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Voices From Liminal Spaces:

Narratives of Unacknowledged Rape

By

Dusty Jayne Johnstone, M.A.

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2013

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Voices from Liminal Spaces: Narratives of Unacknowledged Rape

by

Dusty Jayne Johnstone

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this dissertation and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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ABSTRACT

The phenomena of unacknowledged rape has been well documented in the empirical literature on sexual assault, and it has been found that a substantial number of women who have experiences that would legally constitute rape or sexual assault choose not to name it as such. The purpose of this investigation was to determine how women who have not acknowledged discuss their experiences in the absence of the labels of rape and sexual assault, and also to examine what influences how they do conceptualize their coercive experiences. Interviews were conducted with ten women from the University of Windsor who reported experiences of rape, but did not label them as such. The women's narratives of coercion were analyzed using the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) as an analytic framework, and three voices (or themes) were identified that illuminated how women negotiate experiences of sexual violence in the absence of labels. These voices have been identified as the Not Knowing Voice, the Knowing Voice, and the Ambivalent Voice. These voices are discussed in relation to the broader cultural context, and the complexity of how women struggle to know and name their experiences is framed in relation to the influence of rape culture, neo-liberalism and cultural dialectics.

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Who must do the hard things? Those who can.
Who must do the impossible things? Those who care.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation begins with what I feel Michelle Fine (2002) might label "the presence of an absence". It begins with unheard voices and hidden victims. It begins with a research literature that has reminded us, with each new publication across the last 30 years, that sexual violence continues to resound in the lives of women and girls. It begins with the uncharted experiences of the many, many women who have experienced rape but have never felt that they could really claim that label. And so it begins with what has come to be known as unacknowledged rape.

The academic community first learned of unacknowledged rape in 1985, when Mary Koss revealed that 64% of women who reported experiences aligning with legal definitions of rape did not label their experience as such. She described these women as 'hidden victims', because their experiences were never reported, and their experiences were largely unrepresented within the empirical literature at that time (see Russell, 1982, for exception). Together, these women comprised a large but unknown social group linked by a history of rape that the victims did not label as such. In the years that have followed, a modest but consistent literature has emerged to examine this problem, and although prevalence rates of acknowledgement have varied, it has been evident that this is not a problem of diminishing concern, as up to 83% of assaulted women who do not label their assaults as rape (Pitts & Schwartz, 1993).

The issue of rape acknowledgement reflects serious and longstanding feminist concerns regarding the pervasiveness of sexual violence in women's lives. To begin, we know that sexual violence has a significant impact on the lives of many women, with

15.4% (Koss, Gidycz & Wisniewski, 1987) of women reporting an experience of rape and as many as two thirds of women reporting some form of sexual assault (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). We have, in the last 30 years, necessarily created a lexicon of rape: stranger rape, marital rape, date rape, acquaintance rape, and gray rape. This lexicon has emerged from the realization that rape transcends so many lives and circumstances that to leave it unqualified is to insufficiently represent it. The term "unacknowledged" has been added to this lexicon as yet another qualifier, another way of locating, identifying and describing rape. The seemingly simple act of naming the "hidden" rape victims has created discursive space for an entire body of empirical investigation (e.g., Fisher, Daigle, Cullen & Turner, 2003; Hammond & Calhoun, 2007; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger & Halvorsen, 2003; Koss, 1985; Littleton, Axsom, Breitkopf & Berenson, 2006; Littleton, Axsom & Grills-Taquechel, 2009; McMullin & White, 2006). It has also served to unsettle previous estimates of rape prevalence that greatly under-represented the scope of violence suspected (and documented, at least informally) by the feminist community (Brownmiller, 1975; Clark & Lewis, 1977).

With the realization that as many as 83% of raped women do not label their assaults (Pitts & Schwartz, 1993), acknowledgement has become an issue of considerable concern for rape researchers. Since the publication of Koss' (1985) seminal work on acknowledgement, research has been dedicated to the task of describing the women who are identified as unacknowledged rape victims (although I prefer to label them as women who have not acknowledged). This has involved an attempt to understand the factors that contribute to acknowledgement (e.g., Bondurant, 2001; Botta & Pingree, 1997; Fisher et al., 2003; Hammond & Calhoun, 2007; Kahn, Mathie & Torgler, 1994; Layman, Gidycz

& Lynn, 1996), and more recently, the consequences that acknowledgement has upon post-assault functioning (e.g., Conoscenti & McNally, 2006; Layman et al., 1996; Littleton et al., 2006; McMullin & White, 2006). The majority of work that has been conducted in this area has focused on the factors that distinguish women who have acknowledged from those who have not by examining personality and attitudinal variables of assaulted women, as well as the situational variables that characterize their assault(s). The work that has been conducted in this area has been almost exclusively quantitative, due to the practical and ethical challenges of accessing a hidden population of sexually assaulted women (see Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011, for exception). The research has relied upon surveys that assess unwanted, coercive sexual experiences using behaviourally based self-report questions. These questions do not require women to accurately label their assault according to legal definitions in order to report an experience that does legally constitute rape. The advantage of this strategy is that it has permitted widespread prevalence estimates of rape, broadly speaking, as well as of unacknowledged rape specifically.

Although we have successfully learned how to discern women who have acknowledged from those who have not, we still know very little about the actual process of acknowledgement – that is, how women actually come to acknowledge their rapes and whether or not acknowledgement is a stable or changing condition. Moreover, there is limited research on how women who have not acknowledged *do* label their experiences and how they make meaning of their experience in the absence of the expected labels. To date, our understanding of this victimization has been largely a matter of taxonomy and not semantics; we have devised a system of classification, but the study of meaning

remains outstanding. Although this classification system has been necessary and productive, we must move past it to understand the experience and process of naming and meaning making that women who have not acknowledged engage in. The purpose of this project therefore, is to turn our attention to the presence of the absence (Fine, 2002) – specifically the absence of the voices of women who have not acknowledged – the absence of their stories, their labels, and their representations of their experiences with their own words.

Doing this requires going to the liminal spaces where these women are located, both experientially and linguistically. The concept of liminality began in anthropological studies and was used to describe transitions from one developmental period to another. Turner (1967) described it as a "betwixt and between"; it is the threshold between two places, an ambiguous territory that is both and neither. From the existing literature on rape acknowledgment it can be inferred that many women who have not acknowledged find themselves located in the liminal space between "just sex" and rape, where finding the appropriate label for one's experience can be a struggle (Gavey, 2005). To understand this we need to look to the role that discourse and language play in influencing the construction of our experiences. Gavey has suggested that within dominant discourses of heterosexism, sexual coercion is normative and provides the building blocks for what she refers to as "the cultural scaffolding of rape" (p. 2). Within this cultural context, rape is not a distinctive act of violence, but rather an endpoint on a continuum of normalized violence in sexual relationships between men and women.

Language develops in relation to the experiences of those in power, and since women are a historically disempowered group, their experiences are not necessarily

reflected in the language that is available to them (DeVault, 1991; Spender, 1980). DeVault describes this occurrence as linguistic incongruence, where women are forced to translate their experiences by using labels that are not quite right, or by using language in unconventional ways. When translation occurs, part of the experience or the meaning of that experience is rendered invisible because the translation is inevitably not a perfect fit or description. Women located in the liminal space of unacknowledged rape are confronted with linguistic incongruence whereby their experience legally qualifies as rape, but dominant discourses of normative heterosex preclude their ability to recognize it and subsequently name it as such. To understand the experience of unacknowledged rape we must go to these liminal spaces and sites of translation. We must look to the language that women use, as well as the language that they are unable to use to develop a more nuanced understanding of what it actually means to be an unacknowledged victim of rape, and the challenges of negotiating one's identity within that liminal space.

I approach this research with two overarching and interlocking goals at the fore, which have been informed by my commitment to feminist epistemology and methodology. The first goal is derived from the work of Louise du Toit (2009), which guides us towards research that does epistemic justice to rape. According to du Toit, doing epistemic justice to rape requires acknowledging the political significance of rape, while at the same time, not losing focus of the trauma experienced by individual women. To acknowledge the political significance of rape we must locate women's experiences within the misogynistic conditions that normalize, trivialize and delegitimize rape. Du Toit advises that the agency, voice, and meaning making of victims must be centered within "discussions of the political meanings of rape and vulnerability" (p. 298). This is

an act of careful balancing, because when we focus on the structural and cultural factors that facilitate rape, it is easy to obscure the idiosyncratic experience of individual women (du Toit, 2009). The rape acknowledgement literature has made gains in politicizing the experiences of women who have not acknowledged, but has provided limited representation of individual women's experiences and voices (see Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011, for exception). To do epistemic justice to unacknowledged rape we need to understand and adequately explain the unique traumas and struggles that women who have not acknowledged experience, and the ways in which their experiences are similar to and different from the experiences of other rape victims and survivors.

The second goal of this research is informed directly by the work of Rebecca Campbell (2002) who advocates for rape research that does emotional justice. Campbell cautions against research on rape that has been too carefully sanitized by academic discourse, as this creates emotional distance by intellectualizing rape and undermining the actual feelings that emerge from this trauma and violation. Academic research is largely based upon legal definitions of rape, which in turn are based upon the behavioural actions of the rapist. Although these definitions reduce victim-blame by accentuating the circumstances of non-consent and permit accurate assessments of rape prevalence, both legal definitions and most academic definitions of rape do not reflect the feelings of the woman who was raped, only the behaviours enacted upon her body (Campbell, 2002). Legal and academic definitions of rape, and much of the academic work that follows from these definitions lack "the voice of the victim, the feelings of the victim, the emotions of surviving rape" (Campbell, 2002, p. 110). The rape acknowledgement literature, in particular, reflects the presence of this absence and as such, doing emotional

justice to unacknowledged rape begins with creating space for the representation of women's feelings about their experience.

This research begins with the presence of an absence – the absence of voices and feelings and stories from women who either cannot or choose not to label their assaults as rape. The principles of epistemic and emotional justice provide a way of responding to this absence theoretically and methodologically, and in turn guide me towards the liminal spaces where the voices, the feelings, and the stories of unacknowledged rape victims can be found. Within these liminal spaces lies the potential for narratives, and within narratives lies the potential for meaning making, for analysis and for understanding of the experience, of the challenges of navigating identities and labels following assault – and it is to this space that this research will attempt to go.

To borrow directly from the words of Deborah Tolman (1992), this document "will be an orchestration of three voices" that in concert tell a story. First, I present the voice of academia, the literature drawn from psychology, primarily, and feminist theory, to support and guide this research. Secondly, my voice is woven throughout the narrative as I articulate my rationale for this project, as well as my epistemological and methodological decision making. Finally, the third voice is plural, really, as it is a composition of the voices of the women I interviewed, who shared their stories and lent me their language. The purpose of this research is to illuminate these voices and dispel the shadows that obscure our ability to know the language of acknowledgment and rape.

Doing Epistemic Justice

The language of unacknowledged rape. It is necessary to begin the discussion of unacknowledged rape by discussing language and the way that it has been used in this

research area, because language provides the parameters for what we can know about rape acknowledgement, and has implications for how women are represented in this work. Mary Koss (2011), has explained that she first proposed the term "hidden rape" to describe this phenomena, however, it was deemed by journal editors to be too sensationalistic, and it was recommended that Koss adopt a term with more professional overtures. Koss thus used the term "unacknowledged rape" to describe the incidents of reported rape that were not labeled as such by victims, and this language has continued to dominate this literature (for exception, see Botta & Pingree, 1997; Harned, 2005; Marx & Soler-Baillo, 2005; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011).

Research on rape acknowledgment has largely been conducted using the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Koss & Oros, 1982), although a significant exception is that undertaken by Fisher et al. (2003). The general procedure, which has been used to assess both rape acknowledgment and rape prevalence more broadly, involves asking women behaviourally specific questions about experiences of sexual assault and rape that do not rely upon the use of specific labels. For example, in Koss and Oros (1982) original version of the Sexual Experiences Survey, women are asked to respond to the following "have you ever had sexual intercourse with a man when you didn't want to because he used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.)"? In addition to answering behaviourally specific questions about sexual assault, women are also asked directly to indicate if they have ever been raped or sexually assaulted. Within this literature, women who report a behavioural experience that aligns with legal definitions of rape or sexual assault, but who report having never been raped or sexually assaulted are considered to be unacknowledged victims.

Most of this research has been undertaken within the United States, and has thus been framed in relation to legal definitions of rape within the given state in which the research was undertaken. Operational definitions of what constitutes rape have thus varied among studies, particularly with regards to the body parts (i.e., vagina, mouth, anus) specified within the definition, and whether or not intoxication due to drugs or alcohol was considered criteria for establishing rape. The majority of studies have used a more inclusive definition of rape, which accounts for non-vaginal penetrative acts (i.e., oral or anal) that are not necessarily enacted using penis, as well as assault that occurs while a woman is too intoxicated to resist (for example, see Bondurant, 2001; Botta & Pingree, 1997; Layman et al., 19966; for exception, see Fisher et al., 2003). Although these experiences legally constitute rape in the United States, some researchers have chosen to include the label of sexual assault, rather than (or in addition to) the term rape, because this term is more inclusive and have identified participants as acknowledged or unacknowledged sexual assault victims (Botta & Pingree, 1997; Harned, 2004; Marx & Soler-Baillor, 2005).

The more inclusive label is particularly relevant to Canadian research, because although the word rape arguably holds similar cultural meaning in Canada as it does in the United States, it is not specifically written into the Canadian Criminal Code (1985). Instead, Canadian law uses the more encompassing term of sexual assault, which subsumes the penetrative sexual acts that would constitute rape within the United States. For Canadian researchers, the decision to anchor operational definitions of acknowledgement to rape or sexual assault may depend upon whether they prioritize the semantic weight of the word rape, or the official legal construct; however, the SES can be

easily modified to include both options, which has the potential to provide not only insight into patterns of acknowledgment, but also differences in the way women use these terms to label their experiences of coercive sex. In this research, I use both the terms sexual assault and rape in relation to acknowledgment, but largely defer to the term unacknowledged rape, to help clarify the fact that I am asking specifically about the penetrative acts of sexual violation, and not the broader scope of activities that would also be included within the Canadian legal definition of sexual assault (e.g., forced petting or kissing).

Rates of unacknowledged rape. Prior to the 1970s, rape received only modest attention from researchers, and the research that was conducted was problematic in its' approach. Gavey (2005) in particular has criticized pre-1970s rape research for pathologizing and blaming victims. In a matter of a few short years, however, rape was taken under the fold of social science as a legitimate phenomenon of investigation. Emerging from the influence of feminism, one of the primary research concerns to be addressed was assessing the representation of rape victims in the population. Until the late 1970s, estimates of rape prevalence were based on police reports and more general crime surveys and scholarly articles maintained the position that a woman's chances of being raped in her lifetime were minimal (Clark & Lewis, 1977; Russell, 1982). Prevalence reports contradicted the feminist position that rape was pervasive and widespread; however, feminist researchers hypothesized that this was due to the methodological limitations of the existing prevalence research. Specifically, it was suggested that the rape supportive cultural milieu was a barrier to women disclosing and reporting their experiences of rape (Gavey, 2005).

The paradigm for conducting research on rape changed significantly with Diana Russell's (1982) exhaustive study on women's experiences of violence, which involved conducting interviews with 930 women from San Francisco. Russell approached this research from the position that data drawn from convenience samples could not be trusted to represent the wider population accurately, and thus a sample needed to be randomly selected in order to be generalizable. She also suspected that women were unlikely to disclose experiences of assault to someone whom they did not perceive to be sympathetic, and as such, sensitive and carefully trained interviewers were necessary to elicit forthcoming responses. Finally, Russell utilized multiple and specific research questions that asked women about their experiences of rape and assault, without directly using labels, and each disclosure of forced or unwanted sex was followed up in detail, to obtain a clear picture of the event. This allowed Russell and her co-researchers to make independent decisions of whether or not an experience qualified as rape within the state of California, regardless of the women's responses when asked if they had ever been raped. Although only 22% of women in Russell's study disclosed an experience of rape or attempted rape, Russell found that, in fact, 24% of the women in her study reported an experience that aligned with legal definitions of rape, and 44% of women reported an experience that qualified as attempted rape.

Mary Koss also approached rape prevalence research in the early 1980s with methodological concerns about the likelihood of women underreporting their experiences of assault (Koss & Oros, 1982; Koss, 1985; Koss et al., 1987). In response to this concern, she devised a short, 10-item questionnaire to assess sexual victimization based on behavioural experience rather on than labels. Like Russell, she asked a range of

questions covering a spectrum of sexual victimization ranging from coercive sex play to forced penetration (Koss & Oros, 1982). Koss also directly asked at the end of the questionnaire if women had ever been raped. Koss classified women based upon their most serious report of sexual victimization, coding those that corresponded with the legal definition of rape in Ohio as rape. The methodological innovations of Russell (1982) and Koss (1985; Koss & Oros, 1982) have made more accurate and widespread assessments of sexual assault possible in the last 25 years. Moreover, they have provided the methodological impetus for studying rape acknowledgement.

Across the acknowledgement literature, the number of women who would be classified as unacknowledged has varied. It is probable that this can be attributed, at least in part, to the various operational definitions of rape and rape acknowledgment that have been employed. The proportion of rape victims who would be classified as unacknowledged has ranged from 28 to 83% (Botta & Pingree, 1997; Pitts & Schwartz, 1993), although the majority of studies suggest that women who have not acknowledged represent 40 to 70% of the sample (Bondurant, 2001; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Conoscenti & McNally, 2006; Fisher et al., 2003; Kahn et al., 1994; Koss, 1985; Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton & Henderson, 2009; McMullin & White, 2006; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). The studies that have utilized more restrictive definitions of rape (i.e., definitions that are based on force or the threat of force) have been associated with a more modest representation of women who have not acknowledged, ranging from 30 to 57% of the sample (Conoscenti & McNally, 2006; Fisher et al., 2003; Hammond & Calhoun, 2007; Koss, 1985). Studies using a more expansive definition of rape, including rape that occurred because one was too

intoxicated to resist, have been related to higher rates of unacknowledgement, ranging from 58 to 83% (Bondurant, 2001; Harned, 2005; Kahn et al., 2003; Pitts & Schwartz, 1993).

With regards to the operationlization of acknowledgement, the majority of studies appear to use the label of rape, specifically, although there is a small subset that have used the more encompassing term of sexual assault. Botta and Pingree (1997) used a behavioural definition of rape that aligns with many legal definitions of rape in the United States, which was unwanted oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse through force, the threat of force, or intoxication, but when asking women about their experiences they chose to employ the more inclusive term of sexual assault. They determined that 28% of their sample was comprised of women who were unacknowledged victims of sexual assault. Harned (2005) used similar definitions and labels, but found a much higher rate of unacknowledged assault, with 73% of the sample qualifying as unacknowledged sexual assault victims. Other researchers have used an expanded definition of acknowledgement that is based on a more general sense of victimization (Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton, Breitkopf and Berenson, 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009). In this work, women were considered unacknowledged if they did not label their experience as either rape, attempted rape, or some other form of crime. Despite the more encompassing criteria for acknowledgement, the prevalence of women who had not acknowledged ranged from 34 to 61% (Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al., 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009).

Although the majority of research on rape acknowledgement has been conducted with samples of college-attending women, the research that has been conducted with

community samples of women has found similar rates of acknowledgement. Russell's (1982) randomized sample of women from San Francisco suggested that 44% of women who had experienced either rape or attempted rape were unacknowledged rape victims. In a survey of employees from a medical center and a university, Koss, Figueredo, Bell, Tharan and Tromp (1996) found that 60% of the women reporting experiences had not acknowledged. Littleton et al. (2008) conducted an evaluation of rape experiences in a sample of women with low income and concluded that 34% had not acknowledged.

Regardless of the disparities in prevalence rates of acknowledgement, what is apparent is that women who have not acknowledged are well represented within studies that use even the most restrictive legal definitions of rape, as well as the ones using the most encompassing labels for victimization (i.e., sexual harassment and victim of a crime other than rape or attempted rape). Consequently, even with measurement and labelling issues aside, it is evident that rape is an experience that women struggle to name and identify with themselves. It is worth noting, however, that in order to buffer itself against critique and accusations of inflating estimates of rape prevalence and acknowledgement, this literature has almost exclusively adopted narrow, legal definitions of rape that do not include the more expansive, feminist definitions of rape, which would include intercourse that occurs because of verbal coercion (Koss, 2011). Were a more inclusionary definition of rape to be applied to this area of research, it is likely that prevalence rates of rape would be even higher, and acknowledgement would be even lower.

Characteristics of unacknowledged rape. The primary task undertaken by the rape acknowledgement researchers, aside from documenting the representation of unacknowledged victims, has been to unearth the factors that distinguish women who

have acknowledged from those who have not. Koss (1985) began this work by examining whether acknowledgement status could be differentiated according to various personality, attitudinal and situational variables. She assessed dimensions of personality, such as dominance/submissiveness, effective communication, and social skills, as well as attitudinal variables such as "acceptance of sexual aggression, conservative attitudes towards female sexuality and rejection of rape myths" (p. 198). Finally, she examined 17 situational variables, which included factors such as whether alcohol or drugs had been used by either the woman or the perpetrator, whether or not the woman resisted, whether verbal pressure or physical violence was used and clarity of non-consent. Koss found no differences between women who have acknowledged and those who have not in measures of personality or attitudes; however, she reported that they did differ in their reports of the situational circumstances of their assaults.

Koss (1985) found support for a situational model of rape acknowledgement, whereby the context of the assault had implications for whether or not women acknowledged their assaults. She documented no differences between women who had acknowledged and those who had not with regards to the severity of the assault. Both groups of women reported similar levels of verbal and physical aggression, resistance, and clarity of their non-consent, and drug use at the time of the assault. Situational variables surrounding the relationship between the victim and offender did, however, yield significant differences between women who had acknowledged and those who had not. Koss concluded that women who were unacknowledged were more likely to report having been assaulted in a context that was "appropriate to sexual intimacy" (p. 209), which she described as situations where the offender and victim were either dating or

were formally or informally engaged. Women who had acknowledged were more likely to report having been assaulted in a sexually inappropriate context, that is, by a stranger, family member, neighbour or non-romantic friend. Women who had not acknowledged were more likely to be closely acquainted with the man who assaulted them, and were more likely to report having prior consensual sexual activity with him.

Since Koss' seminal work was published, research in this area has sought to further establish the factors that differentiate acknowledgement. A review of the rape acknowledgement literature from 1985 to 2013 yielded approximately 20 papers that addressed acknowledgement in relation to at least one additional psychological, relational, attitudinal or contextual variable (Bondurant, 2001; Botta & Pingree, 1997; Clements & Ogle, 2009; Fisher et al., 2003; Hammond & Calhoun, 2007; Harned, 2005; Kahn et al., 1994; Kahn et al., 2003; Kalof, 2000; Koss, 1985; Layman et al., 1996; Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al., 2009; Littleton et al., 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009; McMullin & White, 2006; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011; Pitts & Schwartz, 1993). Most consistently, the variables assessed in relation to rape acknowledgement have included the degree of physical force experienced during the assault, as well as the amount of resistance evidenced during assault, the relationship between the woman and her assailant at the time of the assault and alcohol use at the time of the assault. In contradiction to Koss' original work, more recent literature has found a strong relationship between the degree of force experienced during the assault and acknowledgement, such that women reporting a more physically forceful assault are more likely to acknowledge their assaults as rape (or other victimization) (Bondurant, 2001; Botta & Pingree, 1997; Fisher et al., 2003; Hammond &

Calhoun, 2007; Kahn, et al. 1994; Layman, et al., 1996; Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al., 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009). This is unsurprising, given the fact that the presence or threat of physical force is consistent within the United States definitions of rape (Koss et al., 1987), as well as the Canadian definition of sexual assault (Criminal Code, 1985), and is broadly understood to be the defining feature of rape. Similarly, a strong relationship has also been found between reports of resistance during the assault and acknowledgement (Bondurant, 2001; Harned, 2005; Layman et al., 1996). It appears that the more women resist the assault, the more capable they are of labeling it as rape.

