consequences: how victims are interpreted influences how we respond emotionally and, via this, politically. The images created by social movements are implicated in their success, and success is a factor in how we subsequently judge the victims we meet (Loseke 2003).

Chapter 2 is an introduction to the survivor movements from which I take the stories that use vocabularies of victimization and that rely upon the cultural code of agency. After considering the historical backdrop and cultural milieu of the movements, I talk about each in turn and about a few of the founders of each movement. For each survivor movement, I have sought to briefly describe its origins and emergence, some of the key storytellers in the early stages of the movements, some of the actions taken by movement participants, and some of the important social changes that the movements have engendered. My portraits of the movements are necessarily succinct and partial; I intend them to serve as scenery and setting for the dramas that unfold. As I have indicated, I treat the movement actors, the feminists from the women's movement, the polemicists, the sociologists, the therapists, the critics, and the journalists, *all* as narrators. In many cases, I have tried to provide a bit of detail about the movement actors I am citing; the victims are mostly nameless or were given pseudonyms. Many of the activists have gone on to become famous (or infamous), and fuller accounts of their lives, as well as of the movements in which they played such an integral part, are available elsewhere (see Brownmiller 1999 for a personal recollection; see Schechter 1982; Matthews 1994; Davis 2005a; and Lytton 2008 for excellent historical discussion).

The next four chapters are the heart of the book, each illustrating victim construction in the vocabularies of survivor movements and of individuals and showing the inextricable links between claims-making and the cultural code of agency. I begin with rhetoric from the rape survivor movement, followed by the battered women's movement. Because of their significance for understanding the countermovement of the "cultural critics" and the clergy abuse survivor movement, I then talk briefly about incest survivor images, the rise of "therapeutic culture," and false memory syndrome before moving on to the emergence of survivor identity work and the movement represented by SNAP.

If I am right about the cultural code of agency and the feeling rules derived from it, victims who have been framed as agents will be portrayed as responsible in some way for their victimization, and thus they are unlikely to elicit sympathy or help. This is the image of the *blameworthy* victim, the focus of Chapter 3. In this chapter, I show how the antirape movement in particular drew on this image as a springboard for bringing public attention to the problem of rape even as they redefined victimization as *never* the victim's fault. I use rape victim vocabularies in stories from the first speak-out on rape to illustrate how victims (and their advocates) respond to the implicit cultural code questions: "What did you do to cause this?" and "Why didn't you resist?" I also show a little of how the blameworthy victim theme has been echoed in the other survivor movements and similarly has worked as a foil for the identities other claims-makers were then constructing in opposition.

In contrast to the blameworthy victim, individuals and survivor movements have sought to typify victims in ways that deflect responsibility and through this create *blameless* victims whom audiences will feel inclined to help. These victims are not the source of their own troubles. Instead, they are powerless in the face of the sociological and psychological forces arrayed against them. In Chapter 4, I draw primarily upon rhetoric that early activists in the battered women's movement used (especially in the social scientific literature), to provide exemplars of this kind of collective victim identity work. Images of battered women also reflect the cultural code of agency; they and their advocates must and do answer the question, "Why did she stay?" In addition, as in Chapter 3, I consider blameless victim typifications in other survivor movements. When looking at these, I examine how we might be sympathetic toward this kind of victim but also point out a potential for problems that I see as inherent in blameless constructions. This "identity dilemma" (Charmaz 1994) has to do with how we feel about people who are powerless and whom we can therefore label "victims." Sometimes,

the blameless victim might evoke pity as well as sympathy, an emotion we tend to direct downward, toward those we feel are beneath us (Hochschild 1979).

Having illustrated blameworthy and blameless victims, and the ways in which agency and lack of agency work to foster or deflect blame, I move on in Chapter 5 to the stories and imagery generated by an incipient countermovement that has made use of the fact that victims may be negatively evaluated because they are lacking agency. Here, I examine the *pathetic* victim as she is represented in the “backlash” literature of the early 1990s, particularly in response to putative acquaintance rape victims but also to the so-called victim feminists. I cite the use of what I call “vocabularies of victimism” in popular media, especially in mass market publications and cultural criticism, to show disparaging constructions of victimization and the emergence of some very public victim contests. These images depend for their resonance on the cultural code of agency, which not only assumes choice but *privileges* it. Thus, cultural critics portray victims as naive and gullible, creating images that evoke pity and, in extreme cases, contempt. These victims are hard for audiences to identify with and undermine support for survivor movements. Included in this chapter are some of the concerns about images of rape victims and battered women raised by people within these social movements as well as by outsiders. These images, intended or not, are more likely to evoke our disdain, and they may dissuade us from offering our help.

In Chapter 6, the final substantive chapter, I look at victims who are cast as agents but who are *not* blamed. These are the “survivors,” whom I call *admirable* victims. New media representations of clergy abuse survivors, including victims’ stories on survivor movements’ websites and support groups on the Internet, use a new vocabulary of victimization, a vocabulary of surviving, that alludes to the courage and heroism characterizing contemporary images, many of which now include adult male survivors in addition to women and children. I preface this examination with early stories from Louise Armstrong’s (1978) “speak-out in print” on incest, to show how even children’s victimization confronts the cultural code of agency. I also examine typifications of “vulnerable adults,” who appear to be agents as individuals but whose stories present them as structurally powerless. In the end, it is the vocabulary of surviving that helps produce collective identities that oppose *and* affirm the cultural code, thus mitigating the tensions described above and appealing to movement participants as well as to broader publics.

In Chapter 7, I collect my thoughts on the vocabularies of victimiza-

tion, victimism, and surviving illuminated in the book and consider the implications of studying the social construction of victims and survivors. Have I added anything of interest to ongoing discussions of the uses and consequences of using the term *survivor*? How does the research contribute to a sociological understanding of victimization as a meaning-laden social process and to what we know of the collective identity work in which survivor movements engage? And further, what can these vocabularies tell us about deviance, social problems, and social movements more generally? How can this study contribute to victimology? Finally, what issues for public policy and social change can be extracted from the analysis?

First though, I turn to the stories' milieu, and to the historical processes of "collective definition" in which survivor movements "arise, . . . become legitimated, . . . are shaped in discussion, . . . come to be addressed in official policy, and . . . are reconstituted in putting planned action into effect" (Blumer 1971, p. 298). To understand the cultural context shared by survivor movements over time, it is helpful to know a little about their beginnings, the people involved, what they did, and what has happened as a result.