The research that has examined alcohol use at the time of assault and the relationship between the women and their offenders has suggested that alcohol also has significant consequences for whether or not assaults are acknowledged (Botta & Pingree, 1997). Hammond and Calhoun (2007) found that 76% of women reporting experiences of assault involving physical force were acknowledged, whereas only 36% of assaults involving alcohol and drugs were acknowledged. Layman et al. (1996) found that women who had not acknowledged were more likely than women who had acknowledged to experience assaults that occurred because they were too intoxicated to resist than due to force or the threat of force. Across various studies, Littleton and colleagues found that women who had not acknowledged were significantly more likely to report having been binge drinking either prior to or at the time of assault (Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al., 2008; and Littleton & Henderson, 2009). Intoxication of the victim does not appear to be the only factor that influences acknowledgement, as Kahn et al. (2003) found that women who had not acknowledged were more likely to have been assaulted by an intoxicated assailant. Similarly, Littleton et al. (2006) and Littleton et al.

(2008) found that women who had not acknowledged were significantly more likely to report that their assailants had been drinking heavily at the time of assault, than women who had acknowledged.

Based on the existing literature, it is evident that acknowledgement is much more likely for women who have experienced assault as a consequence of physical force, rather than because they were too intoxicated to resist. There are other situational variables, however, that have been found to contribute significantly to acknowledgement, such as the nature of the relationship between the woman and the man who assaulted her. Similar to Koss' (1985) finding that women who had acknowledged were more likely to have been assaulted within an "inappropriate social relationship" (e.g., by a stranger, relative, non-romantic friend, etc.), Kahn et al. (2003) found significant differences for relationship status between victims and the men who assaulted them, with 38% of women who had acknowledged and 55% of women who had not acknowledged reporting that their assailant was a romantic partner. Littleton et al. (2008) reported that women who had not acknowledged were significantly more likely to be in a romantic relationship with their assailant and were also more likely to have continued having a relationship with this person following the assault. Littleton and Henderson (2009) found that women who had acknowledged and those who had not were equally likely to report having been assaulted by an acquaintance, but women who had not acknowledged were significantly more likely to be in a romantic relationship with the perpetrator.

The nature of the specific sexual act that was committed appears to also have consequences for whether or not women acknowledge their assaults. Even though legal definitions of rape account for both oral and anal penetration, as well as vaginal

penetration, it appears that the women who are victimized in this way have a much more restrictive definition of what constitutes rape. Kahn et al. (2003) found that women were unlikely to acknowledge if they reported a penetrative experience that was non-vaginal and Hammond and Calhoun (2007) found that only 13 % of non-vaginal rapes were acknowledged. Peterson and Muehlenhard (2004) asked women to provide written narratives of their assault, and content analysis revealed that many women who had not acknowledged did not count their experience as rape because the assault was not penile-vaginal. Although some findings have been mixed, the overall literature suggests that acknowledgement is more likely for women who experienced rape as a consequence of physical force and who actively resisted the assault. Rape is also more likely to be acknowledged when the assault involved vaginal penetration and was committed by a non-romantic partner. Rape is least likely to be acknowledged when it occurs while intoxicated, is non-vaginal, and is perpetrated by a romantic partner.

Outcomes associated with unacknowledged rape. The literature on the outcomes associated with acknowledgment is a smaller body of work and has resulted in more mixed conclusions than the findings on the prevalence of acknowledgement and the characteristics associated with acknowledgement. The outcomes that have been assessed in relation to acknowledgement primarily reflect psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, and risk for revictimization. Post-traumatic stress has been the primary focus in this research, and it has been clearly demonstrated that both women who had acknowledged and those who had not reported higher rates of posttraumatic symptomology than women who have not been raped; however, differences between the women who had acknowledged and those who had not was less clear. Some studies have

suggested that women who have acknowledged demonstrate higher rates of posttraumatic stress than the women who are unacknowledged (Layman et al., 1996; Littleton et al. 2006), but other research has indicated that women who have acknowledged and those who are not do not differ significantly in terms of posttraumatic stress (Conoscenti & McNally, 2006). General psychological stress, in the form of depression and anxiety, has also been examined and these findings have also been mixed. The majority of studies have found elevated (compared to non-raped women) levels of distress that do not differ significantly between women who have acknowledged and those who have not (Littleton et al., 2006; McMullin & White, 2006). All of the studies that have studied somatic symptomology, concluded that both women who have acknowledged and those who are not report a greater number of physical health concerns than women who do not have a history of sexual assault, but the findings have been mixed as to whether there are significant differences between women who have acknowledged and those who are not (Conoscenti & McNally, 2006; Littleton et al., 2008).

In addition to wellbeing, there has been some examination of the relationship between acknowledgement and risk for revictimization, and there is evidence to suggest that women who are unacknowledged may be at higher risk for being re-assaulted than their acknowledged counterparts. For example, it was found that women who were unacknowledged were more likely to continue a relationship with their assailant post-assault, increasing the likelihood that they would be re-assaulted by that individual (Layman et al. 2006; Littleton et al., 2009). There is also some suggestion that women who are unacknowledged are likely to consume higher levels of alcohol, which is also a risk factor for revictimization (McMullin & White, 2006). Marx and Soler-Baillo (2005)

examined risk detection in women who were unacknowledged versus those who were not by having them listen to an auditory tape of a date rape with instructions to press a button when they felt that the situation had become dangerous. Women who were unacknowledged had significantly longer response latency than women who were acknowledged, suggesting that it takes them considerably longer to detect risky situations, which could have implications for detecting risk in their own lives. Finally, there has been limited investigation of actual revictimization rates in studies assessing acknowledgement, but Littleton et al. (2009) found that women who are unacknowledged reported more instances of attempted rape following their initial assault.

Although the research on post-assault outcomes is somewhat mixed to date, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the wellbeing of women who are unacknowledged is undermined by their experience of assault, as evidenced by the fact that they report higher levels of psychological and physiological distress compared to women who have not been assaulted. Moreover, women who are unacknowledged appear to be at higher risk for revictimization than women who were acknowledged, due in part to higher rates of alcohol consumption, delayed risk detection, and ongoing relationships with their assailants. Despite the fact that this is a nascent area of research, in the history of rape acknowledgement investigation, there is sufficient information to conclude that acknowledgement status does have potentially significant consequences for post-assault functioning and wellbeing.

The rape acknowledgement literature has been limited almost exclusively to cross-sectional methodological design, and thus the process of acknowledgement is not well understood. Although we understand what contributes to it, the process by which it

occurs is unclear. McMullin and White (2006) conducted one of the few studies that examined changes in acknowledgement over time, and 20% of women changed their acknowledgement status over a six-month period – however, acknowledgement changed in both directions. There has been evidence to suggest that acknowledgement is related to the amount of time that has passed since the assault, such that the more time that has passed since the assault, the more likely women are to acknowledge it (Fisher et al., 2003). McMullin and White's findings reflect a very narrow time period, but they do suggest that the process of acknowledgement may indeed be iterative and non-linear, which suggests that more than the passage of time is required for women to acknowledge their rape experiences.

Theorizing the barriers to acknowledgement. Understanding the barriers that women face when it comes to acknowledging their assaults involves contextualizing the experience of sexual assault within the broader cultural milieu. This body of literature has not been broadly theorized; however, one theoretical explanation that has been offered is script theory (Littleton, Rhatigan & Axsom, 2007). Scripts are cognitive structures that organize behavioural expectations in a given situation (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) and the application of script theory to rape acknowledgement suggests that acknowledgement is precluded by a mismatch between one's own experience of rape and what one perceives 'legitimate' rape to be. For example, in Western culture what is known as the blitz rape (or *real* rape) script is widely held and delineates an experience of rape that involves being violently and forcefully attacked by a stranger, usually outdoors, and often with a weapon (Bondurant, 2001). Through the work of feminist activism and research the prevalence of acquaintance rape has become more widely recognized;

however, both Bondurant (2001) and Kahn et al. (1994) found that women who had not acknowledged were more likely to endorse the traditional blitz rape script than women who had acknowledged; women who had acknowledged were more likely to endorse a script that involved less force and assault by an acquaintance. These findings suggest that for women who have not acknowledged there is a more significant mismatch between their personal experience and their conceptualization of what constitutes rape (Bondurant, 2001; Kahn et al., 1994).

Peterson and Muehlendhard (2011) further theorized the use of scripts in determining acknowledgment, with the additional consideration of motivation. They refer to this framework as the match-and-motivation-model and explain that acknowledgment is based upon two processes. The first process, described as match, is informed by script theory and involves the victim's appraisal of her unwanted experience in relation to the rape scripts that she holds. How she labels her experience will be influenced by the degree of match between her experience and her rape script. The second process, described as motivation, accounts for the influence of consequences that might be associated with labeling, with the expectation that women are less likely to label their experiences as rape when there are negative consequences associated with doing so.

Peterson and Muehlenhard (2011) examined their framework qualitatively, by asking participants to provide written narratives of their most recent experience of non-consensual sex, and answer open-ended questions pertaining to labeling. The narratives and responses were then analyzed using thematic analysis to determine participants' reasons for not labeling. When it came to the match between women's experiences and their rape scripts, Peterson and Muehlenhard found evidence of four points of distinction.

Approximately a quarter of their sample reported that they did not label their experience as rape because the man involved did not fit their image of a rapist. A fifth of the sample refrained from labeling because the level of force demonstrated during their experience was not significant enough to meet a definition of rape. Similarly, a quarter of women felt that rape was not an appropriate label because they did not engage in sufficient physical resistance to qualify it as such (even in instances where women were rendered unable to resist due to unconsciousness). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, almost half of the women reported that they did not think that their experience was rape because of their behaviours leading up to the incident. The incongruence between women's perceptions of their behaviours and their rape scripts revealed that by choosing to consensually engage in other sexual activity, by being intoxicated, or by voluntarily choosing to be alone with men it was difficult for them to label their experiences as rape, because of their purported complicity.

From the women's narratives Peterson and Muehlenhard (2011) also identified three different factors that influenced women's motivation to label their experience as rape, which included a desire to avoid having to call the man a rapist, as they did not want to have to apply this label to their boyfriends or friends. One woman indicated that she wanted to avoid the word rape in order to avoid becoming distrustful of all men. Additionally, women indicated that they were not motivated to use the word rape because of its negative connotations. Although they recognized that their experience was serious and a violation, the word rape was imbued with a particular meaning that made them uncomfortable. Peterson and Muehlenhard followed this investigation with semi-structured interviews conducted with four women who were non-labelers, and from these

interviews deduced that women also chose to avoid labeling in order to avoid feeling worse about what happened, and to avoid having to report it.

Peterson and Muehlenhard's (2011) qualitative examination of acknowledgement enriches our understanding of this phenomenon and the calculus that women perform as they negotiate labels and meaning. Their expansion of script theory offers a valuable starting point for understanding the barriers that women face when it comes to acknowledging their assaults. Beyond this, our investigation of acknowledgment must further contextualize rape and sexual assault within broader feminist critiques of rape myths, rape culture and misogyny. To contextualize the social milieu in which unacknowledged rape exists (and violence against women, more generally), I draw upon Lorraine Code's (2009) use of Castoriadis' (1991) instituted social imaginary. Code presents the instituted social imaginary as a system of social significations

> "that carries normative social meanings, expectations, prohibitions and permissions into which human beings are born and nurtured from childhood, which they internalize, affirm or contest as they make sense of their places in a world whose social, material, physical "nature" and meaning are also thus instituted. A social imaginary is not only about principles of conduct, but also how principles claim and maintain salience." (p. 330).

The instituted social imaginary is one means of conceptualizing the overarching social and political structure in which we are situated, and provides a means for analyzing the structural factors that shape women's lives and experiences of rape. The magnitude of the instituted social imaginary is evident in the fact that its coherence is understood

and internalized in a way that extends beyond what any one individual, or even many individuals subscribe to. This is the "instituted" nature of the imaginary and it establishes parameters for what we can know, and how we can know things; it regulates our understanding of subjectivity and agency, and influences the distribution of power and privilege (Code, 2009). The instituted social imaginary has consequences for how we view women's bodies and the violence that is enacted upon them. Code draws our attention to the fact that misogyny is an overarching theme within our instituted social imaginary, and the social imaginary that makes genocidal wartime rape conceivable is the same one that makes date rape, acquaintance rape, gray rape, and unacknowledged rape acceptable and taken for granted.

Misogyny is the social backdrop against which all acts of rape occur, and it both fuels and is fueled by what has come to be known as rape culture (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth, 1993). Within rape culture, rape is a normalized and taken for granted part of the social environment, and is sustained by a widely held system of beliefs that support rape, marginalize the women who experience it, and protect the men who commit it. Rape myths, which Martha Burt (1980, p. 217) has defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" provide the cultural building blocks upon which rape culture is built (Gavey, 2005). Rape myths contribute to tolerating a high prevalence of rape, through false beliefs such as those that hold that if a woman consents to some form of sexual activity (e.g., petting), it is her fault if things get out of hand (i.e., she is raped), and that if a woman drinks too much and is unable to resist a man's sexual advances, it is again her fault. Rape myths play an important role in delegitimizing rape, and influence the likelihood that women will recognize their assaults as legitimate

experiences of rape. We see evidence of rape myths in the findings that outside parties (e.g., observers reading scenarios in a study) who are not involved in an assault are less likely to characterize sexual victimization as an actual assault when there is less force involved (Proite, Dannells, & Benton, 1993) and when the victim exercised less resistance to the assault (Hannon, Kuntz, Van Laar, Williams, & Hall, 1996). There is evidence to suggest that assaults are also less likely to be characterized as rape if the woman described in the study engaged in previous consensual sexual behaviour with her assailant (Shotland & Goodstein, 1983) or if she was in a romantic relationship with him (Bridges, 1991). Within this web of egregious assumptions, women are forced to defend their culpability and provide legitimate grounds for claiming assault. For women raped by men known to them, this requires disruptions, however small or significant, in the instituted social imaginary.

It is in the examination of rape myths and rape culture more broadly, that we begin to locate the complexity of the barriers that preclude women's acknowledgement of their assaults. To fully understand the experience of women who are unacknowledged we unsettle the culture of rape (Gavey, 2005) and we draw the reality of misogyny's role within our instituted social imaginary to the surface of consciousness. We pose questions as to why individual women struggle to acknowledge what clearly constitutes legal rape, and yet we must step back and view the situation panoramically. In doing so, we see that the burden of acknowledgement that is imposed upon individual women is in fact the failure of society at large to recognize the implications that misogyny has for normative relationships and sexual interactions. Confronting misogyny and rape culture requires an interrogation of normative heterosexuality, and the discourses that provide the subtext for

sexual violence against women. Moreover, it requires willingness to accept that rapists are not deviant and pathological individuals, but men, just men, quite likely men we know, maybe men we love, probably men that we trust. It requires acknowledging that the relationships in which we should feel safest may not be safe spaces. It requires that men examine their own abuse of power, and critique the systematic privileges that sexism has afforded them in their sexual relations with women. It requires humility and contrition. Confronting misogyny in this way requires monumental disruptions within the instituted social imaginary – and yet, to dismantle rape culture, and the prevalence of unacknowledged rape, this is what must occur.

According to Gavey (2005), discourses of heterosex provide us with knowledge and guide our assumptions about what normative sex between men and women involves – including, what sex is like, who does what to whom, and the role that sex plays in relationships. This reflects a system of common meanings and values (Gavey, 2005), which Hollway (1983) describes as "a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual's set of ideas" (p. 231). Dominant discourses of heterosex represent the systems of male power that are part of our instituted social imaginary. Within heterosexual discourse, male desire is privileged and female submission is assumed – as such, sexual coercion in heterosexual relationships is a normative practice. When coercion is normative, drawing a line between what counts as rape and what does not becomes a challenge. By examining the dominant discourses of heterosexual relations it is possible to understand where the tensions of negotiating labels for rape emerge from.

Hollway (1983; 1984; 1989) has identified three dominant discourses of heterosexual relations that are both sympathetic to rape culture and create barriers to rape acknowledgement. She labels these as the male sexual drive discourse, the have-hold discourse, and the permissive sex discourse. Gavey (2005) frames these discourses within her theorization of the cultural scaffolding of rape, and illustrates the manner in which they contribute to heterosexual coercion. These normative and "natural" discourses of heterosex create conditions where it can be impossible for women to say no to sex – or at least it is impossible to have the autonomy of their "no" recognized and respected. For example, the male sexual drive discourse is based on the widely held cultural assumption that men have a fundamental, biological need for sex that is so innate and pervasive that it is difficult to control. Within this discourse, men are constructed as having an insatiable sexual appetite that they cannot be held fully responsible for, and that women are expected to satisfy. The have-hold discourse perpetuates the belief that women have no inherent sexual desire of their own, and that they satisfy the sexual needs of men in order to ensure relational resources and security. Finally, the permissiveness discourse contrasts with the have-hold discourse by suggesting that women desire sex as much as men, and thus engage in it freely and willingly.

By contextualizing the rape acknowledgement literature within the context of these culturally instituted discourses it is possible to see some of the systematic barriers that delegitimize rape and impair labeling. For example, the empirical literature has shown that women who do not label their experiences are more likely to subscribe to stereotypic blitz rape scripts than women who do label (Bondurant, 2001; Kahn et al., 1994). Women who do not label are also more likely to report having experienced

assault by an intimate partner (Kahn et al., 1994; Kahn et al., 2003). The discourses of heterosex proposed by Hollway (1983;1984, 1989) and extrapolated by Gavey (2005) provide insight into this phenomenon. According to the have-hold discourse women were obliged to provide sex to their intimate partners, but were relieved of the expectation of having sex with anyone else (or, more critically, were denied the right to have sex with anyone else). This discourse aligns with the finding that women struggle to label experiences that happen in the context of intimate relationships, because women are expected to provide sex within those conditions, and precludes consideration of wantedness or consent.

The rape acknowledgement literature has also shown that women who have experienced an assault that did not involve penile-vaginal penetration are less likely to label their experience as rape (Kahn et al., 2003). Gavey (2005) has explained that underlying each of the dominant discourses of heterosexual relations is the norm of the coital imperative, which is the heterosexist assumption that only coitus counts as "real" sex. Although men and women may engage in other sexual acts, it is widely believed that penile-vaginal penetration must have happened in order for sex to have legitimately occurred. Gavey suggests that the coital imperative is the most robust of all heterosexual norms, and as such, it is unsurprising that women who experience assault/rape that is not penile-vaginal would struggle to identify and label their experience as a legitimate rape. The very fact that legal definitions of rape are more comprehensive and inclusive than more widely held cultural definitions of rape speaks to the influential and controlling nature of discourse to determine what is socially considered legitimate rape.

Having spoken of the factors that inhibit acknowledgement, it is worthwhile to consider those that facilitate acknowledgement. Of the multitude of factors that can affect rape acknowledgement, the strongest and most stable predictor is the presence of violence and physical force (Bondurant, 2001; Botta & Pingree, 1997; Fisher et al., 2003; Hammond & Calhoun, 2007; Kahn et al., 1994; Layman et al. 1996; Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al., 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009) – the greater the degree of physical force that is exercised during the assault, the more likely women are to label the experience as rape. This is made visible through our sociological impulse to query the legitimacy of rape in the absence of physical evidence of force, and also through its representation in the Canadian Criminal Code (1985). Sexual assault has been hierarchically ordered within the Canadian legal system to mirror charges for physical assault, ranging from simple sexual assault, to sexual assault causing bodily harm, to aggravated sexual assault. The severity of the crime is evaluated according to the harm, or risk of harm, posed to the body. Within our culture, rape is a nameable offense – not because it is inherently a gendered act of aggression and oppression, but because it is an act of violence against the body, and is culturally recognized as a violation of morality. When the perceived legitimacy of rape is coupled with the presence of physical injury, it is not surprising that women who do not label their assaults report less physically violent assaults than women who do label.

In trying to theorize what facilitates and inhibits acknowledgement, it is useful to draw upon Michel Foucault's analysis of power, which frames power both in terms of traditional force (i.e., which we generally associate with physical violence) and discipline, which operate in tandem to maintain social control (Gavey, 2005). Discipline

is particularly germane to an examination of labeling because it functions through "the power of The Norm" (Foucault, 1979). Discipline is the process by which normative social conditions are created and conformity is encouraged and sustained in a myriad of ways, including observation, reward, and punishment, among others (Gavey, 2005). Discourse is the means by which discipline is effected, because it is the vehicle through which norms are maintained. Discourses position us to experience, understand, and make meaning of our lives in particular ways. Dominant discourses – such as those representing normative heterosexual relations – are not impervious to resistance and change, but appeal to a commonsense understanding of the world that is taken for granted as natural – "that is just the way things are". It is the presumed naturalness of dominant discourses that makes them efficient channels of discipline.

Foucault's (1979) analysis of power requires a significant shift in how we conceive of power, of how it is used and maintained. Physical violence is observable and has consequences that can be witnessed on the body, as such when bodily integrity is compromised through the application of violence the abuse of power is easily named. The control (and violence) that manifests through discipline is covert, and not easily located, because although this power may be played out upon the physical body, its source is located within language. Force is the observable demonstration of power, and thus when it is played out unjustly on the body, it is the position from which it is easiest to locate crimes against humanity. However, constructions of injustice that are built upon observable force are insufficient, as they deny the insidious and pervasive role of discipline in perpetuating systematic oppression. An epistemology of rape that is based upon evidence of violence is insufficient for this reason – it fails to account for power

exercised through discipline. Moving to an epistemological position that is centered upon consent creates space for an analysis of rape legitimacy that is not predicated upon evidence of violence and physical harm. By looking to the discourses that constrain consent we can locate the forces of disciplinary power that not only maintain rape, but that undermine rape acknowledgement specifically.

Sites of translation: Advancing the research agenda through language. To advance the rape acknowledgement literature it is necessary to look not only to the dominant discursive constructs that regulate how women label, but also to the discourses that women construct for themselves in response to a socially delegitimized and unnamable experience. The current lexicon of rape, which includes stranger rape, marital rape, date rape, acquaintance rape, gray rape, acknowledged rape, and unacknowledged rape, has developed due to the realization that to leave rape unqualified is to insufficiently represent the way that it is diversely and pervasively experienced by women. This lexical imbroglio reflects sites of translation where women struggle to make meaning and represent the normative experience of sex and violation (DeVault, 2008; Jervis, 2008; Littleton et al., 2006; Littleton et al. 2008).

According to DeVault (1999), researchers are used to translating the experiences of women into a standardized vocabulary of experience. This is seen in the rape acknowledgement literature, where women are largely given the dichotomous choice of indicating either that they have been raped or not. In critiquing the positivist tradition that has largely informed the rape acknowledgement literature to date, Gavey (2005) notes that the forced choice categories of raped or not have limited the understanding that researchers can have of how women who are unacknowledged label their experiences.

Koss (2011) has also spoken to the fact that requiring women to respond with a yes or no answer in response to the question 'have you ever been raped' obscures the nuance, ambivalence, and contradictions of the acknowledgement process. Although a number of studies have given women a greater range of options, such as identifying as a victim of a crime, or labeling their assault a miscommunication or merely "bad" sex (Littleton et al. 2006; Littleton et al., 2008; Littleton & Henderson, 2009; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011), it is worth considering whether these naming options are actually helpful, and if they contribute to our understanding of women's experiences of sexual assault as well as the perceived legitimacy of these assaults.

Spender (1980) and DeVault (1991, 1999) have urged researchers to open the linguistic boundaries of their research to allow women to speak for themselves, to create accounts of experience that are rooted in the reality of their experience and that reflect their nuanced struggle to represent it. In the rape acknowledgment literature there is an absence of women's voices, of women's narratives of unacknowledged assault, and of their discursive struggle to label their experience (for exception, see Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011). As such, the ability to understand how women who are unacknowledged make sense of and negotiate their experiences of assault is diminished. By failing to create space for the discourses of women who do not label, scholars risk underestimating the heterogeneity of these women and the complexity of the acknowledgement process.

Interviewing women about their experiences of unacknowledged sexual assault is a way of creating space for experiences that have not been fully articulated in previous research (DeVault, 1999). Interviews provide the opportunity to ask questions that

cannot be answered in a simple or straightforward manner, and they also provide an opportunity to access stories and perspectives that are left out of dominant interpretations (DeVault, 1999; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992). Providing women with the opportunity to tell their stories is a chance for them to negotiate the politics and struggles of labelling their experience using language, which is a significant tool for making meaning and processing an experience (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Directly accessing women's language is an important step towards representing their experience, but it must be contextualized within the paradigms of social power from which language emerges. Language itself is a tool of power; it is constructed by those who are in power, and is thus developed in relation to the experiences of the powerful. Within a patriarchal, misogynistic and heterosexist culture, language is male centered, and women's unique experiences are denied linguistic representation (DeVault, 1991; Spender, 1980). Shirley Ardener (1975) has written that because language reflects the experiences of those in power, women are a socially muted group.

Friedan (1963) used the term "the problem with no name" to describe the experience of women living in suburbia. In doing this, she was referring to the aspects of women's lives that must be talked about indirectly and that are often unlabelled. Similarly, when Farley (1978) began to research women's experiences in the workplace she observed unnamed patterns of behaviour that affected women's performance and success. In naming this experience sexual harassment she found a way to both legitimize and document this system of oppression. It can be argued that for many women, experiences of coercive sex fall into the category of an unnamable problem. When there is a lack of fit between women's experiences and the language that is available to

describe it, women are forced to engage in processes of translation in order to name and explain it.

Exercises in translation are inevitably problematic because nuance is sacrificed when inadequate labels are forced to suffice. Unacknowledged rape victims learn to interpret their experience in relation to dominant discourse, and when their lives are not accurately reflected within that discourse, they must accept inappropriate labels or are required to use language in unconventional ways. Researchers see evidence of this in the recent development of terms such as gray rape and "not rape" (Jervis, 2008) – both allude to the ambiguity and ambivalence that women feel when describing their experiences of coercive sex. Under the cultural hold of the coital imperative, sex is only perceived as valid when penile-vaginal penetration has occurred – and in the absence of "sex", rape is not possible (Gavey, 2005). For women who experience rape that is not penile-vaginal, there is no word that accurately represents their experience within dominant discourse. Although the term sexual assault should be a semantic possibility, particularly in Canada where it is has been codified into law, women still seem disinclined to use it (Harned, 2005). The lack of a suitable label contributes to the emergence of labels such as gray rape from the liminal spaces where women negotiate the tensions of having experiences that are neither clearly sex nor rape.

Research questions. The specific research questions that have guided this work are as follows:

1. How do women who are unacknowledged understand and talk about their assaults in the absence of the labels of rape or sexual assault?

2. What influences how women conceptualize their coercive sexual experiences and negotiate acknowledgement?

More generally, the goal of this research is to provide women with an opportunity to share their narratives and to speak for themselves using the words that they feel are most appropriate to represent their experience of sexual coercion. At the same time, it is also the goal of this research to attend to the sites of translation – the times, the places, the words – where it is a struggle for women to communicate what they mean, to represent their experience using a dominant but incongruent language. In conducting research on acknowledgement it is important to consider not just what women are able to say but all of the things that they are unable to say. Perhaps it is in the silences, in the presence of the absences, where the voices of women who are unacknowledged may most clearly be heard.

Doing Emotional Justice

Emotional justice extends beyond the space that is created for feelings and necessitates conscientious and considerate interaction between the researcher and the women involved in the study. According to Campbell (2002), the primary task when interviewing rape survivors is to bear witness to the experience of rape. Specifically, she notes that “we must pause, affirm, support, and encourage rape survivors. We must answer their questions. If we can provide validating, normalizing information to survivors, we must do so” (p. 68). In addition to bearing witness, rape researchers are charged with the task of providing positive social reactions in response to participants’ stories of victimization. According to Sarah Ullman (2010), positive social reactions take the form of emotional support (e.g., validation of not only the rape, but one’s

psychological response to it), tangible aid (e.g., actions or assistance, such as providing someone with resources or walking them to a crisis centre) and information support (e.g., providing them with information about what rape is and what its effects are). Providing emotional justice to rape victims/survivors holds researchers accountable to providing these things.

As a qualitative researcher and as a feminist I feel a strong ethical responsibility to the women who participate in my research. Ultimately, I have undertaken this work because I feel that their experiences and their voices are valuable and underrepresented. I believe that there is more to say about women's experiences of violence than the literature has yet been able to represent. Given this, I have tried to create space for the voices of the hidden women because I believe that they have something to say that deserves to be heard; deserves to be validated; deserves to be represented. I feel a commitment to them, a commitment to represent them on their own terms, using their words, listening for their voices. And yet, I have conducted a project that is, from its most nascent stage, based on a representation that they do not embody and that I am projecting upon them. I am situating them as unacknowledged rape victims, which necessarily implies the label of rape victim – a label that they have not chosen.

I am cautious of this endeavour, but have chosen to proceed because I feel the tug of another ethical responsibility, and that is my responsibility beyond the level of the individual, to the lived experience of women more broadly. After all, choosing not to appropriate the label of rape does not protect women from actually being raped. I undertake this research with caution, but also with the conviction that as a feminist committed to anti-violence against women research I also have an ethical responsibility

to locate and name violence that is taken for granted in women's lives. I find myself, and this project, situated in a place of discomfort, carefully balancing my ethical commitment to the individual women who agree to participate in this research with my ethical commitment to a feminist anti-violence agenda.

I feel a responsibility to use the privilege that my position as an academic affords me, which is the opportunity to see patterns and trace lines, to contextualize, to create a map of voices that may tell us something about the experience of rape that cannot be otherwise viewed – or heard. However, the authority that comes with the privilege of being an academic is not unproblematic. I realize that the control I exercise over the written word in this research project is a reflection of my position of power as an academic. Although I am inviting women's narratives and discursive constructions of their experiences, I am a co-contributor in this construction and have control over how these narratives will ultimately be represented in text. At the end of the day the representations that are presented in this work are a matter of my discernment and will reflect my own judgments and biases, and so I approach this work with trepidation, given the particularly marginalized voices of the women who I am inviting to participate in this research. Despite my feelings of concern, however, I realize that there are things that we cannot know about violence in women's lives if we are unwilling to go to places of discomfort and ambivalence. And so, I cannot fully resolve these tensions. I can only articulate them, and consider them reflexively, and do my best to negotiate this ethical dialectic with sensitivity and an ethic of care.

I borrow the term ethic of care from Rebecca Campbell (2002), an eminent rape researcher and author of *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape*, which

has proven to be a guidebook for conducting rape research and a source of considerable influence in shaping this work. Campbell argues for rape research that acknowledges the influence and significance of allowing yourself to move beyond thinking and into the realm of feeling. "To the extent to which academic discourse frames rape as an individual problem of individual survivors, devoid of emotionality, it may miss the mark in representing the problem of rape in women's lives and our society" (p. 97).

According to Campbell (2002), feeling is the necessary basis for conducting ethical research on rape, as it allows one to connect with empathy, and in doing so to obtain greater sensitivity to the needs of the participants, and of yourself as a researcher. Campbell recognizes fully that this is at odds with traditional research paradigms that advocate dispassionate objectivity and distance, but defends it as the more appropriate approach, given the degree of care and consideration that rape research requires.

> Caring involves attuning to the wellbeing of those affected by research, and allowing that concern to guide the decisions researchers make over the course of the project. An ethic of caring prompts researchers to learn about the emotional needs of their research participants, and regardless of whether they have direct interactions with those individuals, to create a research environment that can respond to those needs. Caring means thinking through what people will get out of participating in the research process, what they would gain, and what effect it would have on their lives… Rather, an ethic of caring prompts researchers to think about the impact of their work in ways more broadly defined than what is

> traditionally specified in research codes of ethics and institutional review boards. (p. 128)

It is from this position that I have accepted the ethical challenges of this work, and have tried to navigate the practical methodological challenges as well as the emotional challenges of this work.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

If epistemology is the study of how and what we can know, methodology provides the parameters that both enable and constrain the acquisition of this knowledge through research (Willig, 2001). Silverman (1993) urges us to consider methodology as theorizing about research and to conceptualize it as the practice that bridges our epistemological position with the methods that we use – that is, the particular tools, strategies and techniques that we use to conduct our research, such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, or otherwise (Letherby, 2003). My epistemological position is informed by both feminist theory and social constructionist theory, which are complementary, and together have influenced the two methodological paradigms that I am using to guide this research, which are, broadly speaking, feminist methodology and qualitative methodology. A feminist methodological position does not necessitate the use of qualitative methods; however, there has been a strong commitment within feminist traditions, first outside the academy and then within, to emphasize the importance of personal testimony and the representation of women's experiences through "voice" (Stanley & Wise, 1983).

Willig (2001) suggests that qualitative methodologies can be differentiated according to the degree of emphasis that they place on the importance of language, as well as personal and epistemological reflexivity. Choosing the appropriate methodology is aided by considering these matters in relation to one's epistemological position. First, with regards to language, both feminist and social constructionist epistemologies acknowledge the significant role that language plays in representing women's

experiences (DeVault, 1999). This is not to say that there is a unitary feminist position with regards to the role that language plays in the dialectic of reality and representation; however, feminism does consistently draw attention to the fact that women have been excluded from both the production of language and representation within it (Spender, 1980). Consequently, creating space for women's voices and language is a feminist priority (DeVault, 1991). The theoretics of social constructionism are perhaps even more strongly predicated on language and the role that it plays in socially constructing knowledge and mediating human experience (Willig, 2001), and thus methodologies that support this paradigm must necessarily be sympathetic to the significance of language.

According to Willig (2001) personal reflexivity requires that researchers position themselves in relation to their work and make explicit the role that their personal lived experience, history, and social context have in influencing the knowledge that is produced. Research does not occur outside of the researcher, but instead is intimately related to her beliefs, attitudes, values, political perspectives, and life history (DeVault, 1991). Consequently, knowledge is produced through the interpretative lens of the researcher, and as such, the factors that shape this lens must be made as transparent as possible. Epistemological reflexivity on the other hand, is the consideration of how the actual research design, questions, and methods have regulated the knowledge that can be attained (Willig, 2001). It also calls us to question the assumptions that we have made in conducting research, and to question the limitations that these assumptions may impose upon the findings.

Both feminist and social constructionist epistemologies support a high degree of reflexivity in the research process, as they support the position that knowledge is affected

by the conditions under which it is produced. If we assume that knowledge is co-constructed by the researcher and those who participate in research, then we need to be thoughtful about the particular mark that the researcher suffuses in the work. It is necessary, as a researcher, to be as transparent as possible, so that the knowledge that is produced can be evaluated in relation to the researcher who produced it. But moving beyond personal reflexivity, feminism and social constructionism also urge us to be rigorous in questioning the consequences of our methods and the research questions that we ask. To use the words of Alessandra Tanesini (1999), "knowledge is not politically innocent" (p. 186), and as such, the processes by which it is produced must be evaluated critically, by both us as researchers and by those who read our work. Critique begins with the researcher as she engages in epistemological reflexivity, and considers the way she has both opened and constrained possibilities for understanding. With the significance of language and reflexivity in mind, I have chosen to use narrative inquiry as it prioritizes both of these things. Within feminist and narrative traditions there are many points of intersection, and thus the two can be integrated with relative ease. I will address briefly the key features of narrative and feminist methodology separately, and will then discuss how they have overlapped and been combined with direct application to this work.

Narrative Inquiry

At the most basic level a narrative inquiry is an examination of lives as they are told through stories, both written and oral. Chase (2005) has framed narratives as "an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life" (p. 652), while Murray (2003) has defined them as "an organized interpretation of a sequence of events" (p. 113). These

explanations illustrate the facility of narrative, but also belie the social complexity of the narrative process. This mélange of definitions alludes to the fact that a narrative is many things at once, and it serves a variety of purposes. Narrative is a story; it is a voice(s); it is a social process; it is a form of discourse; it is a possible point of agency and political transformation. It is an organizational tool that helps us make sense of experience, make meaning, and negotiate representations of ourselves, and our identity. It is a valuation of the experiential and it is an affirmation of the importance of language.

Chase (2005) helps outline the various versions and functions of narratives, by suggesting five different analytic lenses through which it can be viewed and understood. Foremost, she situates narrative as a form of discourse that enables retroactive meaning making. By ordering and organizing our experiences into stories we are able to create understanding of ourselves and others, and we are able to connect the consequences of actions and experiences as they unfold over time (Polkinghorne, 1995). We deal with the world in events, not in fragmented pieces of text, and narratives aid us in explicating our experience (Bruner, 1990). Narrative inquiry prioritizes the viewpoint of the narrator, and is intended to create space for the idiosyncrasy of lived experience, rather than focusing on commonality (Chase, 2005).

Chase (2005) also frames narrative as a form of verbal action and creation, with voice at the center. Narrators exercise agency as they use narratives to explain, justify, complain, defend, entertain and persuade, among other things. Murray (2003) construes narrative agency as the choice to engage and connect with the world. Narration is an act of social construction and is thus an opportunity for narrators to control representation, and to shape their identity as well as their story. However, narrative discourse is not

constructed in the absence of other discourses and Chase encourages us to "view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances" (p. 657). Specifically, historical, cultural, geographical, social, linguistic, interactional and psychological factors collide along plains of experience and create parameters within which constructions of self and reality can be built (Chase, 2005).

Naturally, this extends to the actual research setting, which imposes its own parameters. Although narrative inquiry can be applied to written text, it is strongly implicated in interview methods. Interviews occur within a particular social setting, one where an imbalance of power between the researcher and the narrator may be explicit or sub-textual. It is important to bear in mind that narratives are told differently depending on the circumstances in which they are being told, the purpose for which they are being told, and the audience to whom they are being directed. For example, the stories that our participants tell us may not be exactly the same as the ones they would tell their friends. This is not to say that experiences are not real and concrete, but rather to acknowledge the possibility that experience can be represented and understood in different ways, and expressed through multiple voices (Murray, 2003). It is possible that the parameters of the research experience may actually invite the opportunity for positive or improved narratives, in part by simply encouraging them to be told (Chase, 2005).

Integrating Feminist Methodology and Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry sustains the traditions of second wave feminism, with its attention to voice and with the view that women's stories are primary documents essential to feminist research and analysis (Chase, 2005). Feminist methodology is not directly related to any given method, but rather provides broad conceptual directives for

undertaking research. Narrative inquiry supports the goals of feminist methodology, but also provides a tangible strategy for conducting research, given its close association with interview methods, and as such can be viewed as a vehicle that allows feminist methodology to be connected to a specific method.

DeVault's (1999) tenets of feminist methodology have informed the orchestration of this work. The first point that DeVault has addressed is the fact that feminist methodology should aim to bring women into the research, to allow them to represent their own experiences and to attend to the aspects of their lives that are silenced or ignored. In this work I have aimed to excavate voices and experiences from the liminal space that is situated somewhere between rape and sex, not-rape, and just sex (Jervis, 2008; Gavey, 2005). I have tried to illuminate an area of women's experience that has been denied the discursive space to be clearly represented. Through carefully attending to personal testimony and the voices that come from insufficiently articulated places of experience (DeVault, 1999), I have obtained insight into the ways that women negotiate meaning in the absence of labels, and the factors that influence acknowledgement.

The second goal of DeVault's (1999) feminist methodology is to minimize harm and increase control for the women who participate. I have used the word narrator interchangeably with the word participant throughout this document, in an effort to acknowledge the agency of the women involved. I have been influenced by Mardorossian's (2002) admonishment of researchers' complicity in perpetuating the objectification of women who have been raped, by unknowingly reinforcing their status as victims through the regulation of their narratives and voice. I realize that using a different label does not absolve the research of the problems of power imbalance between

the women I interview and myself, and it certainly does not change the linguistic privilege that I retain in producing the written findings. However, I do believe that by positioning women as agentic contributors who construct their own narratives, I am making an effort to resist relegating them to the oppressive position of passive victimhood. Additionally, I have tried to use the terms women who have acknowledged and women who are unacknowledged in lieu of the terms acknowledged and unacknowledged victims, to attenuate my imposition of identity upon these women.

The issue of language and labelling is of particular importance when discussing rape acknowledgement. From the beginning I have been negotiating the political and ethical challenges of conducting research that is grounded in a label that women have not chosen for themselves. Consequently, it is imperative that this research be sensitive to the ways in which women choose to represent themselves. Narrative inquiry is well suited to this task because of the way it frames women's experiences and voices as a coherent text. To minimize the likelihood of misrepresentation, I have felt that it is important for women's experiences to be viewed as a whole story, and have thus included a chapter that is dedicated to contextualizing each woman's assault, by drawing upon her words as much as possible. In examining each narrative in context, it was possible to focus on the voices that were woven throughout the narrative, rather than just themes. Keeping voice at the center of the analysis was a way of keeping each woman embodied in her narrative, thereby keeping her words and her representations salient. Fostering agency means respecting the words that the women chose to describe and situate themselves; even when I disagreed, I have taken care to try not to overwrite their voices.

Finally, DeVault (1999) encourages the use of feminist methodologies that reinforce the value of women and support social change that would improve the lives of women. Narrative inquiry has offered this possibility in several ways. First, the act of talking can of itself be a positive experience, and this is particularly true for women who have experienced rape (Chase, 2005; Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens, & Sefl, 2010). Narratives are positive in that they facilitate the processing of one's experiences. They are an opportunity to retell the story to oneself, to understand it or make meaning of it in a different way, and to possibly create a "better" story (Chase, 2005). Perhaps more significantly, by participating in these interviews I feel that I offered women an opportunity to have their experience validated and recorded as story worthy. Chase has explained that not all stories are considered worthy of telling, and as such only emerge when they are invited. This is particularly relevant to women who are unacknowledged victims of rape, because at the most basic level, acknowledgement is a matter of perceived legitimacy. When women do not perceive themselves to be legitimate victims, they may be denied the discursive space to disclose and explain their victimization. Within the context of normative heterosexual sex, coercion is routine and taken for granted (Gavey, 2005), which reduces both its story worthiness and its recognition as legitimate victimization.

The Listening Guide

There are various paradigms and approaches that guide narrative research, and I chose to use The Listening Guide method (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) to shape and analyze my research. The Listening Guide is not simply an analytic tool for evaluating narrative data – although it is that as well – it also represents a feminist philosophy of how

researchers can and should interact with their research participants. I felt that the Listening Guide was particularly appropriate for this research given that it is not only feminist, but it also emphasizes a voice-centered and relational approach to narrative analysis that aligned with my desire to pursue both epistemic and emotional justice through this work.

The Listening Guide supports the feminist concern that women's voices have been systematically marginalized by dominant male-centered paradigms of language, thus bringing women's voices to the centre of research must be done purposefully. Accessing voice, however, is a relational experience as we learn to speak, express ourselves and make meaning within a web of linguistic and social relationships. Consequently, the Listening Guide urges us, as researchers, to consider the significance of this, and to approach our research and our interaction with participants as a relational experience. According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), the Listening Guide is intended to shepherd the researcher and participant into a relationship, rather than impose a particular interpretive frame. Within a relational context it is important to consider not only who is doing the speaking, but also who is doing the listening – and how that listening affects what is spoken. In this way, the Listening Guide helped me attend to my own contribution in shaping the dialogue between myself and the women, and to be mindful of the way I influenced the construction of the narrative.

The Listening Guide was well matched to this research in that it created space for a nuanced and layered analysis of each woman's voice and experience. The Listening Guide draws upon musical analogies to illustrate the complex nature of voice and the representation of oneself through language. In particular, it assumes that voice is

polyphonic, meaning that each woman's voice is comprised of multiple, overlapping voices or parts – a collection of unique melodic lines, if you will – which come together to create a harmonious whole. Within the polyphonic perspective is the possibility of contrapuntal voices. Contrapuntal voices are derived from the musical concept of counterpoint and are intended to reflect melodic lines that contradict the other melodic lines, but which somehow still create a harmonious piece of music. By considering voice in this way, it was possible for women to express personal conflicts about their experiences of sexual violence, and to reveal contradictions in their processing and understanding of their experience. The Listening Guide makes space for the representation of experiences that are unresolved, unclear or difficult to articulate, and as such, it is particularly well suited to the agenda of this research project.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants and Recruitment

For this investigation I interviewed 14 women between the ages of 18 and 47 who were enrolled at the University of Windsor in at least one of the semesters between June 2011 and February 2012. The women who participated in this study were chosen using purposive sampling strategies that allowed me to select only women who did not label their experience as rape or sexual assault.

I knew from my review of the rape literature that sampling women who were unacknowledged would be a challenge, due to the fact that these women are "hidden" not only from others, but also from themselves (Koss, 1985). It is to be expected that if they do not name their experience as rape or sexual assault, they will not report having experienced rape or sexual assault when asked. Fortunately, the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) provided me with a way of overcoming the semantic barriers that are faced by rape acknowledgement researchers (and other rape researchers, more broadly).

For the purposes of this investigation I chose to modify the SES slightly to reflect Canadian legal discourse (Appendix A), which uses the umbrella term of sexual assault, rather than the more specific term of rape. Given this, I added a question asking "have you ever been sexually assaulted?" in addition to the original "have you ever been raped?," which was developed to reflect the rape laws of the United States, where this measure was developed. Although rape is not a legal term used in Canada, the familiarity and semantic power of this word nonetheless resonates with women, and I felt that it was important to retain it for these purposes.

Participants were pre-screened for this study through the Department of Psychology Psychology Participant Pool pre-screening survey (refer to Appendix B for Participant Pool Screening Instructions). In the pre-screening survey women were asked to complete all of the questions from my modified version of the SES. Women were categorized as unacknowledged rape/sexual assault victims if they respond with *no* to both of the questions "have you ever been raped" or "have you ever been sexually assaulted", and *yes* to one of the following questions (modified from the Sexual Experiences Survey, Koss & Oros, 1982, see Appendix A for all questions):

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) or experienced sexual acts (oral, anal or vaginal penetration by objects other than a penis) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force?
2. Have you ever been in a situation in which you were incapacitated due to alcohol or drugs (for example, you were physically unable to resist, passed out, or unaware of what was happening) and had unwanted sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) with a man?

In the Intersession semester of 2011 approximately 10 participants met the inclusion criteria. In the Fall, 2011 and Winter, 2012 semesters the samples to draw from were predictably larger, and thus the number of participants who met the inclusion criteria was approximately 25 in each semester (although it should be noted that there was a small degree of overlap, as some participants were identified in both semesters). All eligible women were contacted and invited to participate in the study.

I initially contacted the women by telephone, but found that this had limited success. I was unable to reach a number of women, presumably because they chose not to answer calls from an unidentified number, and the majority of those I did reach declined participation. I suspected that this was because of the personal nature of the research and felt that women may have felt uncomfortable being asked to make a decision in the moment (even though they were given the option of thinking about it). Consequently, I revised my procedure and began contacting the women via email, which had more fruitful outcomes. By providing the details of the study in an email I believe the women were given more time to process what was being asked of them and consider their interest in participating.

Both the telephone and email recruitment scripts (Appendix C) were informed by empirical literature on survivors' decision making when it comes to participating in interview research (Campbell et al., 2010). The script emphasized that many women have had coercive sexual experience, and the purpose of this project was to obtain a better understanding of these experiences. The participants were assured of confidentiality and were assured that they would only have to disclose what they felt comfortable with. They were informed that remuneration would consist of either 2.5 Participant Pool bonus points (pool standard for study that may be up to 2 hours in length, plus a half point for completing the follow-up questions) or $40 (with $30 for participating in the interview, and an additional $10 for completing the follow-up questions).

Because these women did not acknowledge their assault, I chose to use the more general term of "sexual coercion" to describe the study. I expected that a number of

women would not be familiar with the term sexual coercion and thus I explained that this included experiences with men who had used verbal pressure or threats or physical force to try to have some form of sexual experience with them, as well as sexual experiences that occurred because they were too intoxicated to resist.

The women who expressed interest in participating were scheduled for a face-to-face interview in a private location of their choosing, although all participants indicated that they would be most comfortable having the interview in my office. Fifteen women expressed interest in the study, however, one participant had a very restricted schedule and was unable to find sufficient time to schedule an interview. Interviews were conducted with the remaining 14 women and 10 were included in the final analysis[1].

Interviews

I collected the data using a semi-structured interview protocol that relied upon general orienting questions to provide overall direction to the course of the interview. This allowed the flexibility to move in unexpected directions, according to the needs and stories of the women. The approach seemed most appropriate because it accomodates the feminist goal of minimizing the power imbalance between the researcher and the participant, by creating space for the participant's voice, and restoring as much control as possible into the hands of the participant (Way, 2001). Given that this research relates directly to the silencing of women's voices, it seemed of particular importance to prioritize the women's stories and voices over my own specific questions in this investigation.

Prior to starting the interviews I read the consent form (Appendix D) with each woman, to ensure that no parts were missed and that she was fully aware of what was

involved in the interview and of her right to withdraw at anytime without penalty. I then asked her if she still wanted to proceed with the interview, in the hope that this would normalize a decision to leave if she was uncomfortable. None of the women declined participation. The women then signed the consent form and were asked to choose a pseudonym, although in some cases they asked that I choose one for them. Following this, I had the women complete a short background questionnaire (Appendix E) as well as the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Appendix A). Although they had previously completed the SES during the Participant Pool pre-screening, I asked them to complete it again as a way of prompting them to think about their unacknowledged assault experience. This also provided me with a starting point to me to initiate dialogue about this event, by asking them if they would be willing to tell me about the experience they reported on their questionnaire. By simply referring to it as the experience they reported, I was able to bring it up without imposing labels. Additionally, in administering the survey prior to the interview, I was able to account for whether their acknowledgment status had changed from the time of pre-screening until the interview, which in some cases it had.

Campbell (2002) has advised that when conducting interviews with rape survivors it is important to ask them about their assault experience (or in this case, coercive experience) early in the interview, as they will probably be anticipating it, and may be anxious about getting it over with. However, I decided that this was less suitable for a sample of women who are unacknowledged, especially since I was inviting them to participate in a discussion about their experiences of sexual coercion, rather than sexual assault or rape exlicitly. I felt that asking someone to speak about their experiences of

sexual coercion does not necessarily carry the same emotional weight as asking someone to speak about their experiences of rape, and thus women might arrive not emotionally prepared for the intimacy of the interview. I deviated from Campbell's advice in order to take more time to establish rapport between myself and the women, by first initiating a more general discussion about the women's perceptions of sexual coercion (see Interview Schedule, Appendix F), which proved to be a successful point of introduction.

Following the general discussion about sexual coercion, I guided the conversation to their personal experience by referring to their responses on the Sexual Experiences Survey. I asked each woman if she would be willing to tell me about that specific event, and assured her that she could use a much or as little detail as she liked. I tried to avoid probing for additional information, beyond what was provided, except in one situation where the context and nature of the assault was very unclear. This particular participant spoke in generalized terms and I had to ask her to confirm the specifics of her experience. From this point I guided the conversation into a discussion about the woman's feelings and thoughts following the event, particularly as it pertained to the labelling of the event. Frequently this led us to talking about disclosure and whether or not the women had ever shared their stories with anyone else, as I expected that the experience of articulating the story to someone, and their subsequent response, could influence labelling.

Following each interview I provided the women with a resource and information package (Appendices G-K), containing a list of psychological and physical health services that they could access, if necessary. The package included information on self care after sexual assault, myths about sexual assault, definitions of sexual assault, and a list of related website and books that could be consulted for further information.

Although the resource materials specfically reference sexual assault, I took caution to avoid imposing labels, and thus informed the women that although they might not find all of the material relevant to their experience, it might be useful for their friends, and they were thus encouraged to share it. At the end I thanked each woman for her participation and reminded them that I would be in touch via email in two weeks to ask follow-up questions about the interview process. I also let them know that I would check in with them by phone or email in the day or two following the interview in case they had questions or needed support. In the majority of cases I emailed to check in, and all women assured me they were fine; however, in the case of two particularly emotional interviews I did the follow-up by telephone so that I could directly converse with the woman if needed. In both instances the women thanked me for calling, and affirmed that they were feeling fine and had no questions.

Follow-up Survey

Two weeks following each interview I contacted the women by email to provide them with the follow-up questions. These questions, which can be found in Appendix L, invited their personal reflections about the coercive experience since the time of the interview, and also inquired about the experience of participating in the interview.

Research Notes

In commitment to the reflexive process, I wrote personal case notes following each interview that briefly summarized the interview, and made note of any significant emotional experiences, or points of confusion with the questions. I also documented the characteristics of the women's stories that resonated with me or made me uncomfortable, and the emotional responses that they evoked for me.

Transcription

The interviews were audiotaped, and later transcribed verbatim. All of the participants consented to having the interview recorded. Each woman was emailed a copy of her transcript and was told that she would have two weeks to review it and provide feedback. Only two women responded. One woman assured me that everything was as she remembered and no changes were necessary. The other woman told me that although she did not regret doing the interview she found it very painful and she did not want to revisit it by reading the transcript. She said that she trusted me to have captured it accurately and was comfortable with me using it without her review.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The analytic procedure for the Listening Guide involved a series of sequential listenings, each of which helped me attend to different elements of the narrative and the narrator's voice (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003). In approaching voice as a layered phenomenon I was able to identify contradictions, variations, and complexities that might have otherwise be overlooked or misunderstood. Moreover, in conducting this multi-stage analysis I needed to consider the presence of my own voice, and to consider the influence that it had upon the dialogue with my conversational partners (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan et al., 2003).

The First Listening: Listening For Plot

According to the guidelines provided by Brown and Gilligan (1992) my first listening was used to obtain familiarity with the literary nature of the narrative, by attending to the plot, and the specific details and nuances of the story that was being told. Additionally, I was directed to attend to my own responses to the narrative, thus conducting an autoethnographic listening (Gilligan et al., 2003). The goal of this listening was to situate the narrative within the broader (and potentially multiple) social and cultural contexts in which it was embedded, including the research context itself (Gilligan et al., 2003). I followed the recommendation of Brown and Gilligan and documented the notes regarding plot in the left-hand margin of the transcripts, and my complementary autoethnographic response to the narrative in the right-hand margin.

Through the literary listening I became more familiar with each woman's story, by attending to the "who, what, where, when and why of the narrative" (Brown &

Gilligan, 1992, p. 27). Brown and Gilligan have described this as mapping the "geography of the psychological landscape" (p. 27). During this listening I tried to make note of the use of such devices as metaphor and repetition, as well as absences or revisions to the story, and changes in the narrative style, or narrative position (i.e., shifts between first, second and third person).

The autoethnographic listening occurred concomitantly with the literary analysis, and served the purpose of helping me actively attend to my feelings about both the participant and the story that she was telling (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). This personal analysis can be likened of course to the reflexive process that is a cornerstone of qualitative methodology. As I listened to the plot, I tried to be mindful of how I was responding to the story and the narrator, both in the moment and at the time of the interview. In doing this I have tried to bring my own subjectivity into the interpretive process, and make my own thoughts, feelings and associations explicit. This was important because as the women told their stories they interpreted their experiences and communicated them using the medium of voice; as I listened to their voices I performed a second interpretation through the act of listening. Consequently, there was always a double interpretation and the goal of this listening was to elucidate, as much as possible, the personal experience that both sharpens and distorts my interpretation.

The Second Listening: I Poems

While the purpose of the first listening was to situate the narrator and myself as storyteller and listener, and to bring us into relationship with one another, the goal of the second listening was to bring the narrator singularly to the fore. The literary influences that guided the development of the Listening Guide were also apparent in this listening,

as I was instructed to listen for the “distinctive cadences and rhythms” of the first person voice (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 162). By attending to the first person voice I was offered a point of entry into the psyche of each woman, and was thus able to “attempt to know her on her own terms” (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 28). This was an important step in the analysis as it helped minimize the distance between the participant and myself, and helped me come into relationship with her through the transcript. Brown and Gilligan (1992) have emphasized that as we listen closely to the first person voice of each woman we learn more about her and are more intimately affected by her. First we learn about how she sees herself and knows herself, and then as we make connections between her experiences, we begin to think and feel and make connections to our own lives. The intimacy that was embedded in this step of analysis served to undermine the urge towards objectivity, by turning my gaze directly to the subjectivity of the narrator. Having listened to each woman in this way it was impossible to claim any sort of objective stance, which is the goal of the Listening Guide, as it assumes that knowing and understanding the lived experience of another person is predicated upon having a relationship with them.

To facilitate this process I constructed “I poems” for each narrator (see Appendix M for examples), which was a compilation of every excerpt from the text that the narrator expressed in the first person (Gilligan et al., 2003). I moved through the text, taking note of each use of the word “I”, “me”, “my”, etc., by underlining them, along with any verbs or accompanying words that appeared to be significant. Once the entire text was subjected to this analysis, the underlined words and phrases were extracted in order, and

arranged sequentially as the lines of a poem. To illustrate this I will draw upon an excerpt from the “I poem” that I constructed from an interview with Grace.

I honestly
I was so drunk
I couldn't feel my body
I had no idea
I had no idea that…
I was, it kind of clicked after
I was like, what are you doing?
I was…
I didn't know what was going on
I… like,
I was like, oh my gosh stop

By organizing the first person voice in this manner, I was able to observe the movement of the participant’s associative stream of consciousness throughout the narrative and it became possible to trace changes and observe variations in the first person voice (Gilligan et al., 2003). Consequently, this listening not only served to bring me into a more intimate relationship with the participant, but it also facilitated my awareness of the polyphonic nature of voice, and the range of “themes, harmonies, dissonances and shifts” that one person could express, which helped prepare me for the next stage of analysis (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 164.)

The Third Listening: Listening for Contrapuntal Voices

It was at this point in the analysis that the text was examined in relation to my specified research topic and questions. Unlike the majority of other qualitative analyses, the aim was not to categorize themes, but rather to identify the multiple voices that were related to acknowledgment and to follow them through the text, from start to finish. Gilligan et al., (2003) consider musical counterpoint to be analogous to voice, and developed the Listening Guide with the assumption that voices are composed of multiple

layers of meaning and expression. By carefully attending to the shifts in voice I began to discern the different parts, or melodies (to continue the analogy) that came together to represent acknowledgment. These voices are referred to as contrapuntal voices, and they allowed multiple meanings to co-exist simultaneously. In this way the Listening Guide allowed me to create space for both harmony and dissonance within each woman's voice, and in doing so, to acknowledge contrarian beliefs and perspectives. Although intra-personal conflicts and discord within the expression of the participants could not necessarily be assumed, the Listening Guide analysis allowed me to be sensitive to it in the event that it was.

The third stage of analysis was iterative as I read each transcript multiple times and began to discern different voices. I began each time by reading the text with a particular voice in mind. When I heard that voice in a particular segment of the text, I underlined the appropriate words or phrases with a coloured pen. The same process was carried out for the remaining voices, such that the presence of each voice was demarcated with a different colour. The colour-coding of the transcript provided me with a visual representation of the contrapuntal patterns that were woven throughout the narrative. According to Gilligan et al. (2003) this helps us understand how "these voices move in relation to one another and to the Is" identified in Step 2 through the I poems (p. 167). The goal, from this point forward, was to develop an understanding of the relationship between these voices, as they related to my desire to understand acknowledgment.

The Fourth Listening: Composing an Analysis and Integrating Interviews

By the final stage of analysis each transcript had been subjected to several distinct listenings, which include the initial reading for plot and my own reactions, reading for the

"self" of each woman, as well as the contrapuntal listenings. Each listening was coded using a different colour, and was summarized. Following this, I began the process of synthesizing the readings, by drawing together the contrapuntal voices across the narratives. Gilligan et al. (2003) explain that although the purpose of the earlier steps is to tease apart various aspects of the participant's voice and experience, and in the final step our goal is to bring these listenings back into relationship with one another. To return to the music analogy, by separating out the melodic lines and studying each pattern of notes individually, we obtain a better understanding of how a piece of music has developed and how it functions; however, a single note or melodic line cannot provide sufficient information about the piece of music as a whole. Knowing and appreciating music – and narratives – comes from understanding the complex relationships among the mechanisms that underlie it.

In examining how each woman negotiated not knowing, knowing and ambivalence within her own experience, I attained an appreciation for the complex patterns of interaction that emerged. The balance of these voices varied in each narrative, as the women knew their experiences in different ways and to different degrees according to the specifics of their assaults, as well as the broader context of their lives. The goal during this stage of analysis was to compare the women's interviews to one another for the purpose of highlighting harmonious voices, as well as those that were in discord, or perhaps even in stark contrast to the voices of the other women.

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVES

To understand rape acknowledgment I think that it is critical to be mindful of the unique details that inform a woman's perspective, and to account for the influence of factors such as how old she was, her previous history with coercion, and her relationship with the perpetrator, etcetera. I therefore written a brief account of each woman's narrative of unwanted, coercive sex to contextualize the voices that I discerned in my analysis. I have tried to represent the most salient details of each woman's assault by relying upon the words that she used to describe what happened to her, and have attempted to summarize where women were positioned with regard to acknowledgement during the interview process.

Isabelle

Isabelle was a 23 year old woman of European-Canadian descent in the 5th year of her undergraduate degree, who identified as heterosexual and was in a relationship at the time of the interview. When I asked her to describe the experience of having unwanted sex, she explained that it had happened several years ago when she was in high school. She had been at a party with her friends and they had all been drinking. After the party they all returned to their friend Evan's[2] house where they intended to spend the night. Isabelle and one of her friends were intending to share a small couch for the night, so Evan offered to let her sleep in his room. Isabelle recounted that she was not suspicious of this offer because she knew that his girlfriend would be arriving home shortly. Evan then carried her into his room and she fell asleep.

Isabelle awoke to find Evan kissing her. She asked him what he was doing, and tried pushing him away. Isabelle described the situation as awkward and uncomfortable and she tried to laugh it off and indicate her disinterest playfully. Isabelle explained that she “didn’t know how to handle” herself, and she did not want to appear that she was overreacting. She noted that she did not want to make it seem like it was that big of a deal and embarrass him. When Evan began to take off her skirt, however, she started to panic and became more insistent that he stop.

> And he, like, was pinning me down and was like 'c'mon Isabelle, blah, blah, blah'. And I'm telling him, 'like, NO. I need you to stop right now. This is not funny.' And... the next thing I know he was like, like putting himself in me to, and I kinda just like, stopped and almost let him, and then I got really mad and I shoved him off and said 'No, like this is not funny' and I like got up and I left the room.

Isabelle explained that despite her drunkenness and her disinterest in Evan, what really motivated her to resist was the thought of Evan’s girlfriend coming home to discover what was happening and blaming Isabelle. For Isabelle, it was the fear of having another girl be angry at her and the implications that would have for how she would be known within their friend group and around school (i.e., as a slut), that enabled her to use the forceful physical resistance strategies that are known to be effective, but are often uncomfortable for women to use (Ullman & Knight, 1993).

> The whole time I just kept thinking, when she comes in, this is what she’s going to see, and this would be awful... I just didn’t want her to be mad at me...she probably would have forgiven him because that's what girls tend

> to do, and it would have been all on me and something would have gone, like that's what, like right away I was like, I need to get out of this situation and I just like... more of anything I was thinking of her at the time, than myself.

Following the attack, Isabelle immediately went to her friends to cry with them and disclose what had happened. I asked her how she described the event to her friends, and she told them that he had just attempted to have sex with her.

> I wouldn't have said rape; I wouldn't have said assault or anything like that. I think I was just saying that... umm, Evan carried me into a room and... was, like, on top of me and trying to have sex with me, I think that's what I said. And then I don't think I said he did. I just think I said he tried. And... they just... gave me a hug and were like, 'oh my god, are you ok? Like, what a jerk and it's ok'. Cause I was crying and they just, like everyone was just saying 'it's ok, it's ok, what a jerk he is'. And that's kind of what it was left at. It was a situation where... nobody really knows how to deal with it, cause it's an awkward situation, so... and he's supposed to be a friend.

Although Isabelle and her friends recognized that there was valid cause for her distress, neither she nor they had access to a vocabulary that would allow them to describe the incident as sexual assault or rape. I asked her directly if anyone named that experience, or attempted to label it, and she responded by saying,

> No... I don’t, I mean... looking back now that was, like he was trying to rape me and he did, but at the time, no, it was more just... I can’t believe he did that. There was no labels or terms or anything used.

On the SES, immediately prior to the interview, Isabelle indicated that she experienced sexual intercourse when she was too intoxicated to resist, but affirmed her unacknowledged status by indicating that she had never been sexually assaulted or raped. However, as she began to share her story with me she almost immediately labeled what had happened to her as rape.

> …I shoved him off and said 'No, like this is not funny' and I like got up and I left the room. And I was, then I started like bawling cause I'm like, ok that was, like a rape situation. I literally was just raped, so, then I left. And then at first I was just thinking, like, oh he's just a friend, like this is just, like... and then I realized, no, this isn't ok at all, so.

After we had discussed her experience of sexual assault and her perceptions of sexual assault more broadly, I queried Isabelle about the discrepancy between her questionnaire responses and the descriptors she chose to use during the interview. She said that when she was filling out the questionnaire her immediate response was to reject the labels of both sexual assault and rape because neither she nor anyone else had ever applied them to her situation. She explained that for many years she did not even think about that experience, let alone try to assign words to it, but two years previous to the interview she participated in a research study on sexual assault and realized for the first time that it had happened to her. She was surprised that she had answered no when asked

if she had been sexually assaulted or raped because as soon as she started talking to me she was able to access that language.

> I didn't even, I'm looking at that now and I'm like why would I have written that? Like I honestly didn't mean to even say, like no, I didn't... I did... that's just what came out of my... It's like as soon as I start talking about it... my defense mechanisms go away, and it's like ok, it really did happen, but I do have to, I guess talk about it first, to... cause I've never really used the word when I was talking to anybody, I don't think. I think it was more, the word rape was not used. Even though I knew that was what happened, we weren't using those terms... until today, when we were talking about it. It's always like... sexual... intercourse... unwanted sexual intercourse, right? That sounds a little bit... almost like a nicer way of putting rape, right?

SchoolGirl

SchoolGirl was a 20 year old woman of European-Canadian descent in the second year of her undergraduate degree. Although she was technically a second year student, at the time of the interview SchoolGirl was in her first year at the University of Windsor, as she started her degree at a college and then transferred her credits. She reported that she was heterosexual and not currently in a relationship. SchoolGirl described an assault that occurred approximately five months prior to the interview, during the first week of the school year, and indicated that it occurred when she was too intoxicated to resist. She told me that it had happened in her residence building after an evening of drinking and dancing with her friends. She returned to her residence with a female friend and several

men who lived in the same building. One of the men asked her if she wanted to go to his room to hang out and she agreed. She has no memory of what followed until she awoke to find him on top of her. She recalled protesting, but then passed out and the next time she awoke he was in the process of having sex with her. At that point she physically forced him off of her and fled his room to return to her own. She awoke the next morning, wearing only her bra and pants, with only a vague recollection of what had happened.

> This one guy was like, oh do you wanna come hang out? Like everyone else left, so I said ok, but I was blacked out by that time. So by the time I actually made it to his room, next thing I knew I was just on his bed and he was on top of me and I'm like, ok, get off of me, but... I passed out again and then I woke up again and like... I guess we were in the process of having sex, and then I ended up kicking him off of me and I ran out of his room... Well, when it, during it I like, I... I just ran back to my room and I just passed out, cause, like I said, I was blacked out... coming in and out, so I just blacked out and then when I woke up I was... confused at first as to what happened, right? But then... the message, I had messages on my phone and stuff like that, and that like, I knew that we had left the bar... and then the messages that he actually sent me the next day. I mean he's just like, oh yeah, so, he... I don't know it's just like, yeah, you wanna come get your shirt and stuff? And I was like, oh, like when I woke up, like I was sitting there in my bra and pants, and I'm like ok, like where's my shirt? You know... what happened? And then the (inhales) next day,

> you know you start thinking about it and little bits and pieces of it were actually coming back to me, so... and I actually didn't even go get the shirt myself. I actually sent my friend to go get my shirt.

Using text messages on her phone, and fragments of memory, she was able to piece together what had happened. Feeling distressed, she called one of her friends who laughed in response to SchoolGirl's disclosure, and dismissed the seriousness of the situation, claiming that it had happened to her so many times. Following this disclosure SchoolGirl did not discuss the assault again until the time of the interview, explaining that she knew it was unlikely to be taken seriously because she had been drinking.

> I've heard a lot of cases when girls are drunk, and it's hard to prove what actually occurred the night before, so I figured I would pretend, like, I was drunk and it didn't happen...

Despite her desire to pretend that nothing had happened, SchoolGirl continued to be reminded of the event each time she saw the man who assaulted her. She felt considerable discomfort and awkwardness with the man who assaulted her after the fact, and explained that she went to lengths to try to avoid seeing him, even though they lived in the same residence. When they did pass by one another they avoided eye contact and interaction.

I asked her if it had been difficult to find the words to describe what had happened to her, and she said that it was because of everything that she did not know, such as how she got to his room, and how the assault started. When I asked her if she had ever tried to label the experience, she described her experience as sexual assault, but revealed that she

was hesitant to use that label, in part because she did not want it to be true, but also because she felt responsible for what had happened.

> I would personally say it was sexual assault, because, I was... I wa... I didn't consent to it, and I was... passed out. I mean I was blacked out by the time I had even gotten in there, and for me to wake up and for him to be on top of me, and then pass out again, and then for him to still be on top of me, and for me to actually use physical force to get him off of me... yeah, definitely... I mean, you, it, it was definitely a sexual assault, and some people might even classify it as a rape, but I mean... it, it, it, as far as I'm concerned it is, but I don't want to consider it that way..."

On the Sexual Experience Survey that she completed at the time of the interview SchoolGirl reported that she had been sexually assaulted, but that she had never been raped. In the two-month period between the pre-screening survey and the interview her acknowledgment status had shifted. SchoolGirl relayed to me that she had recently attended the *Bringing in the Bystander*™ workshop[3], where she had been exposed to sexual assault prevention education. She felt that what she had learned at the workshop had influenced her assessment of her experience. Although SchoolGirl would be considered an acknowledged victim, she revealed that her acknowledgment was tenuous and that despite labelling the experience as assault during the interview, she continued to vacillate between positions of accepting that label, and reconstructing it according to mainstream perceptions of drunken hook-up sex.

> I just try and not label it and pretend that it didn't happen, to be quite honest. Because like I said, it was his fault and he shouldn't have done

> that, but... if I didn't drink, then... Well l'm still angry at myself for letting it happen, and, and like I said, that I'm taking responsibility for it, but... I know in my head that really it was his fault, so... it's kinda contradicting itself for me right now.

Grace

Grace was a 19 year old woman of European-Canadian descent in her second year of university at the time of the interview. She reported that she was heterosexual and was currently in a relationship. When I asked to her tell me about her experience of unwanted sex, she told me that it had occurred one year before, when she was 18, and that it had happened when she was too intoxicated to consent. Grace began by providing me with context, and told me about the relationship that she had been in prior to her assault. She described a boyfriend who was manipulative and emotionally abusive, and coerced her to have sex by repeatedly telling her how much he loved her, despite the fact that she emphasized to him that she felt too young to have sex. Grace told me that she was shocked when he broke up with her out of nowhere, and said that this was a significant emotional low for her. She described her boyfriend as "one of those people that had to have your attention all the time so I lost quite a few of my friends", and following their break-up she felt very lonely and isolated. In the aftermath of the break-up she became friends with a guy who had also recently gone through a bad breakup, and a friendship evolved from their shared sense of experience and the ability to relate to and empathize with one another.

On the evening that Grace was assaulted, she was invited by this man to attend a dance with him and his friends at the university. Upon picking her up, Grace could tell

that everyone had been drinking and they provided her with a large bottle of alcohol and pressured her to drink it. She did not feel comfortable drinking it while they were driving, so she waited until they arrived at the university and then drank all of it within 20 minutes. Grace proceeded to the party and danced while the guys continued to buy her drinks, as she was underage and unable to buy them for herself. Grace noted that at one point she became rather suspicious when one guy was insistent that she drink what he bought for her.

> I don't, I've never been slipped anything but I remember this guy, umm, his buddy, not letting anybody else drink the beer that he was about to give me, so I didn't drink it. So I don't know if I was about to be slipped something or if I did end up at some point in the night being slipped something but... I hope not. I wasn't sick or anything like that. I was hung over the next morning, but I wasn't, so I don't think so, but I just found that really odd.

Grace went on to explain that she did not really know the people that she was with, and that she had only known the guy who invited her for about a month. She paused at that moment to reflect on her own naiveté, and then proceeded to tell the story of her assault. After dancing and drinking for a while she had a bad taste in her mouth, and thus decided to go to the truck that they came in to get some gum. Her friend insisted on going with her, and when they arrived at the truck he urged her to get inside on account of the cold. Grace explained to me that at this point she was barely cognizant of what was happening around her, and the next thing she knew her clothes were being taken off. She felt so drunk at that moment that she barely understood what was

happening and described not being able to feel her body. She asked him what he was doing as he started having sex with her, and he responded by dismissing her question and assuring her that nothing was happening as he raped her. She told him to stop, but he persisted and continued to tell her that nothing was happening. Grace said she was barely able to process what was happening, until her phone rang, and when she saw that her father was calling her she suddenly became aware that sex was occurring.

> And then I... like I was like, oh my gosh, stop. And he was like, 'oh no, no, don't worry about it. Nothing's happening; it's fine'. And I was so drunk out of my mind, my phone was ringing and I looked at my phone and it was my dad and it clicked.

Following this, Grace got out of the truck as fast as she could and they rejoined the party. She said that at that point it was very weird because there had never been any previous intimacy or affection between them and she had never considered being attracted to him, but he spent the remainder of the evening being close to her and acting like her boyfriend. In the coming days he made it seem like he wanted to be her boyfriend, so they kind of started dating, even though she had not previously considered dating him. They had sex again, because she felt that it did not really matter given that they had already done it once. She also believed that he would decide not to date her if she did not. However, within a couple of days he made it clear that he never really wanted to date her anyway. What was significant in this part of Grace's narrative was that although she never really desired him as a potential partner, dating him provided some legitimacy for what happened. Having sex with him was more appropriate in the

context of a relationship, which is why she went on to explain that she really put effort into maintaining that pretense.

> And kind of felt like, if we don't date, then I'm just kind of a whore, kind of thing, you know what I mean? And um, so I put a lot of work into trying to, like, like making a relationship out of, working out... because that happened. Like if it had never happened I never even would have thought of liking him, in general. Like I felt really obligated, like I did that now, like... umm... yeah. And then we broke up and he was just kind of using me, and so... yeah...

Grace reported that since the time of the assault she had struggled with feelings of disappointment with herself and described herself as now being "used-up". She repeatedly contextualized her experience in relation to her own naiveté and inexperience with drinking. Grace confessed to me that she had not previously told anyone about what had happened because she was so embarrassed that she was stupid enough to not only let it happen, but to try to maintain a relationship with him after the fact. She explained that she was numb about what happened until they stopped seeing each other and then she felt like "a huge slut, a huge whore". In the days prior to the interview she attempted to tell her current boyfriend about what had happened, but he responded by telling her that she was gross so she did not give him further details.

During the interview Grace attempted to positively reframe the experience and discussed the positive effects that it had on her, such as making her more cautious and on guard when she is drinking. She described herself as "the anti-whore" and said that she won't even dance inappropriately within someone. She described her degree of

guardedness as being ridiculous, but felt that it was a positive outcome because she now shoots down anyone who tries to get near her, and as such she feels that she is protected from having it ever happen again. Grace noted several times that sex now means a lot less to her, since it happened, but said "I kind of forgave myself for it, in a way... but... yeah..."

On the SES Grace reported that she had been neither sexually assaulted nor raped. After Grace shared her story with me I asked her how she would label her experience and she explained that she thought it was kind of rape, but not really, because it was not as traumatic as she thinks rape should be. Grace briefly tried on the word rape, but then reconsidered and labeled the experience as stupidity, namely her own.

> I know it was kind of rape. I know in a general sense that is kind of what it is, but I have a really hard time coming to reality with that, like I have a hard time... cause I know people, most people who have been raped, it's been a lot more traumatic. So I can't really call it that because it didn't, like affect me that badly in the long run, I don't think.

Jade

Jade was a 35 year old woman of European-Canadian descent in her first year of university. She reported that she was heterosexual and not currently in a relationship, but that she was divorced and regularly interacted with her ex-husband, with whom she shared two children. When I asked Jade to tell me about her experience of unwanted sex she told me that it had occurred approximately five years ago when she and her husband were separated and living apart. The evening of the assault Jade had been out drinking and when she came home she felt lonely and sad and missed her husband, so texted him

and asked if he wanted to come over to cuddle. At some point during the night Jade passed out and her husband proceeded to have sex with her.

> And umm, after this one night, I came home and I texted him and I said, I just.. you know.. do you want to cuddle? And I... I know I'd had a lot to drink that night cause I don't remember getting home, I'm not even certain how I got home, so... But I remember, you know, him showing up and then... I woke up and he was gone and... I was.. I remember telling him, umm, that I didn't want to have sex I just wanted to cuddle, you know, and, he would... you know, touching here and there and what not, and... you know, I would tell him, you know, stop, just, I just want to cuddle, I don't want it to be about that tonight, I just want to cuddle. And umm, when I woke up after he'd, apparently he had gone, I didn't know he was leaving (kind of laughs), umm... my... vaginal area was, like, soaked with semen... And... I was heartbroken, because I just thought... he knew I didn't want to, he knew that that's not... (inhales) you know, and... I, uh uh... I do recall, like, him continuously trying to touch me and what not, and I kept saying stop, I don't, I just wanna, I just wanna be with you, I just wanna, like I just wanted to have that reconnection with him...

When Jade awoke the next morning and realized what had happened she felt betrayed, hurt and angry and she called her mother to tell her what had happened. Later that day her mother confronted Jade’s husband and he acknowledged that he should not have had sex with Jade because she was “too out of it”. Later, when Jade confronted him herself he admitted that he actually had sex with her twice that night, although he later

changed his story and said that it was only once. Based upon the amount of semen in the morning, Jade maintained the belief that it had probably happened twice.

Jade explained to me that this situation happened within the context of a long history of coercion and violation, and that since their separation her husband had routinely badgered her to have sex with him. On one occasion she actually conceded and as it was happening she realized that he was recording her without her permission. She was furious and when she tried to leave the situation he held her down.

> Yes, and so I picked this up, I'm like, what the fuck is this!? And he's like, he's like, 'let me explain, let me explain!' I just tossed it across the room and I, like I don't know if it broke, I have no idea, I don't even care, umm, but it like, it had just like, from here to the wall a way. I threw it across the room and... you know, he then held me down by my wrists and said, 'just let me explain, just let me explain.' Cause I tried to get up, I said get the fuck off me. Get off me right now and just leave me alone. Let me get up, I need to get up. I need to get away from you. And he said 'let me explain'. 30 minutes. 30 minutes and the only reason that he let me up was because my daughter was crying for me.

Jade also reported that on many occasions during their separation she would wake up to find that her husband had let himself into her home and would be watching her in her sleep while masturbating.

> So there was many nights that I would wake up in the middle of the night and he would be beside me with my, like standing beside me, and like

have my pants pulled down and he'd be looking at my bottom and masturbating.

During custody negotiations Jade ended up reporting these events to the police, along with the situation that occurred when she was unconscious. She took her husband to court with charges of harassment, forcible confinement and sexual assault. She told me that she found it very difficult when she had to state in court that he had sexually assaulted her. "And it was very difficult for me to say he sexually assaulted me. I didn't, I don't know it it's that I didn't want, I didn't want the label. Or if I didn't want him to have the label." Jade said that this was the only time that she ever labeled what her husband did as sexual assault, and she only did it then for the sake of the court hearing. In the end though Jade decided to drop all of the charges against her husband.

On the SES, at the time of the interview, Jade reported that she had been sexually assaulted but that she had never been raped. She expressed discomfort with using the term sexual assault, and said that rather than label it or her husband, she preferred to think of the situation as just something that happened. "I, I think it's more so me, like it was like uh, ok, you know what, he just, he, it was just something that he did."

Sarah

Sarah was an 18 year old woman of European-Canadian descent who was in the first year of her undergraduate degree at the time of the interview. Sarah reported that she was heterosexual and was in a relationship. When I asked her about her experience of unwanted sex she said that it had happened approximately one year prior when she was 17, and involved her boyfriend at the time, who she was still dating. Sarah said that the situation happened one night when she and her boyfriend were drinking with a group

of their friends. At some point in the evening she and her boyfriend, who were both drunk, were alone in a bedroom with the intention of going to sleep when he initiated sex with her.

> Umm, it was actually, it was with my boyfriend and we've talked about it since then. Umm, it was just a night with our friends, like a small group of friends, like around 10 people, and we were both like drinking, and I was probably like 17, I think, last year sometime. We were both drinking a lot and then, I dunno why our friends thought it was a good idea, but they left us alone, like in someone's room…. then we said, oh we'll just go to sleep, so umm, what happened is I had... drinked so much that I didn't, I don't remember even going there. And like he, like he, like he says, anyways, like he, like he kind of remembers but he was still like in a state where he didn't really know. And like, it wasn't like, what happened was uhh we had started to have sex and like he kind of (kind of laughs) clued in more that I wasn't responding to him or anything so he freaked out and called my parents (laughs). I wasn't unconscious but I was not, not communicating properly, right? So that's why he called them.

Sarah told me that she does not remember any of this happening, nor even her parents arriving or to take her home. The morning after, her boyfriend came to her house to talk to her about what had happened because he felt uncomfortable.

> And like I think it was more, like since he had been drinking too, like the next day that's why he told me right away, cause like he did, he felt bad, he felt like it was wrong. That's what, that's why he said something, cause

> he, like even though I don't think he would identify it as rape, he still saw it as something, like it wasn't acceptable.

Upon relaying to her what had happened, she reported that they talked at length about why that situation was inappropriate and why it could never happen again, and she felt that he understood why she was so upset. Although neither of them labeled it sexual assault they both felt that he had acted inappropriately and that it was not acceptable. Sarah said that she had recently taken the Sexual Assault Resistance Education program[4] offered to first year women and that she had been introduced to the term “sexual coercion”, and now felt that it applied to this situation. She did not, however, feel that this situation was sexual assault because of how her boyfriend responded to it, and the fact that he realized what was happening and chose to do something about it.

> I wouldn't, I wouldn't say that it was [sexual assault] no. I see it as sexual coercion, not sexual assault. They are two different things. I think sexual assault is more like a forceful assault, so that's how I would describe it, like more like... physical, like physical, like holding someone or like something like that. That would be more... what sexual assault is to me anyways.

Although she indicated on the SES that she had been sexually assaulted, she said that she used this term in relation to a situation that had happened when she was 14, where she was forcibly kissed. Since she had taken the resistance education she had come to see that situation as assault because of the aggressive nature of the boy who kissed her. Even though that situation did not involve intercourse, to her it was a more assaultive experience on account of the intentions behind it. She felt that in contrast to

this, her boyfriend made an alcohol-influenced decision to have sex with her but then realized that she was beyond the point of being able to consent and thus stopped. Despite the fact that this situation involved actual intercourse she felt less physically violated and that there had been less risk for actual harm.

Janna

Janna was a 21 year old woman of European-Canadian descent in the fourth year of her undergraduate degree at the time of the interview. She indicated that she was heterosexual and was currently in a relationship. When I asked her to tell me about the experience of unwanted sex that she reported on the SES she told me that it had happened two years ago when she was in her second year of undergrad. Janna said that she had been out at a bar drinking with her friends and roommates, and near the end of the night one of the guys who was there insisted that he walk her home. She reported that she does not remember anything that happened after that point, and she was shocked when she woke up the next morning to find him in bed with her. She insisted that he leave immediately and then queried her roommates for more specific details.

> Umm... we talked about it... the next morning after he had been there, and... I was just like, how did this, how did he end up here? Umm, like what happened? Did we walk home all together? Did we walk home separately? And I guess... um, the two of us walked home and then my friends, my two roommates walked in not too long later and saw that he was there and I guess we talked for a bit. So they told me that. And that... um, we had been, or him and I had been talking at the bar for like a few minutes, like previous to leaving... and then that after they saw us together

> I was just gone, so... they followed me back to the house and then we talked for a bit, I guess, and then we just disappeared upstairs.

Janna felt really uncomfortable with the situation because she did not know what actually happened during the night. It was not until about a month later that she learned from other friends that she and this guy had oral sex.

> Umm... it was probably close to a month afterwards... we were out drinking again and one of his roommates was like, "oh are you going to take home Mike again, I heard that you guys had a fun time last time", and I was like no it wasn't anything like that, he walked me home and then, I don't know why he decided to spend the night, but I really wasn't okay with that. And he was like, "oh no, I can tell you what actually happened" and then he told me, and then I asked the guy and he was like, "well yeah, you know, we did". And I was like, this isn't okay with me, so now we just don't really talk ever.

Janna felt extremely embarrassed and uncomfortable with what happened, and was worried about what others would think of her. She and her friends took to calling it "the night that never happened", and until the interview she never discussed what had happened or what she had learned with anyone. On the SES Janna indicated that she had been sexually assaulted but that she had never been raped. When I asked her why she used this label she said that she felt it was appropriate because she was clearly so drunk that she was unable to give consent.

> Umm... I guess I would for that instance call it assault... because I really don't know what happened... and it's even similar events of that nature

> I've, can recall enough that I know that it wasn't somehow brought on by my actions, you know what I mean? Umm... but in that instance, I mean, as far as I know I didn't have any... bidding in the matter, I just, it kind of just happened. Umm, and yeah, it was also like I said, before the fact that I, I don't know what happened, like I could have actually been held down, I could have been made to take my clothes off, I, I have no idea and just feeling that... blank... you, I just, I can't fill anything in. And I just know that the whole time I was blank I was with this guy, so... it's scary what... what could have happened... if he toned it down... if maybe we did more... um, if he forced me to. So... umm, I don't know. I would, I would probably call it assault. The fact is that I, I would never really talk about it with anybody. I mean not that instance anyway, so... it's kind of hard to say that I would... But, you know, for me the reasons of the interview, then yeah, I'd say it would be [assault].

Sherry

Sherry was a 20 year old woman of Middle Eastern descent in the second year of her undergraduate degree. She reported that she was heterosexual and was currently in a relationship. When I asked her about the experience of unwanted sex that she reported on the SES she told me that it had happened a couple of years ago, when she was 17 or 18. She went camping with her older sister and a group of their mutual friends, and during the night she was drinking and talking with one of her sister's friends. Although she was not experienced with drinking she felt that the situation was ok because she was with her sister and people they knew. At one point in the night she felt that she needed to pass out

and so she decided to go to her tent. The guy that she had been talking to throughout the night decided to come with her, and at first they just talked, and then decided to rejoin the party and continue to drink, but eventually returned to the tent to go to bed. She was very drunk at this point and when he initiated sex with her she found it very difficult to resist.

> And umm, I don't know, as the night went by, um I decided to like crash into like, one of the tents or whatever. And then this guy decided to like, you know, come along, and like chill. We spoke for a bit and that was about it and then he left. And then, ummm... I woke up again cause everyone was still singing and it was really early in the morning. I drank a little more and then when went back to bed, but that wasn't it, cause the same guy decided to come in and we were chatting and one thing led to another and it was just, you know, touching and feeling and it was really odd because I didn't know what to do and I was like, I know this person and I'm not really sure which way to go. I knew I didn't want to do anything, but I was still like in, like drunk kind of, and didn't really, you know, do anything like, like obvious, to like you know, put it out to like no I don't want this, or whatever, and so yeah that's how we ended up having sex, and that was like the worst cause like I woke up in the morning and I was like, no, cause like I wasn't really sure what happened.

Sherry was embarrassed by the fact that she had sex with this guy and that she could not really remember what happened. She felt uncomfortable with the situation and approached him to talk about it, but he was aloof with her and dismissed it as being

anything of significance, which caused her to question her feelings about what had happened.

> Like I thought it was really, really embarrassing and just really, you know, it was, it was sad that I allowed something like that to happen. So, it was that and it was just the fact that, you know, that they guy didn't really acknowledge it, so I was like, well... you know, it's my fault, I was... so yeah, it was just a lot, a lot of burden on that, on that front. And so, I didn't know how to tell people that you know that I got really drunk and I had sex with someone even though I didn't want to, and I blanked out half way and I didn't know what I was doing, and then I woke up in the morning and it, like you know, I saw him and then, oh you know we had sex and whatever, and I was just like, what are you talking about and then after it took him to kind of make me remember what happened the night before.

When Sherry reflected upon the situation she said that when the sex was first initiated she tried to verbally resist and dissuade her perpetrator, but she was so intoxicated that it was a struggle and she eventually gave up. “In the beginning there was resistance but soon after, it was just yeah ok... yeah...” Despite the fact that she was extremely intoxicated and did resist what was happening, Sherry still implicated herself as being partly responsible for what happened. As the interview progressed, however, she noted that she increasingly felt that he had purposefully taken advantage of the situation.

> I mean, now I've begun to, I still think that I had a big part to play in it, so from that perspective, yeah, I sti... yeah, that's pretty much the same. But at the same time I also think that him being 21 and knowing what he was getting into, like, I've begun to think maybe it's not so much me as it was him... ...you know, it's kind of odd, so now I think about it in terms of, yeah he was going for something and you know he got what he wanted in the end, but... that was wrong on his part.

On the SES Sherry indicated that she had never been sexually assaulted or raped, and she did not use either or these terms throughout the interview. However, when I asked her how she would label this situation she said that she felt it was an example of sexual coercion.

Emma

Emma was a 20 year old woman of European-Canadian descent who was in the second year of her undergraduate degree. She identified as heterosexual but indicated that she was not currently in a relationship. When I asked her about the experience of unwanted sex that she had reported on the SES she told me that it had happened approximately four years ago when she was 17 and in high school. Emma described being at a house party with a large number of her friends, who were all drinking. At one point in the night one of the guys at the party who was older than she was, took her into the house where the party was. She noted that she had not been talking to him throughout the night and although she knew him because they shared mutual friends, she did not have a personal relationship with him.

> Umm, I guess just a friend. Like, I didn't like know him that well. We weren't like, we don't really talk or anything on a regular basis or... like, I don't know, just like, friends of friends kind of thing.... umm, no... like I think it was just like, I don't know, he's just one of those guys that just like, you know, just tries to pick up girls, like at parties and whatever, kind of thing.

Emma remembers being very intoxicated by the time she was taken into the house and her memory of what happened from this point on is vague. The last thing that she clearly remembered was being taken into a bedroom and seeing him lock the doors, which she found strange. Emma did not know the specifics of what happened from that point on although her friends told her that when she and he finally emerged from the room she was wearing men’s pants. Emma was completely oblivious to this and has only a vague recollection of it happening, but this is a story that her friends have found particularly funny and have relayed over and over, across the years. Most of what Emma does remember about that experience has been influenced by her friends’ telling of the story.

> It was at, like I was at a house party and I was like with my friends and... I don't know if it was just like a point where he just... I don't know, brought me into the house and locked all the doors to make sure no one would come in or anything like that, and... and then like, and then like after the situation happened I guess, he was all like, it was a joke kind of thing, with my friends and just like... I like came out wearing like guy’s pants, and they were like Emma, those aren't your pants. And I was just like,

> what, these are my pants. And they were like those aren't your pants! So it was like, kind of like a joke after, so that we'd kind of joke about, but at the time, it was just like, I don't know, it was kind of like, how he just locked all the doors and made sure no one came in and stuff, it was kind of weird.

In the days that followed Emma was really worried about what had happened because she did not know if he had used a condom, and she was worried that she might be pregnant or have an STI. She went to the doctor to make sure that everything was fine, but as she recollected the experience she said that it was kind of scary to not know what had happened. It was only through asking other people that she was able to piece together that sex had even occurred, and among her friends the entire situation was dismissed as anything other than comedic. She never talked about the situation with the guy who was involved because she felt that it was awkward and she just wanted to avoid it.

> Umm, like I... I just remember... like I was, like I was really, like intoxicated, and... ... like I don't, like... I just feel like I guess it's only, like, I wouldn't have, like... I wouldn't have done that if I was sober. Kind of like, any of those situations, so I feel like, I was probably just like, you know, like, persuaded into it and like... I don't know, I was probably... it's hard to say now. Like sometimes, like I don't know what happened, I had to like ask about, and that's why I got really worried and stuff, just case, like, I didn't know if he used a condom or anything like that, so I had to go and make sure everything was ok, go to the doctors and that kind of stuff

> and like... and sometimes you just hear from your friends and like people talking about it, like... like, this and this happened, and it's just like what? I had no idea, like... I don't even know what happened... it's kind of scary to think about that.

Emma stated that she felt he was one of those guys who was very cognizant of what he was doing. She found it strange given that they had not talked all evening that he just chose to take her to a room to have sex with her. Although she recalled him being drunk, she felt that he was sober enough to be aware of his actions. She suggested that perhaps he had been watching her drink all night and was just waiting for her to be drunk enough to have sex with him. When I asked Emma how she would label the experience she said that she was not really sure. She referred to it as a “mistake” or sluttiness or sloppiness on her part. On the SES, Emma indicated that she had never been sexually assaulted or raped, and she did not use either of those terms during the course of the interview.

Kristina

Kristina was an 18 year old woman of mixed ethnicity who was in her first year of her undergraduate degree at the time of the interview. She reported that she was heterosexual and currently single. When I asked Kristina to tell me about the experience of unwanted sex that she reported on the SES she told me that it had happened the year before with the ex-boyfriend of one of her friends. She was at a birthday party with her friends and became very intoxicated. She could not recall how it happened, but the man took her from the party to his home and had sex with her.

> Umm, it was actually, like, just last year when it was, umm, one of my friend's birthdays and we decided to drink a little bit, and we ended up, because we were pretty lightweight, we got a little, we got really drunk right away. And so, what happened was a couple friends of mine, they got drunk and they didn't know what was happening, so they're usually with me and they usually take care of me, but then, um, one of my friends, uhh, ex-boyfriends came up and he ended up taking advantage of me. Like, took me to his house and he like just had sex with me and... I did not know what was happening... until the next day, and I just was... really weird. It was really weird reaction for me. First of all because it was with my friend's ex-boyfriend and secondly I just did not know what was happening.

Kristina has no memory of what happened from the time she left the party until she woke up in the middle of the night. She awoke in the middle of the night, around 3 am and realized that someone was sleeping next to her. She was shocked to find herself in bed with him, because as she said, “I don't remember going home with him or being at his place, like I was completely wiped out.” In fact, Kristina noted that she did not even remember speaking with him and so she did not understand how they were even together. “I don’t remember talking to him at all that whole night. It just... randomly happened after I got drunk.” I asked Kristina how she knew that she had sex with him and she said that it was because he told her when she woke up and was confused about what happened.

"Umm, well pretty much he told me, he said "I screwed you over, I banged you" and everything... it was just... it was really awkward for me, like to realize that, it was my friend's ex."

Other people saw Kristina leave the party with this man and she told me that she faced significant social consequences for having sex with him, because he was the ex-boyfriend of one of her close friends.

Yeah, like, the way that he ruined my life, it's like I wanted to stay there with my friends, I wanted, we were planning on getting an apartment together and living together and everything. Like everybody, like we were all really happy and really excited. We got, we found an apartment for a cheap price and everything. We were all ready to move in and the everything happened, and it was kind of like, a huge shock to everyone, and everybody just kind of like, backed away from me after that. So it was kind of like, it ruined my life, and it ruined my friendship with a lot of people, like, just because of that one incident.

Kristina attempted to explain the fact that she had neither initiated nor willfully participated in the sexual experience, and used the term sexual harassment to label what had happened. Many of her friends rejected this however and blamed her for what happened.

Umm, well, it was kind of, I just told them that it was, like, it was unknown, it was kind of like sexual harassment pretty much, but then... They just said, no, you're just a whore or something.

Despite the apparent malicious intent of his actions, and the consequences that followed, Kristina refrained from describing the situation as sexual assault or rape. When she went home the next morning she disclosed to her parents what had happened and when her father labeled what happened as rape, she felt very violated and upset.

> They, my dad just said, it was... like, it was pretty mu--, my dad said it was rape, but, I just said no it can't be rape, so. He tried to go along with what i was saying, he just tried to be there for me... ...It just made me feel like, I just got... like, really violated and like... just... I just felt really disgusting and I just had to take a shower like right then and there... 'n it's really awkward.

On the SES Kristina indicated that she had never been sexually assaulted or raped, and during the interview she compared her situation to that of a cousin who was raped by a stranger in an alleyway. She said that in comparison she did not feel that what happened to her was rape, and the idea of labelling her experience as such was very distressing. When I asked Kristina how she would label it she said that she considered the experience to be an example of sexual harassment.

> I tried... like I just tried to think it's just sexual harassment, it's like, kind of like, a little bit like rape, kind of thing, but it's not... like, I don't, I cannot say it's rape because... I should have known better, but... it's hard to like say what it is for me.

Blair

Blair was a 47 year old woman of European-Canadian descent who was in the fourth year of her undergraduate degree at the time of the interview. She reported that

she was heterosexual and married with two teenage children. When I asked Blair to recount the unwanted sexual experience that she reported on the SES she told me that it had happened 33 years ago when she was 14 and in grade nine. The incident occurred with her boyfriend at the time, but she had no recollection of it happening.

> Cause at 14 I was only in grade 9. At that point I'd only drank beer or something like that. Umm... but... I.. don't even remember whether I woke up and realized what he was doing, or if he told me afterwards. But I just remember being really upset when he drove me home, and going 'what is wrong with you? I could get pregnant. What the hell is wrong with you!?' And he... didn't think it was any big deal. But I still stayed with him for a while.

Blair told me that while she had been drinking beer the night that it happened she did not recall being drunk. She suspected that he may have drugged her, knowing that she would not otherwise have conceded to having sex with him, but did not recall tasting anything unusual, "I don't know that I was totally aware of... something being in it? I mean I wasn't stupid back then, if there was a taste to it I would have tasted something." She said that she did not remember passing out, she just remembered waking up after the fact and realizing that something was wrong. She confronted her boyfriend and was furious when he admitted to having had sex with her.

> I don't remember passing out, but I know afterwards... after coming to and sort of realizing that things didn't seem right. It was like, ok, just take me home. He drove. He was in grade 12 at that time. He was a little loony, and he has been for some time, but anyway. Um... um... ...so I mean I

> remember him driving me home, but like I said, I don't know whether... I passed out and he carried me somewhere, or if... there was any sort of make-out... or something first... I just remember it happening. ...so as I say, I... I think he's the one that told me. I believe. And I just remember being furious, like how dare you think that was ok? I mean don't you think if I wanted to... I could have been cautious for it? You know? It just seemed... um... like a violation of… your trust.

Blair said that despite her anger she continued to date him and have sex with him for about another year. In the aftermath of what happened Blair described her life as being a downward spiral for the following two to three years. She began drinking heavily, using drugs, and recklessly having sex, which resulted in her becoming pregnant and having an abortion when she was 15.

> Just heavy drinking, drug use, promiscuity... running away from home. All sorts of stuff. And that would have been 14 to about... 16. Something like that. Grade 9 and 10. About two years, I guess, yeah... ... (speaking while crying) when I started drinking so much... ... ... I ended up pregnant at 15... with somebody else. Umm... ... that's another reason why I moved schools, so... and my parents don't even know that that happened.

Although her parents realized that something was wrong and had her in counselling for self-esteem building, they had “absolutely no idea” about what had happened to her. She never told them or anyone else about being assaulted, and the only person she ever told about her pregnancy was her husband. Blair informed me that this was the first time in 33 years that she had ever talked to anyone about what happened.

On the SES she reported that she had never been sexually assaulted or raped. When I asked her if she had ever tried to label it and she said no. “Just sort of ignore it, and kind of, don't want to think about that part of it.” We discussed the volunteer work that she had done over the years with Victim’s Services and when I asked her how she would label the experience if it had happened to someone else she said that she would call it rape. “Yeah... and maybe... (struggles for words) I'd have to classify it as rape because... if I wasn't conscious, you're not consenting.” Although she could intellectually engage with the label when forced to, Blair preferred to cognitively distance herself from labelling what happened by not thinking about it and talking about it, and instinctively constructed it as just a “giant mistake” rather than rape or sexual assault.

CHAPTER VI

THE *NOT KNOWING* VOICE

I begin my discussion of the results with an examination of what I have come to know as the *not knowing* voice, because in the earliest stages of analysis it was this voice that sounded most loudly. The initial identification of this voice was significantly informed by patterns of speech that I observed during the reading of the "I poems" at the second stage of analysis (see Appendix M for excerpts). The most obvious thread of thought that emerged was the phrase "I don't know". In fact, for many of the participants there was a rhythm to their poems that was orchestrated to the cadence of "I don't know". This is illustrated below in an excerpt taken from SchoolGirl's I poem.

> *I don't know...*
> I told my friend what happened and then
> *I don't know,* at first she started laughing
> I was
> I was like, this isn't funny
> *I don't know*
> I guess for her it's funny
> I was a little shocked
> I was like
> I can't believe you're laughing at me right now
> *I don't know*, afterwards we started talking and stuff
> I don't think she really [took] it as seriously as
> I thought it was
> I still consider it kind of a serious issue
> I mean, there could have been a lot of different outcomes
> I just left it alone
> *I don't know*

This voice is relevant to acknowledgment, because labelling an experience as rape is necessarily predicated upon knowing what rape is, and recognizing that it applies to you. Subsequently, not acknowledging an experience as rape occurs because women

may know their experience as something else, something that is not rape. It is useful to consider the relationship between knowing and not knowing as a dialectic. One's ability to really "know" and acknowledge an experience as rape requires that the alternative ways of knowing it (e.g., as something that was not that serious; as a normative event) be diminished. In struggling to understand how women do know rape, I've realized that it is essential that we also understand the ways in which they do not know it. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to name this the voice of not knowing.

I heard this voice expressed in a number of ways, through more specific voices that I have named *self-blame*, *dismissal*, *normativity*, and *avoidance*. I initially categorized these voices as discrete from one another, but realized that they ultimately served the same end, which was to distance women from knowing. The only interview in which I did not hear the lingering of the not knowing voice was with Isabelle, who labelled her experience as rape within the first five minutes of the interview. Each of the other women, SchoolGirl, Grace, Jade, Sarah, Janna, Sherry, Emma, Kristina, and Blair, voiced not knowing to varying degrees. The nature of the women's assault narratives, the responses that they received from others, and the meaning making that they engaged in after the fact, influenced the specific sound of their not knowing voice, as well as the prevalence with which it appeared in the narrative.

Self-Blame

My analysis of the not knowing voice began by examining the voice of self-blame, as it surfaced early in the analysis and was most consistent across narratives. Initially, I coded self-blame as an independent voice, because of the frequency with which it emerged, but as I thought about the process of not knowing I realized that self-

blame is a variant of it. In order to label an experience as rape you have to know that someone else is responsible for committing a crime against you. Self-blame impairs the ability to know the full culpability of the perpetrator because it artificially partitions responsibility. When women assume responsibility for what happened it dilutes the responsibility that is assigned to the perpetrator and creates a schism between their view of their experience and their understanding of what rape is.

SchoolGirl, Grace, Janna, Sherry, Emma, Kristina, and Blair each voiced self-blame by attributing responsibility to themselves in some way. Each of these women shared narratives of sexual violence that occurred when they were too intoxicated to consent. In fact, most reported that they have no memory of having sex, or were barely conscious when it happened. Janna, Kristina, Emma, and Blair told me that they had no recollection of having sex at all, and only knew that it had happened because they woke up disoriented, knowing something was not right, and had either the man involved or their friends confirm what had happened. SchoolGirl was also unconscious when the sex began, but she woke up in the middle of it, and upon realizing what was occurring, pushed the man off of her and fled the room. Sherry was conscious, but struggled to remember the details of what happened because she was so drunk and on the verge of passing out at the time. Grace recalled struggling to feel her body and not understanding that sex was happening, even though she was conscious. The effects of inebriation were considerable for these women, and in the cases of Grace and Blair particularly, but SchoolGirl as well, I strongly suspected from their descriptions that drugs may have been involved. I queried them about this possibility and they each agreed that the effect of what they experienced was beyond any other situation where they had consumed alcohol.

Janna, Emma, and Kristina did not necessarily believe they had been drugged, but they were also distressed by the amount that they couldn't remember.

Each of these women's narratives revealed sexual experiences that seem to be situated far outside the boundaries of consent. When I looked at their situations as an outsider, it seems blatant that they were incapable of negotiating consent. It also seems abundantly clear that there was little room for misinterpretation and that these men engaged in the predictable predatory behaviour of undetected rapists, namely exploiting the diminished physical resistance of women rather than employing physical force (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Despite the fact that at best these women had nebulous recollections of what happened, they each assumed at least some level of responsibility for it. SchoolGirl told me that what happened was a consequence of her decision to become intoxicated.

> Well, alcohol's not an excuse for anything, that's why I'm putting it on myself, that the situation occurred... if I wasn't drinking and if I didn't go out with people that... I don't know, then I'm sure this wouldn't have happened.

Sherry also felt that it was her own failure to be vigilant that resulted in having sex, but she also questioned her character under the influence of alcohol, and whether the assault happened because alcohol revealed an overly promiscuous personality.

> So yeah, so it was that, and as well as just basically not being on guard, cause you think with people you know you're much safer, but you know, sometimes you're really not and then, just me, cause then I started thinking what if... cause you know how alcohol sometimes brings out your underlying personality, and I'm like well, is it me, is it just, you know the

> way I am when I'm drunk? Am I overly sexual when I'm drunk, sometimes?

In addition to blaming themselves for being too intoxicated to resist, the women blamed themselves for "letting it happen", and for being irresponsible and not taking the necessary precautions to avoid making themselves vulnerable. Sherry revealed that she was embarrassed about how little she could remember, which made it difficult for her to talk about with her friends, and in the absence of an appropriate label Sherry struggled to make sense of what happened to her. Given her limited ability to remember what happened, and the embarrassment that she felt for her perceived complicity, she refrained from telling many people.

> Like I thought it was really, really embarrassing and just really, you know, it was, it was sad that I allowed something like that to happen. So, it was that and it was just the fact that, you know, that they guy didn't really acknowledge it, so I was like, well... you know, it's my fault, I was... so yeah, it was just a lot, a lot of burden on that, on that front. And so, I didn't know how to tell people that you know that I got really drunk and I had sex with someone even though I didn't want to, and I blanked out half way and I didn't know what I was doing, and then I woke up in the morning and it, like you know, I saw him and then, oh you know we had sex and whatever, and I was just like, what are you talking about and then after it took him to kind of make me remember what happened the night before.

Grace also expressed significant embarrassment about her experience, and implicated herself as being naive and stupid for having allowed it to happen. "Umm, embarrassed mostly... like, really embarrassed. The fact that (voice breaks) I did it... and that I'm stupid enough for it to happen..." Similarly, Blair spoke of how naive she was at the age of 14, and the poor judgment that she exercised in agreeing to go to her boyfriend's house when his parents were not home. She also implicated her lack of discernment at recognizing that he was not a good boyfriend, and that she was not safe with him.

> I feel like I shouldn't have put myself in that situation. I mean my mum always said, you don't get back to people's houses when their parents aren't home…. I think it was a mistake to go there, first of all. Umm…. obviously he has issues, so I should have picked that up a little sooner! So that was a bit... stupid on my part.

For each of these women, self-blame was expressed on the basis that they should have been wiser and been able to predict what was going to happen. It is helpful to theorize self-blame in the context of rape culture, and more specifically, the discourses of normative heterosexual relations that have been theorized by Hollway (1984). Misogyny provides the backdrop for rape culture, and within rape culture our perceptions of sexual violence are evaluated in relation to falsely held beliefs that are built upon the undercurrents of misogyny. These beliefs, which we refer to as rape myths, set the parameters for what qualifies as legitimate rape and they serve to obfuscate the responsibility of perpetrators by squaring our attention on the actions of the victims and what they did to bring it upon themselves. Within the context of the male sexual drive

discourse and the have-hold discourse that informs our understanding of normative heterosexual relationships, women are charged with the responsibility of maintaining the sexual desires of men. In these discourses women are assumed to be largely divorced from their own sexual desire, and have sex as a way of securing relationships. The implied message is that good women only have sex in the context of relationships, and since men are driven by their impulse to have sex, it is women's responsibility to regulate when sex occurs. When they fail to do this the third discourse of normative heterosex is invoked, that is, the permissive discourse, which in the presence of a rape supportive culture, removes the ability for women to say no to sex, as it is presumed that they want all acts of sex. I saw evidence of this in Sherry's narrative, when she confessed that she did not resist the way she should have.

> I described it as being, like my fault, cause like it was something that I let happen and you know it's not really his fault either cause I just kind of probably gave in to him, like yeah... up until this I don't really know what happened. Like when I did speak to him he made it seem like yeah I did give in to him.

Emma also drew upon Hollway's (1989) permissive discourse when she speculated about her own culpability. "I probably went along with it, like yeah, ok..." Emma was unconscious at the time of her assault, or at least drunk enough that she blacked out and has no memory of what happened, so she was obliged to generate hypotheses about her own involvement. When I asked Emma how she would label her experience she struggled to find a term that she felt was suitable. In the end, the labels that she chose reflected her perceptions of her own behaviour rather than the situation

itself. “Umm... ... ... I don't know... how I would label it... ... ... umm... ... ... I don't know, like... it was probably like uhh... mistake? Like uhh... I don’t know. Just sloppy? Slutty? I don't know, like...” In this text, Emma’s voice of not knowing is centered at what DeVault (1999) would refer to as a site of translation. Like Sherry, Emma found herself without the appropriate words to describe what had happened to her. Emma was impaired by the fact that she did not fully know what happened, and had to rely upon cultural discourses to guide her understanding. The permissive discourse provided an interpretive framework for her experience, but did not provide a perfect fit. Her struggle to translate can be seen in her hesitation and uncertainty.

Through the lens of self-blame we can see how women are evaluating themselves against these cultural standards, and feel that they have failed to meet them. By drinking alcohol, and by not being vigilant in monitoring the behaviour of the men around them, they have failed to do due diligence, as outlined by the have-hold discourse for heterosexual engagement. Women internalize responsibility for the actions of men, and perceive men’s infractions against them as a failure of control on their part. Self-blame is evidence of the caustic effects of these discourses and the myths that manifest from them and suggest that women are asking for it when they violate the rules of appropriate feminine behaviour. From my feminist position as an outsider looking in on these experiences, it is unreasonable, foremost, that women should be charged with regulating the behaviour of another autonomous being, but beyond that, it is ludicrous that they should be expected to exercise this even in conditions of unconsciousness. However, these are the discourses of heterosex that maintain our instituted social imaginary (Code, 2009), and that provide context for how women make sense of their experiences. It is

predictable that when we have to process an unfamiliar or undesired experience, we instinctively turn to social norms to evaluate the experience. When the norms of heterosexual engagement put the burden of responsibility on women, it is predictable that they will blame themselves for unwanted experiences.

It is evident that through rape supportive discourses women are able to arrive at self-blame without the direct influence of others; however, having others blame them only serves to exacerbate their own feelings of self-blame. Ullman (2010) has reviewed the literature on social reactions to disclosures of sexual assault, and has documented the significance of reactions that blame the victim. Blaming reactions exacerbate the victim's internalization of blame, and thus fertilize the not knowing voice and diminish the likelihood that women will label. A number of the women told me that they had chosen to not disclose their experience to anyone, due to their expectation that they would be blamed for what happened. Given the prevalence of victim-blaming in our culture, particularly when it comes to sexual violence, it is hard to refute their rationale for keeping the experience to themselves. Some women, however, did take a chance and disclosed their assaults to close friends and boyfriends. Some, like Isabelle and Sarah, received support and assurance that what happened was not their fault, and it is noteworthy that I did not discern the voice of self-blame in either of their narratives. For the other women who chose to disclose, the reactions that they received were less positive. Kristina attempted to explain to her friends what had happened, and they refused to believe that she had not been complicit.

> Like, it was kind of like, I expected some people to say some stuff, but then... some people that I thought would, like, on my side kind of thing, it

> was kind of like they were all like, "ohhh, I don't think so, I'm pretty sure you were the one who gave into it", kind of thing. So it was kind of like, awkward for me.

Kristina also disclosed what happened to the boyfriend that she was dating at the time, and while he responded with more understanding than her friends, he suggested that if she had not had so much to drink the situation could have been avoided. In doing this, he endorsed the myth that women bring rape upon themselves, and implied that she was not entirely void of culpability. “I did tell him and then he was like ok, it's not your fault, but then [he] was kind of disappointed that I actually got drunk that night, and didn't know what I was doing.” Sherry told me that she had recently disclosed what had happened to her current boyfriend, and said that he had been very sweet and understanding. However, when she began to describe his response I struggled to accept that his purportedly supportive efforts actually relieved her of responsibility, and did not just further her feelings of self-blame.

> ...he pretty much made it clear, like he was like, you know you, it is true you shouldn't have gotten that drunk and you shouldn't have, you know, like, you know, gotten close to someone when you were drunk, but I guess being drunk, you know, at the end allow things to flow much smoothly than you would expect. And so he didn't really support me on the, on the fact that I like, that the guy was at fault, but he did, but he did say that both of you are responsible and him being 21, like he should have known, but I was like age doesn't really... cause you can be 21 and still think like a

> minor, you know, like yeah you wouldn't weigh the pros and cons and be like, I'm an adult now and I'm doing this, right? He didn't really blame anyone, really...

Sherry affirmed my suspicion that the messages she received from others affected her sense of self-blame, when she described the impact that a friend's comments had upon her self-perception.

> At first like one of my friends was really like, was supportive of me talking about it, but then when it came to understanding what I was going through, it was more like... yeah, it was your fault cause you do get too drunk, you know, it was, and... it was more like, yeah it was bound to happen, it was you know, it was, you know, a mistake just waiting to happen kind of thing... mmmm, so, that was really shocking, which is one of the reasons why I was very like, umm like, God this must be me, not the guy that's the problem.

The self-blame that is layered upon these women is a handicap that precludes their ability to know their experience as something they were not responsible for, and thus impedes their ability to label what happened to them as rape. Within these narratives, the voice of self-blame obfuscated the responsibility of the perpetrators, frequently rendering their actions almost invisible. To me this emerges as yet another presence of absence, which Carol Adams would alternatively identify as an absent referent, that is an actor who is unduly ignored (2010). In women's narratives, the absence of direct reference to the perpetrators is important. Even though he is responsible for the assault, self-blame diverts attention to the victim's perceived failings and thus leaves the actions of the

perpetrator unexamined. What we can learn from this representation of the not knowing voice is that self-blame is powerful, and women's feelings of self-blame silence them. When women feel culpable in any way they seem unable to internalize that what happened to them was assault. Sadly, it appears that anything short of the complete absolution of responsibility negates the fact that what happened was a crime – and given the embeddedness of misogynistic, victim-blaming cultural norms it is a struggle for women to arrive at a place where they feel complete absolution. Instead, they are haunted by self-blame, which sounds` along with the melody of not knowing, and significantly curtails the likelihood that they will know and label their experience as rape.

Normalizing

In reading the transcripts and listening to the voices of the women, it started to become apparent that the normativity of coercion and hook-up culture influenced women's perceptions of their experiences and subsequently their labelling (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales & Backstrom, 2009; Paul, McManus & Hayes, 2000). This fits with Kelly's (1987) conceptualization of a continuum of sexual violence, whereby rape is simply an endpoint on a continuum of coercion that is a normative and uncontested part of heterosexual discourse and experience. For Emma, her experience was not noteworthy because of her perception that people routinely got drunk and hooked up at parties.

> But like... I feel like a lot of stuff like that has happened to a lot of people, like my friends, so it's kind of like, kind of just like talk about it like, ohhh yeah I remember when that happened, like yeah, it happened with you too and this and that.

SchoolGirl encountered a similarly normalizing reaction when she called a close friend the day after she was assaulted. She called her friend because she was distressed and was struggling to piece together what had happened, and SchoolGirl felt that her friend would be able to relate because she had been in similar situations. “So yeah, I told my friend what happened and then, I don’t know, at first she started laughing and I was, I was like this isn’t funny, and she’s like, it’s happened to me so many times”.

Her friend’s response did not provide her with the comfort or perspective that she was looking for. The friend cavalierly dismissed the niggling of SchoolGirl’s knowing voice. She normalized SchoolGirl’s experience by relating it to the frequency with which intoxicated hook-ups occurred in her own life. Although the friend later counselled SchoolGirl to just focus on school and not think about it, which became meaningful and influential advice for SchoolGirl, inevitably SchoolGirl felt that the situation was not taken as seriously as it should have been. The reaction that she received discouraged her from disclosing further, and thus I was only the second person that she had ever discussed the experience with. When I asked SchoolGirl why she had chosen to not disclose further, she related it to the perceived normality of these situations and alluded to the difficulty of challenging the possibility that experiences such as hers may have been non-consensual. “Well... usually, I don't know, I've heard a lot of cases when girls are drunk, and it's hard to prove what actually occurred the night before, so I figured I would just pretend, like, I was drunk and it didn't happen...” What SchoolGirl’s narrative suggests is that even within systems of social support, women are scrutinized according to a presumed legal standard of legitimacy and in the absence of a fully defendable case their right to support is revocable.

Despite the fact that SchoolGirl perceived the normalization of this experience to be invalidating, she resigned herself to the fact that this is how things were and that she needed to accept it. I think it is important to consider the way that SchoolGirl discussed the similar experiences that her friend had and how she responded to them.

> But she's the type of girl who puts herself in those situations, and... so, uh, I don't know, I guess for her it's funny, like, oh I can't believe that actually happened to you, you know you used to laugh at me. But it wasn't that I was laughing at her, it was I was laughing at her because she put herself in those situations knowing what the outcome would be at the end of the night, kind of thing. She was that kind of girl I guess.

Both she and her friend responded to one another by laughing and dismissing the significance of what happened. When SchoolGirl received this response she found it invalidating, and she was hurt by it, but she defended her decision to act similarly, and explained how she believed her behaviour was different. SchoolGirl failed to see how she may have also been invalidating and unsupportive. Moreover, she continued to blame her friend by attributing her friend's experiences to her character, rather than giving consideration to the possible context. "She was that kind of girl I guess." Ironically, she continued to maintain attitudes toward her friend that she feared others would have toward her, attitudes that would probably have made it difficult for her friend to label when she disclosed to SchoolGirl. Even though SchoolGirl could see that her personal experience was unjust, she struggled to see beyond herself, which is evidence of how she struggled to know rape well enough to use the label.

For both SchoolGirl and Emma, having sex while blacked out was considered unremarkable within their peer groups. For both women, the responses that they received from their friends were not those of concern, but rather that what had happened was something laughable. It is important to consider that every woman who participated in my research was assaulted while under the influence of alcohol, and probably drugs in some cases. Abbey (2011) has found that alcohol is frequently used to mask sexually aggressive behaviour, by justifying, trivializing, and delegitimizing the perpetration of sexual assault and rape

Emma and SchoolGirl's ability to know and subsequently label their experiences was constrained by the perceived normativity of their experiences. For Emma and SchoolGirl, this was filtered through their friends; however, for Grace, normativity was something that she actually pursued in order to reconcile herself with what happened to her. In Grace's narrative the influence of normativity began during her assault, as her assailant, a male friend, gaslighted her by assuring her that nothing was happening as she tried to protest and resist. Following the assault he normalized the experience by treating her like his girlfriend and openly expressing affection with her in front of other people. Grace relayed to me that she was shocked by the assault as she had no previous sexual experience with this man and had not even considered dating him. Following the assault though, Grace felt considerable dissonance about what had happened, as it contravened her belief that she would only ever have sex in the context of an intimate relationship. For Grace, having sex outside of these bounds implied that she was a slut, a label she vehemently wanted to reject (Herman, 1994; Luo, 2000). She tried to reconcile this dissonance by attempting to develop an intimate relationship with her assailant, despite

the fact that she was not attracted to him and had never been previously motivated to date him. Grace's motivation to normalize the situation was such that she conceded to having consensual sex with him in an effort to maintain the relationship.

> I can't really just... ... that, there's a social pressure, kind of like, well you do it once, why are you not doing it with me anymore kind of thing? And I figured like, ok then he's not going to end up dating me if I don't, kind of thing, so, yeah...

The pursuit of normativity is not without cultural or historical precedent, as is evidenced through the practice of marrying rape victims off to their rapists as a way of mitigating damage to woman or her family. However, despite Grace's effort to normalize the situation by dating, the relationship dissolved quickly, presumably because her assailant felt absolved of his guilt, or because he felt confident that he had gotten away with what he had done by duping Grace.

> I felt really used up, kind of thing... And kind of felt like, if we don't date, then I'm just kind of a whore, kind of thing, you know what I mean? And um, so I put a lot of work into trying to, like, like making a relationship out of, working out. Because that happened. Like if it had never happened I never even would have thought of liking him, in general. Like I felt really obligated, like I did that now, like... Umm... (whispers) yeah. And then we broke up, and he was just kind of using me, and so... yeah...

Following this, Grace was unable to maintain the pretense of normalcy that she had made such an effort to construct. In the aftermath Grace was faced with negotiating

an alternative understanding of what had happened, and confounded by self-blame, she arrived at the conclusion that she was indeed a slut and was responsible for what happened.

> At first I was just really numb about it, I didn't put too much, I didn't really think about it until after the fact when we just stopped seeing each other and talking then it kinda... kinda hit me, umm. Honestly, I felt like a huge slut, like a huge whore kind of thing, well that's what society tells us today.

For Grace, the presence of the normative voice signified an attempt to make sense of a violation that she could not otherwise reconcile. In her case, the expression of the normative voice was an attempt to relieve dissonance and a profoundly distressing perception of herself that was orthogonal to her values. Grace existed within a site of translation (DeVault, 1999). She did not have what she felt were the appropriate words to process or understand her experience. Grace's narrative brought into sharp focus the implication of being denied language. Grace was unable to know her experience as rape, and thus tried to normalize what had happened, with great risk to herself. In the end, however, normalcy was an artifice and she was left with nothing but scathing self-blame to account for her experience. The struggle, as it pertains to acknowledgement, is to reconcile the presumption that rape is an aberrant event with the fact that the experience of unwanted, coercive sex is not. When rape is perceived as aberrant it is predictably challenging to reconcile with an experience that is within the scope of normal.

Dismissal

The dismissive voice often emerged in the women's narratives as both a vehicle for processing and reconciling themselves with what happened, and a mechanism to

facilitate coping. The dismissive voice was evident when the women downplayed what happened to them and minimized its significance, both in relation to what they perceived as "real" rape and in the effect that it had upon them. The tendency to trivialize an experience of sexual violation is unsurprising when we consider the dismissive voice in tandem with the normalizing voice. When sexual coercion is routinely unquestioned and accepted as being just how things are, it stands to reason that much of this coercion will be dismissed as insignificant. Trivializing violence is a mechanism for normalizing it, and it is frequently employed in our rape prone culture. It is thus unsurprising that many women would process their experiences by dismissing them (Ward, 1988; 1995).

Some of the women employed the dismissive voice when directly articulating to me why their experience did not qualify as rape. In North American culture it seems that the litmus test for sexual violence is not the absence of consent, but rather the presence of physical harm. Our ability to recognize sexual violence is proportionate to the perceived amount of injury that was incurred in the process. On the continuum of sexual coercion rape is the endpoint, and what makes it discernible from less recognized forms of violence is not only the degree of physical violence, but also the presumption of the profound emotional trauma that it produces (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011; Kelly, 1987). Our cultural mores would suggest that in order for rape to be accepted as legitimate, it must represent profound physical and emotional violation and harm, otherwise it does not count and is rendered invisible. This perception of rape influenced the way women interpreted their own experience, and the conclusions that they drew about its legitimacy.

Grace's understanding of her experience was heavily influenced by these norms. The fact that she was physically unharmed in the process precluded labelling the

experience as rape, despite the fact that she was so incapacitated at the time of her assault that she couldn't feel her body, and did not immediately understand what was happening. For Grace, rape implied the threat of physical violence and the presence of significant fear, and because she experienced neither of those things, what happened to her could not be accounted for with that label. "So... just, when I think of rape I think of maybe a weapon being used, like something more like forceful than just alcohol, or like drugs... kidnapping, like things like that. Like I think of much more scarier things than whatever happened to me." Kristina evaluated her experience along similar terms, and compared what happened to her to a cousin who was raped by a stranger in an alleyway. "And we saw her like, on the side, like three hours later, like in an alleyway and she was completely raped, and, she had so many bruises and everything." Kristina was among those who found her cousin after it happened, and took her to the hospital to have her injuries treated. For Kristina, what happened to her cousin represented real rape and was thus the measuring stick she used to assess her own assault.

> I think it's kind of like, the way that I was brought up, it's kind of, like, umm one of my cousins actually did get raped, and so... like, I always compare things and I didn't go through what she did, and so it was kind of like, I didn't get raped, I didn't get... I would, didn't turn out to be like her, so I tried to like, go away from that idea and everything.

Sarah also concluded that her experience did not constitute sexual assault because physical force was not used to restrain her, even though she articulated being too drunk to have been able to physically resist anyhow.

> I think sexual assault is more like a forceful assault, so that's how I would describe it, like more like... physical, like physical, like holding someone or like something like that. That would be more... what sexual assault is to me anyways.

Sarah also felt that her experience did not qualify as sexual assault because of the way her boyfriend negotiated the situation. Even though he initiated sex with her when she was too intoxicated to consent, he realized as they were having sex that she was barely conscious and unresponsive, and felt that he should not continue. He stopped having sex with her and called her parents to come and get her. The next day he came to her house to explain what had happened, which Sarah felt really helped ameliorate the situation.

> Like it wasn't... I feel like I'm actually like, I'm luckier cause it wasn't as much as a traumatic experience as some people might have had. So it's a little bit, like it's easier to break down and talk about. I think it was, well, one of the definite things is because it was my boyfriend and that he told me the next day (laughter), that he called my parents, all these things that were so... like, it'd be a lot scarier if it was someone who like had sex with you and left you unconscious. It'd be terrible to wake up and like not know at all, whereas he brought, like, uhh, called my parents to get me and the next day came over and told me everything that happened, so it was just more, like, some people don't have the chance to get someone else to explain it to them.

Despite the fact that she felt it was inappropriate for her boyfriend to have initiated sex with her when she was so intoxicated, she felt that his admission of inappropriateness mediated how she labelled the situation. Given that her boyfriend chose to stop when he realized that she was unresponsive, and later gave her space to talk about her feelings, she felt that the situation was much less upsetting for her than it was for other women. For Sarah, the way the situation was handled and the fact that she was not completely traumatized by it allowed her to reframe it as being less serious than rape.

Kristina also evaluated her assault based upon her own emotional reaction to it, as she did not perceive herself as having experienced profound psychological trauma as a consequence of the assault. For Kristina, rape implied significant emotional dysfunction and she thus perceived her ability to cope without accessing professional resources as evidence that what happened to her did not qualify as rape. “You end up in the hospital and you go through all of these psychological treatments and everything, and I ended up like not going to there, I just... tried to fix it by myself, just talked to my parents a lot.”

The dismissive voice revealed a pattern of thought that is rooted in the belief that what happened was *not* rape because it *could* have been worse – and there were a myriad of standards by which this was evaluated (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). It could have been worse because it could have been a stranger; it could have been worse because they could have no memory of what happened; it could have been worse because they could have been physically hurt; it could have been worse because they could have become pregnant; it could have been worse because they could have been more traumatized. Gavey and Schmidt (2011) have spoken to the profusion of the “trauma of rape” discourse in recent years. In a focus group investigation, they asked participants to discuss their perceptions

of the impact that rape had upon the lives of victims. Participants spoke of the profound trauma that a victim experiences, and the profound psychological impact that it has upon them. They indicated that rape is a special kind of trauma and that it has life-long effects that can permanently scar a woman. Gavey and Schmidt note that one of the problems with this discourse is that it influences perceptions of what constitutes legitimate rape, with the assumption that women who are raped will necessarily show the effects of trauma. This excludes the experiences of women who do not suffer substantial or long-lasting psychological trauma, which is significant because the majority of victims actually have limited symptoms after one year.

The women in this study used the trauma of rape discourse to evaluate the legitimacy of their own experiences. They often compared themselves with other women, whom they perceived to be much worse off because they were the victims of real rape, and were thus more legitimate victims. Grace, for example, seemed to hold the perspective that she had not been sufficiently violated to count as a real rape victim. “Yeah, pretty much. I don't think it... ... ...turned out all that... (voice gets very quiet) horribly, so... it could have been like, real rape victims are just... terrible things, so...” Grace’s words, when they are written on the page, stripped from her spoken voice, appear to convey pity for the women she perceived as legitimate rape victims. When I listened to the recording of her interview though, I heard compassion and empathy in her voice rather than pity. I considered Grace’s use of the dismissive voice in relation to the prevalence of the self-blaming voice in her narrative, and it seemed that the substantive self-blame that she shouldered prevented her from being able to feel self-compassion in the way that she felt compassion for the women she perceived as real victims. She

concluded, consequently, that what happened to her was not that horrible by comparison, and thus did not warrant the label of rape.

For Grace, Kristina, and Sarah, the dismissive voice was spoken out of comparison between their experiences and what they perceived as real rape. The word rape helped them process their experience by acting as a counterpoint. Rape was used as a marker of what their experience was not, and they negotiated their understanding of what it actually was from that perspective of what it was not. The dismissive voice enabled them to put distance between themselves and rape. Sherry and Emma used the dismissive voice to distance themselves from the significance of what had happened to them. However, their motivation was not to distance themselves from knowing their experience as rape, but rather to ameliorate the discomfort of not knowing how to label their experience at all.

Prior to the interview, neither of them had ever tried to label what had happened to them, and thus they had to process their experience and the outcomes without having language to guide them. When I asked Emma how she spoke about the experience, she told me that she had never disclosed what had happened to anyone, and thus the only time she talked about it was when a friend who had been at the party would bring it up to laugh about it. "I guess I was like, just maybe discussing like how drunk I was and just like how ridiculous it was." In Emma's description we see the intersection of the normative and dismissive voices, whereby Emma's experience is sanitized of all coercion and violence, and rendered nothing more than ridiculous. Sherry also struggled with discussing her experience and felt vulnerable sharing how uncomfortable it had made her.

Initially, she played the situation coolly by pretending that she had been in control of what happened and that she was fine with it.

> I just kind of spoke about it in general. And like, and like one of the things when I first started to talk about it, was not like I, I played it down cause I was still really like embarrassed and really like scared and just like, you know, what have I done? So the first few times I spoke about it was really like, it was, it wasn't as bad as it was. So I played it down a lot and made it seem like I was in control of the situation, just cause I didn't want to look like the fool.

DeVault (1999) has emphasized the role that language plays in facilitating how we understand and make meaning of our experiences. When we are confronted with the absence of appropriate language we struggle to process what has happened. For Emma and Sherry, dismissal was used to render their experiences sufficiently insignificant that they did not require labels.

Avoidance

The dismissive voice functions to distance women from the harshness of rape, and the associated meaning and implications that are embedded in it. It also serves as a tool to distance women from an experience that they have no words for, and do not know how to process. In the narrative that I am writing, I believe that the voice of dismissal foreshadows the more purposeful voice of avoidance. The voices of not knowing that I have identified so far, which are self-blame, normativity, and dismissal, reflect the long arms of rape culture, and the mechanisms by which sexual violence is justified, legitimized, and trivialized. These voices reflect an instinctive response to the instituted

social imaginary and the way that it constrains women's ability to know and acknowledge rape. The avoidant voice, in contrast, is less reactionary and more purposeful. It reflects a conscious desire to not know one's experience as rape.

I heard the avoidant voice when women spoke about their desire to not have to think about their experience, and even more directly in their discussions of labelling. I listened for silence in the transcripts. I coded avoidance by attending to the times when the women informed me of their personal desire for silence by trying to not think about or be reminded of what happened. I also coded instances when women made their desire to avoid labelling explicit, usually by choosing a more palliative term. SchoolGirl and Janna both spoke of coping with their assaults by pushing what happened out of their minds. Both were assaulted by an acquaintance while unconscious, and neither could remember how they came to be with these men. Janna reported that she felt "really taken advantage of" and was very upset about what happened so she tried to avoid having to think or talk about it, and stopped interacting with the man who had assaulted her. "Like we used to be friendly, umm, like we would be like 'hey, how's it going' whenever we would end up at the same place together, but uhh, no since then whenever I see him I just kind of avert my eyes and walk away." Janna's roommates were home at the time when the incident occurred and she asked them the next day if they knew what had happened. Beyond this, however, she wanted to avoid having to speak of the situation, and her roommates agreed not to tell anyone.

> We all agreed that it would never leave the house, that they wouldn't tell any of my friends and everything, so. Umm... yeah, we refer to that as the night that never happened, so... so we tried to not talk about it.

Although her roommates promised not to tell anyone what had happened, they would sometimes tease Janna about it when they were drinking. “That was years ago, and to this day they still bring it up and make fun of me about it. Like usually when we're incapacitated, but I don't appreciate it at all, and it makes me feel terrible about myself.” Even though the assault had occurred two years prior, Janna still had strong emotional reactions and felt very distressed when she was forced to think about what happened.

SchoolGirl also tried to avoid thinking about the assault and interacting with her perpetrator. “At first I was, like, a lot more upset, like irritated from it, and just mad and angry and now it’s just I’m trying to block it out of my mind. And now I just feel uncomfortable walking by him, I just, just don’t want to see him at all.” Upon the advice of the one friend she disclosed to, she avoided thinking about the situation by directing her attention to her schoolwork.

> I focus a lot more on school actually. I actually got off academic probation like last semester, like this semester. First semester I was on academic probation, and I got my grades up and everything and I stopped partying and I actually Finished Sober (i.e., participated in an on-campus program that promotes healthier drinking practices).

SchoolGirl avoided confronting her experience, by using her energy to gain more control of other parts of her life. She conceded, however, that it was not a perfect solution and she continued to be affected by what happened.

> I still... have… unsolved issues, I guess you'd say… I just kind of pretend like it was my fault because I was drunk. Because if I wasn't drunk the

situation never would have happened, because I wouldn't have been there.

Jade, Sarah, Kristina, and Blair also exercised care to avoid the label of rape, each for somewhat different reasons. Jade wanted to distance herself from the idea of being raped, because she did not want to be thought of as a victim, even though she recounted being explicit with her husband that she did not want to engage in sex, and was devastated when she realized it had happened. “I was heartbroken, because I just thought... he knew I didn't want to...” When I asked her how she labelled the situation when she told her mother and sister what had happened, she explained that she circumvented labelling by describing her husband’s actions without naming them.

> More so just saying he was a complete douche. Like I (laughs), it sums it up, you know, like I just... I told them exactly what happened and I didn't, I never labeled it. I never said that he raped me; I never said that it was a sexual assault; I just said, you know what, I told him no, he said, you know, he did whatever...

Despite being very cognizant of the fact that her husband intentionally had sex with her without her consent, Jade still avoided using the word rape in order to avoid being identified as a victim. For Jade, what happened with her husband was bad enough; she did not want to also endure the stigma of being a victim, and thus avoided thinking of her experience as an assault.

> You know, like, I guess it's like a persona that I want to just, I want to know I am strong, I am moving past this. I am, you know, I'm not a victim, you know. I've learned from being victimized... but I'm not a

> victim. I'm not going to hold that because I see so many people in the professions that I've been in, there like, they, they milk it. You know, I'm a victim so I can't do this, I've been victimized. You know there are women who have been assaulted and those women... truly are victimized. Those women are truly hurt and they need help. I, I'm ok. You know? I'm ok.

Jade's situation was complicated by the fact that she had to continue to have contact with her husband, as they were not yet divorced and were negotiating custody of her children. Consequently, she also felt compelled, for the sake of her children, to avoid acknowledging what happened because she feared it would affect her relationship with them. "...it'll affect my relationship with my kids because every time that I see him I will HATE him. I will hate my kids for it, because they're a part of him."

Sarah avoided using the word rape to describe what had happened to her because of how it would sound to her boyfriend.

> Well I said, I don't think I used the word rape cause I think it would have... like sounded harsh to him. But I did say like unwanted, like unwanted, like I explained to him, like, if there's any point, it doesn't matter who with, it doesn't matter who it is, I referenced, cause he has a little sister, if this happened to your sister, you know you'd see it as, like no matter what, it's just not ok. If she's not... the whole, like I used like saying if it's not consent, then it's not ok, it's not consent.

She insisted to him, after the fact, that what had happened was unacceptable because she was unable to consent, but she felt that because he accepted responsibility for

what happened rape was not a suitable word. Sarah continued to date her boyfriend, and was dating him at the time of the interview. Given the connotations that are associated with the word rapist, it is to be expected that Sarah would feel considerable dissonance if she was to keep dating someone whom she labeled a rapist. Sarah, like Jade, was aware that what had happened to her was inappropriate, but she preferred to focus on how the specific behaviours were inappropriate and avoid assigning a stigmatizing label that would inevitably hurt both her boyfriend and their relationship.

For Kristina, it was the semantic significance of the word rape that she wanted to avoid. Kristina felt that assigning the word rape to her experience made it so much worse.

> **Kristina:** They, my dad just said, it was... like, it was pretty mu--, my dad said it was rape, but, I just said no it can't be rape, so. He tried to go along with what I was saying, he just tried to be there for me.
>
> **Dusty:** When he said, you know, that it was rape, how did that make you feel?
>
> **Kristina:** It just made me feel like, I just got... like, really violated and like... just... I just felt really disgusting and I just had to take a shower like right then and there... 'n it's really awkward.
>
> **Dusty:** So just in response to that word?
>
> **Kristina:** Yeah... it just really... killed me right there.
>
> **Dusty:** Ok, so the idea of it being that made it that much worse?
>
> **Kristina:** For sure.

Through the avoidant voice Kristina revealed the social meaning that is imbued in the word rape. Kristina's father offered her the opportunity to label what happened to her, but as Kristina's narrative reveals, knowing her experience as rape made her feel more vulnerable, more violated, and compromised her ability to cope. Consequently, Kristina actively rejected the word rape and chose to process her experience as something less significant, even though her assailant had been forthright about his misogynistic and malicious intentions. "Umm, well pretty much he told me, he said "I screwed you over, I banged you" and everything..." During the interview she settled upon the term sexual harassment to explain what had happened to her. Kristina's use of this term is an example of translation. Unlike many of the other women in this study, Kristina was offered the word rape as a way of knowing and understanding her experience, by someone who believed her and supported her. Yet, the social meaning implied in this term was more distressing for her than it was helpful, so she elected to avoid using it and her father supported her by not further imposing it.

In this analysis of the not knowing voice it is apparent that the process of not knowing is rarely the result of one individual voice. Frequently the voices intersect to compound one another and stymie women's ability to know their experience as rape. We see that acknowledgment can be a challenge because there are so many ways to have one's experience questioned, undermined, and recategorized. Even when women are able to challenge one of their not knowing voices, they may still be constrained by others. For example, a woman may realize that what happened to her was not normal, but she may still hold herself responsible for creating conditions where it could happen. Even though her normalizing voice abates, her voice of self-blame can still preclude her from

acknowledging. Through the web of not knowing voices we begin to see the barriers that women face as they process their understanding of being assaulted.

CHAPTER VII

THE *KNOWING* VOICE

Although the not knowing voice was most obvious, as I continued to read through the transcripts I came to recognize the presence of a contrapuntal *knowing* voice that stood in contrast to the not knowing voice. The knowing voice demonstrated that even in the absence of labels, the women knew, at some level, that what had happened to them was not ok. For example, some of the women experimented with the words rape or sexual assault in relation to their experience, and although they may have inevitably rejected or denied the legitimacy of these words, they revealed that they recognized them as meaningful and relevant in some way.

I began to read each transcript for the moments of knowing. In the beginning, I only coded the most overt demonstrations of knowing, namely the pieces of text where a woman related her experience to sexual assault or rape. For example, Grace made the following statement, "I know it was kind of rape. I know in a general sense that is kind of what it is…" This strategy was a productive starting point, but I realized that it did not sufficiently capture the extent of women's knowing, because even when the women did not reference a specific label they still referred to their experience as having been uncomfortable, distressing, or violating. Consequently, I reread each transcript and attended to the words and phrases that suggested that in some way the women knew that what had happened to them was not right. For example, I coded the instances when women expressed being confident that they had not wanted what was happening, as well as moments when they expressed suspicion about the intentions of the man involved – for example, noting that he had significantly less to drink than they did, or wondering

about whether or not they may have been given drugs. I also coded women's knowing voice when they used words to describe their experience that related to sexual violence in some way, for example when they used the terms coercion or harassment. I attended to whether or not the women had ever disclosed their experience to anyone else, and noted the words that they reported using when they negotiated the disclosure.

I began to differentiate women's use of the knowing voice based upon the labels that they used to describe their assault. By listening for women's knowing through the labels that they used, I parsed the patterns of knowing into three different categories. First, there were the women who used the words of rape or sexual assault as points of reference during the interview. Six of the ten participants, Isabelle, SchoolGirl, Grace, Janna, Jade, and Blair, sounded their knowing voice by referring to either rape or sexual assault at least once during the interview. The second group of women, which was comprised of Sherry, Kristina, and Sarah, also labelled their experiences using terms that related to sexual inappropriateness, but they were more euphemistic. They did not label specific actions, but rather categories of inappropriate behaviour, such as coercion and harassment. Finally, Emma refrained from applying any labels that related to sexual violence.

I traced the way that the knowing voice was represented across these groups, and noted the patterns of similarity in their ways of knowing. Foremost, regardless of how they labeled, the women knew their experience to be distressing – if not traumatic. They also knew that they did not want what had happened, and they knew that their ability to give consent was compromised. Some of the women knew that the situation was not right because of how their perpetrator treated them or interacted with them after the fact.

Some knew that what had happened to them was not right, because of the distress they felt when they saw something similar happen to other women.

The knowing voice affirmed what feminists have always believed. Even when sexual violence goes unnamed, unlabeled, and unacknowledged, it is not benign. This is not to say that the women in this study were unilaterally distressed by what happened to them. There was considerable variation across the sample, and even within each interview the degree of distress expressed by the women varied across our conversation, but none of the women conveyed indifference or a complete lack of distress. Consistently, women expressed that what had happened to them was unwanted and upsetting.

Distress

The women expressed a range of emotions that included shock, anxiety, anger, fear, and violation, as well as numbness. Isabelle described the shock that she felt when she first realized that she had been sexually assaulted. In the years that followed Isabelle's assault, she emotionally distanced herself from her own experience, and when she thought about sexual assault it was as an outsider. Isabelle's perception of sexual assault was that it was an awful experience, wrought with emotional havoc – which is consistent with the 'trauma of rape' discourse described by Gavey and Schmidt (2011). When Isabelle realized that sexual assault was what had happened to her she was shocked, but when she felt the surge of emotions that she had experienced at the time of her assault rush back to her, she recognized the vulnerability that she had always imagined survivors of sexual violence must feel.

> It was just kind of a shock, it was upsetting though. I felt like I was... I got kind of upset, I got a little bit anxiety, and I like felt like I was going to cry. I'm like, oh my god, I didn't realize... cause when I hear about that happening to other people, I'm like, oh my god, that's so awful, that's terrible, like, I can't imagine being in a situation like that... and then I realized that... oh I have been in a situation like that. And it seems so much worse when you think of it from someone else's point of view, and how like... awful and distraught they must be after, and then I realized that it had happened to me, and then it just kind of brought back like a flood of emotions of how I felt at that time.

When SchoolGirl first disclosed her experience, the morning after she was assaulted, she had yet to process what had happened and was at a loss for how to label it. The girlfriend that she told responded with laughter and tried to dismiss it, but SchoolGirl continued to believe that something was wrong with what had happened. “I was like this isn’t funny...” Although she never reported the situation, she continued to believe that it was “kind of a serious issue.” SchoolGirl maintained residual feelings of anger, although she tried to avoid those feelings by not thinking about what happened.

> At first I was, like, a lot more upset, like irritated from it, and just mad and angry and now it’s just, I’m trying to block it out of my mind. And now I just feel uncomfortable walking by him, I just, I just don’t want to see him at all.

Blair also experienced considerable anger when she woke up after being assaulted and her boyfriend admitted what had happened. Blair was only 14 at the time, and knew

that she was not ready to have sex. She was furious with her boyfriend for violating her trust, and for putting her at risk for getting pregnant. “And I just remember being furious, like how dare you think that was ok? I mean don’t you think if I wanted to... I could have been cautious for it? You know? It just seemed... um... like a violation of… your trust.”

Violation also defined the feelings that Janna expressed in relation to what happened, particularly after she learned that she had received oral sex. Janna expressed discomfort with the vulnerability and intimacy that she associated with oral sex, and was consequently guarded and judicious about engaging in it. When Janna found out that oral sex had happened, her feelings of violation surged and she felt assaulted.

> Obviously I felt taken advantage of, right from the get go. But, uh, it wasn't until I found out exactly what had happened that I felt pretty much assaulted, you know? Like, it crossed my mind before... I had talked to him about what had actually happened, that... umm... like, what, he could have done anything to me. Like, I, I don't know... but then after I found out for sure that something did go down and I felt pretty... extremely taken advantage of, probably to the point of being assaulted.

Janna expressed concern about her lack of control, because knowing that she was sufficiently incapacitated to have engaged in oral sex indicated to her that anything could have happened and she would not have been able to stop it. Sarah also expressed distress about the loss of control that she felt in knowing that things had happened to her body that she did not want and could not prevent. “Well it's, uhh... I don't know, it's like, I think it's the whole thing about, like, it's... your own body, and it's like... not having...

not having your say in what's going on. And it's just like, I don't, it's the like, being taken advantage of a lot in a way." For Sarah, not having control of her own body was frightening because she realized how vulnerable it made her. "Yeah, it's, it's scary. That's what it is. It's... the experience of having unwanted sex, moreso." Although Emma never directly labelled what happened to her as any sort of violation, she also reflected on the fact that "it was scary" to have no memory of what happened to her. Emma was afraid of what the outcomes might be, as she had no idea of whether or not a condom was used. Kristina, SchoolGirl, Grace, and Blair expressed similar concerns, as they worried about whether they might be pregnant or have contracted an STI. With the exception of Blair, who was assaulted at a time when access to service providers was more restricted, each of the women hastened to see health care practitioners to be tested for STIs. None of the women were able to confirm whether or not condoms had been used, but fortunately none of them became pregnant or contracted STIs as a consequence of their assaults.

For a number of the women, the distress associated with their experience was so considerable that they had to distance themselves from it. Grace was shocked by what happened, and was completely unable to process it without severe self-condemnation, so she numbed herself to cope. "After it happened I was just like really numbed to it..." Blair also engaged in numbing for more than 30 years, and spoke to me of how hard it was to acknowledge that what had happened to her was rape. Acknowledgement, for Blair, meant confronting the fact that her assault was an antecedent to the three tumultuous years that followed, and the suffering that she experienced as a consequence.

Dusty: Ok, so... what's the worst part of having to talk about this?

Blair: Umm... … I guess just acknowledging. Because I've put it away for so long.

Dusty: And what do you mean by acknowledging?

Blair: Acknowledging that it happened.

For Blair, the pain of discussing her experience was so acute that she avoided telling anyone, even her husband, for 33 years. She opened herself up for the interview, but later reported to me that she shut down again soon after because it was too painful to think about.

Unwanted

Some women expressed stronger emotions than others, but the narratives revealed that each woman was unsettled by what had happened, and was negatively affected by it. As the women began to access their feelings and discuss them with me, their knowing voices began to articulate just how clearly they had not wanted what had happened. Jade, for example, had been explicit with her husband and had emphasized that she did not want to have sex. For Jade, there was no question that her husband misunderstood, because she remembered being insistent with him that she was not willing to engage in sex.

> I remember telling him, umm, that I didn't want to have sex I just wanted to cuddle, you know, and, he would... you know, touching here and there and what not, and... you know, I would tell him, you know, stop, just, I just want to cuddle, I don't want it to be about that tonight, I just want to cuddle.

Sherry was still conscious at the time when her assault was initiated, and although she was on the verge of passing out, and came in and out of consciousness as it was

happening, she was able to recall how it was initiated and the fact that she had refused and expressed concern about having sex. The man who assaulted her was a member of her sister's friend group, and while he was considered attractive, she had been warned about the fact that he was "a player". In the days that followed her assault, Sherry reflected on what had happened and was confident that she had indicated that she did not want to have sex, and was thus unsettled that it had happened anyway. She decided to confront her assailant, but he responded by being cool and aloof and refused to acknowledge that he had been coercive. Although Sherry struggled to attribute blame singularly to him, she was confident about the fact that she had not wanted what happened.

> Yeah, I was like, there was no acknowledgement of the fact that I was drunk and you know and didn't really want to do it, and so I wasn't sure and so he shouldn't have kind of been so pushy about it, cause like, the brief moments that I do remember, like of the night, like I pretty much remember not wanting to have sex, obviously, because you know I was coherent enough to say, you know, like, no are you sure, I don't think we should, and stuff like then.

Kristina was also adamant about not wanting to have sex with the man who assaulted her. She reflected upon the way that she had been dressed at the time when it happened, and considered this evidence that she had no intention of having sex with anyone. "I was... just wearing jeans and a t-shirt that whole day. And... I did not expect anything to happen that night, but... stuff happens." Although Kristina remembered him being at the party, she had no recollection of even talking to him. "I don't remember

talking to him at all that whole night. Just... randomly happened after I got drunk." Moreover, this man was the ex-boyfriend of one of her close friends, and was thus someone Kristina would never have considered having sex with, even if she had not had a boyfriend at the time. Kristina was shocked and confused when she woke up and found out what happened.

> I did not want to have sex with him, my boyfriend would have been, like, I was worried about what my boyfriend would think of me, cause I did have a boyfriend at that time. And I was kinda like, what am I doing, why am I here, like, I should never do this. It's just like, stop everything after that.

Emma's situation was similar to Kristina's in that she was also assaulted by an acquaintance at a party. She too recalled that she had given no indication throughout the night that she wanted to have sex with the man who assaulted her. In fact, she was unable to recall having even talked to him the night that it happened, and given that she had no prior sexual or romantic history with him she felt that having sex with him wouldn't have even occurred to her. "It's not like he was like a (inaudible) guy or anything like that, it's just like I just didn't want to do it with him."

Like Kristina and Emma, Grace felt blindsided by her assault and had not seen it coming at all. She was conscious when it happened, but was so impaired that it took her a while to realize that sex was occurring. Although Grace wrestled with self-blame that obscured her ability to know her experience as rape, when she evaluated her situation simply in terms of whether or not she wanted it, she was resolute about her lack of desire.

> Cause I'm not, like I'm not entirely sure. I want to say I've never been raped, but like at the same time I was really confused, like, k... what just

> happened? Did I... was confused... did I know it was happening? Did I want that to happen? Then I realized that no I didn't, and no I didn't.

Consent

Grace was also resolute about the fact that she was not aware of what was even happening as she was being assaulted. It was not until her phone rang that she realized sex was occurring. Grace's knowing voice recognized that it was impossible for her to have consented when she was not even able to comprehend what was happening. For a number of the women, being unconscious at the time of the assault, or unable to recall what happened caused them – rightly – to question their capacity to give consent at the time of the event. Blair stated this incisively, when she noted "I'd have to classify it as rape because... if I was not conscious, you're not consenting." SchoolGirl also reflected on the fact that being passed out at the time of assault had rendered her unable to consent. This opinion was buttressed by the fact that she had to use physical force in order to get him off of her.

> I would personally say it was sexual assault, because, I was... I wa... I didn't consent to it, and I was... passed out. I mean I was blacked out by the time I had even gotten in there, and for me to wake up and for him to be on top of me, and then pass out again, and then for him to still be on top of me, and for me to actually use physical force to get him off of me... yeah, definitely.

Although Janna was seemingly not unconscious at the time of her assault, she perceived the fact that she couldn't remember anything that had happened as an indication that she was far too intoxicated to have been able to consent to sexual activity.

She questioned whether what she knew about the situation was even true, and acknowledged that her perpetrator could have lied to her and she would never know.

> Umm... I guess I would for that instance call it assault.... because I really don't know what happened.... I mean, as far as I know I didn't have any... bidding in the matter, I just, it kind of just happened…. I don't know what happened, like I could have actually been held down, I could have been made to take my clothes off, I, I have no idea…. the whole time I was blank I was with this guy, so... it's scary what... what could have happened... if he toned it down... if maybe we did more... um, if he forced me to.

For Janna, learning that oral sex had been performed on her, was an affirmation that she was not in a position where she could give consent, as she knew that she never would have agreed to it in an uncompromised state.

> Sex is one thing, but you know like, letting a guy give you oral sex is like a whole new level of comfort with yourself and you have to be very comfortable with yourself and very comfortable with somebody else, and... the fact that I apparently let him do that to me... I must have been completely out of my mind.

Isabelle was intoxicated at the time of her assault, but she was conscious and was able to clearly remember what happened. Initially, Isabelle did not consider what happened to be assault, but when she explained to me the conditions under which she believed consent would be comprised (i.e., when you are too intoxicated or are being held down) she realized that this actually described what had happened to her.

> I would say that he raped me. Like... I... when I think of rape in my mind I think of somebody being, like, forced down. Not being able to almost leave the situation, like they're stuck in that situation and that's why they are being raped. Either because they're scared or because... they're, they're being threatened with like a weapon or they're being held down by somebody who is much stronger than them, or they're too drunk, or too, they're on drugs, or there's something that's... like... causing them not to be able to leave. But... that's basically what he was doing. I was too scared to leave and I wasn't... strong enough emotionally to say... get off and don't do this, and stop. And I let him... for however, for like the 10, 15 seconds that he did, until I said stop. Yeah, that's... I would consider that... rape.

Sarah and Sherry had different experiences from one another in that Sarah's occurred with her boyfriend, who quickly realized she was non-responsive and later apologized for what had happened, and agreed that it was wrong. Sarah and her boyfriend had a prior sexual relationship and she felt that he just assumed, based on their history, that it was ok to proceed and have sex with her. When she later explained to him why it was wrong, she emphasized that no matter what your relationship was, if you aren't in a state to clearly give consent in the moment then it isn't ok. In contrast, Sherry was assaulted by an acquaintance that disregarded her attempts to resist, and later denied that anything serious had happened. Sherry described feeling coerced because she had been intoxicated, but also because her perpetrator persisted even when she verbally resisted what was happening. "Yeah, I would definitely call it that cause if someone kind

of keeps going on after the same thing, that is being coercive." Emma drew similar conclusions about the inappropriateness of what happened. She never explicitly labelled her experience as coercion, but she alluded to the fact that what happened to her was probably the result of being intoxicated and pressured into it. She used the more euphemistic "persuaded" rather than coerced, and was less angry than Sherry was about what had happened, but she delineated similar concerns about her ability to freely consent.

> I just remember... like I was, like I was really, like intoxicated, and... ... like I don't, like... I just feel like I guess it's only, like, I wouldn't have, like... I wouldn't have done that if I was sober. Kind of like, any of those situations, so I feel like, I was probably just like, you know, like, persuaded into it and like... I don't know, I was probably... it's hard to say now.

The Behaviour of the Perpetrator

One of the most varied but significant points of knowing for the women in this study was their assessment of their perpetrator's behaviour both during and after the assault. During the interview, the women noted behaviours that indicated to them that their perpetrator was aware that he had done (or was doing) something that was not right. Occasionally, as in the case of Sarah and Jade, the perpetrator actually conceded that he had behaved inappropriately. Jade's mother confronted Jade's husband the day after she was assaulted and her husband admitted that what had happened was wrong. "He, he... acknowledged it the next day, that... I was too out of it." Although he never apologized she felt validated by this affirmation. With the exception of Sarah, none of the other

women received the validation of having their perpetrator admit to being in the wrong. Instead they inferred his feelings of responsibility from other cues, like avoiding further interaction. SchoolGirl noted that while she purposefully tried to ignore her perpetrator after the assault, he also seemed to take care to avoid talking to her. They continued to live in the same residence and routinely saw one another, but never spoke to one another again. She perceived his distance as a sign of guilt. “And when we walk by each other we just kind of look at each other... cause I think he knows what he did.” SchoolGirl was also suspicious of the fact that no one in her residence seemed to know that they had sex. SchoolGirl expected that he would brag to his friends and that it would be gossipped about. When no one mentioned it to SchoolGirl she took this as a sign that he was aware that what he had done was wrong and did not want others to know. “Cause I figured that usually when a guy has sex with someone he goes around bragging about it, right? But I know he feels that he was in the wrong because nobody in my building knows that it happened to this day.”

Grace’s perpetrator engaged in an entirely different strategy than SchoolGirl’s in the immediate aftermath of the assault. He circumvented confrontation by gaslighting Grace, pretending that they were in a relationship and treating the situation like it was normal. Grace was confused by this at the time, but went along with it to try and attenuate the shock and distress that she was feeling. The ruse lasted briefly, however, as after just a few days her perpetrator seemed sufficiently relieved of his guilt to dump her and move on.

> And then ummm, he like, after like the next day [he] kind of made it like, I want to see you, this and that, and we kind of started seeing each other,

> ish, but it was... ... he... I think he just felt bad, like he realized what he did and he just felt bad, because he kind of made it clear, like a couple days later, like he never really wanted to be together at all, so...

I observed that over the progression of the interview the women often became more vocal about their suspicions of their perpetrator's intent. The knowing voice became louder as women had the opportunity to sound and hear their own words. The relational nature of this research becomes important as we try to understand the knowing voice. When the women spoke their words to me they became conscious of how they sounded to an outsider. For some of the women, particularly those who had never disclosed before, I could hear them hearing their own experience differently as they told it to me. They became more wary, more doubtful, they asked more questions, and revealed more anger. Janna questioned the intentionality of her perpetrator and began to feel that he had waited until she was sufficiently intoxicated to opportunistically take advantage of her.

> I think that may have potentially may have been his motive the whole night because, umm, leading up to that he'd been like... (inaudible) some of his friends and him to like, "oh you know, Matt really thinks you're a good guy, or a good girl", and I was like, uhhhhh, that's... uh, I really don't want anything to do with him and so... I'm assuming that he just took his opportunity when he saw it.

Sherry also concluded that what happened to her seemed purposeful, and that this was revealed by both the persistence that her perpetrator demonstrated when he ignored her resistance, as well as his coldness and the fact that "there was no empathy" for what

she was feeling. Even though her perpetrator never indicated that he felt guilty about what happened, she felt his emotional distance and unwillingness to discuss the situation revealed that he did not want to confront the wrongfulness of his behaviour. To Sherry, this was an admission of guilt.

> He never showed it [guilt], but as I, as I get a better understanding of it I'm just thinking that was one of his self-preservation qualities, like, you know just not, like not paying attention and hopefully it is going to go away, and just kind, you know, brush it aside as it comes, and... so yeah, I think that was one of the big factors, just, just, not acknowledging it and hence not admitting completely to, that he had a part to play.

Seeing the purposefulness of his behaviour allowed Sherry to be more confident about the fact that he had acted wrongly and was responsible for what had happened. “You know, it's kind of odd, so now I think about it in terms of, yeah he was going for something and you know he got what he wanted in the end, but... that was wrong on his part.”

For the majority of the interview Emma spoke about what happened almost entirely in relation to her own behaviour and her own choices. But when I asked her if she felt that he was as drunk as she was she told me that she did not think it would have even been possible for him to have been as drunk. Saying this allowed her to question his intentions and whether he was cognizant of what he was doing. She concluded that he probably was.

> Umm, I... he was probably drunk but not as drunk, like... honestly, because, like to have sex he... One would assume, like... he was, like,

> kind of sober enough to do it, so... I don't know. I think he knows what he's always doing, he like, he just kind of like one of those guys who just goes and like, I don't know... I don't know, like... I guess... he definitely knew what he was doing, he wasn't as like intoxicated as I was... ...probably like, seen me come in and kept an eye out, like... you know, like, watched me drink and this and that, whatever. You know."

SchoolGirl also suspected that what had happened had been done purposefully and when she relayed to me how sick she was the day after, I asked if she had any suspicions about the possibility of having been drugged and she told me that she felt it was possible. "Oh I was hungover really, really bad, and... yeah... I don't know, I mean there is a possibility, especially the bar I was at, it is well known for drugs going through the building, and... such." Blair spoke even more affirmatively about the fact that she may have been drugged, and even questioned how she could have otherwise been completely unconscious when the sex actually occurred. Blair suspected that her perpetrator may have resorted to drugs because he rightly believed that she wouldn't have sex with him otherwise.

> Pretty much the same, I mean I just... I just think... it wouldn't have happened had I not been either knocked out or... I wouldn't put it past him to have drugged me. I think he was smart enough to figure out how to do that. I don't think there was alcohol involved... Cause like I say, I'd had drinks before. I wasn't stupid. If I had tasted something...

Again, the shift that we see in the knowing voice throughout the interview alludes to the dynamic interaction of knowing and not knowing voices, and the dialectical pull

that they exert on one another. To understand the dialectics of knowing we need to examine liminal space where it interlocks with not knowing.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMBIVALENT VOICE

The ambivalent voice reflects the intersection of knowing and not knowing. Initially, I contemplated whether ambivalence should really be considered a voice unto itself, given that it is comprised of other voices. The particular merit of using the Listening Guide as my analytic tool is that it urged me to consider voices that occurred in tandem. When I specifically attended to the contrast of these voices it became evident that when heard together they create a particular disharmony that has proven essential to furthering my understanding rape acknowledgement. Understanding the simultaneous presence of knowing and not knowing is critical to understanding the complexity of acknowledgment because it reflects the liminal space, the place where something both is and is not rape. In order to understand how and why women label it is necessary to understand the influence that these competing forces have upon them. Although I chose to name this the ambivalent voice, because I felt it was most straightforward, I feel it could have also been rightly identified as the liminal voice as it emerged from a rather nebulous limen of knowing and not knowing. To analyze this voice I began by coding the pieces of text where the knowing and not knowing voices existed simultaneously.

The Responsibility of the Victim

The cultural ubiquity of victim blaming is at the heart of the ambivalence that women feel when it comes to knowing and labelling their experiences. Victim blaming is fueled by rape myths, specifically the myths that suggest that she was asking for it, and there are two particular variations of this myth that seemed to significantly influence the labelling of the women in this study. First, there is the myth that when a woman flirts with a man she is implicitly consenting to sexual activity, and is thus responsible if they

end up having sex. Second, there is the myth that women who are assaulted while intoxicated are to blame for having irresponsibly placed themselves in a vulnerable position. SchoolGirl spoke to the effect of this myth when she said, “I don’t know, I’ve heard a lot of cases when girls are drunk and it’s hard to prove what actually occurred the night before, so I figured I would just pretend, like, I was drunk and it didn’t happen...” SchoolGirl’s use of the word pretend is an expression of ambivalence, as it implies that even though she *knows* that what happened to her was assault, she also knows that the cultural norms would suggest that it is not. In order to reconcile herself with what is normative (and not open herself up to interrogation) she has to pretend that it was not what she thinks it was, which was an assault.

These myths undermine our perception of what rape is, and dilute the seriousness of an assault by shifting focus to the actions of the victim rather than the perpetrator. When women internalize blame, and see their own behaviour as having contributed to the event it becomes very difficult for them to use labels like sexual assault or rape. The norms of coercion, which are reinforced by these myths, are so influential that if the victim displays even the smallest amount of interest in the perpetrator, or willfully consumes alcohol, the perpetrator is exonerated. Phillips’ (2000) has similarly found that women do not perceive themselves as legitimate victims unless they can conclude that they were completely free of all responsibility for what happened. Janna illuminated just how strong these myths are when she revealed that even just having been in the presence of her perpetrator was sufficient to make her feel responsible for what happened.

> I shouldn't have... talked to him; I shouldn't have led him on more I say, and... it's, and I know it's stupid, but that's just the way I started thinking,

> was you know, I brought it on myself, I was, basically if you feel guilty for even having your presence there, like that was enough to... make him not guilty for it, more or less.

Janna struggled to label her experience because she saw herself as complicit in what had happened. I asked her to explain what she thought constituted sexual assault, and she told me that she thought it was the absence of consent. Having said this, she began to reflect upon her experience and realized that her degree of intoxication had rendered her unable to give consent because she did not even know what was happening. When Janna positioned consent at the core of her definition she realized that she was not to blame, as she was not capable of consenting, and she was then able to label what had happened to her.

> I guess if you're using [sexual] assault to mean that you were, didn't really realize what was going on... would that be made part of the definition? I didn't, I mean I don't know if I was held down or forced to do anything, but... I could have been, you know? So... And I would say that that I guess.

The Physical Violence Involved in the Assault

The degree of physical violence that was involved in the assault was a significant sticking point for many of the women. When they reflected on why their experience did not constitute sexual assault or rape, they frequently made comparisons to what we know as the real rape script. A substantial empirical literature has documented that this script (which is alternatively known as the blitz or stranger rape script) is not only widely held, but has proven to be stable across time (Ryan, 1986; Ryan, 2011). Scripts provide

culturally determined narratives for how events happen, including both consensual and non-consensual sex, and guide our beliefs about what actions constitute rape, where the assault occurs, the roles of the perpetrators and victims, and the character of both victims and perpetrators. Consistently, when women are asked to relay their beliefs about what a typical rape involves, they describe a violent attack by a stranger (Littleton, Tabernik et al., 2009). Although most women are aware that rape can be perpetrated by an acquaintance or date, the belief that rape involves considerable physical violence, fear, and resistance endures despite the mounting empirical evidence to suggest otherwise (Littleton, Tabernik et al., 2009; Littleton & Radecki Breitkopf, 2006; McMullin & White, 2006). Even though the women in this study sometimes reflected upon broader constructions of rape, in their minds it was still fundamentally anchored to resistance and force.

Although the number of women who specifically addressed resistance were in the minority, I suspect that this may have been influenced by the fact that the six women who did not address it were either unconscious at the time of their assault, or have absolutely no memory of what happened, which affirms that they were certainly too intoxicated to be able to resist. Of the four women who reported at least some memory of their assault, each spoke to the resistance that they engaged in. Isabelle and SchoolGirl both engaged in physical resistance that allowed them to flee. Isabelle first resisted by using what Ullman and Knight (1993) would describe as non-forceful verbal tactics. She tried to refuse her assailant without being aggressive. She tried to laugh off what was happening, and playfully communicate her disinterest in order to soften the rejection. When this did not work she became panicked and began using forceful verbal tactics (Ullman & Knight,

1993), commanding him to stop what he was doing. When her assailant persisted and inserted himself inside of her, Isabelle resorted to forceful physical strategies, shoving him off her so that she could run away.

> Like, I was just kind of... it was like an awkward, like I was in high school and I was like, 'haha, don't, like what are you doing?" Until he started taking my skirt off and I was like 'no, seriously, like stop what you're doing'. And he, like, was pinning me down and was like 'c'mon Isabelle, blah, blah, blah'. And I'm telling him, 'like, NO. I need you to stop right now. This is not funny.' And... the next thing I know he was like, like putting himself in me to, and I kinda just like, stopped and almost let him, and then I got really mad and I shoved him off and said 'No, like this is not funny' and I like got up and I left the room. And I was, then I started like bawling cause I'm like, ok that was, like a rape situation. I literally was just raped, so, then I left. And then at first I was just thinking, like, oh he's just a friend, like this is just, like... and then I realized, no, this isn't ok at all, so.

What is interesting about this scenario, aside from Isabelle's resistance, is that Isabelle suggested that in the moments that immediately followed the assault she was able to identify what happened as rape. However, when Isabelle relayed what had happened to her friends just a few minutes later she had already sanitized her description of the situation, and instead simply said that Evan had just tried to have sex with her. Although Isabelle recognized her experience in the moment, it seems that her knowing voice was quickly silenced through the processes of dismissal and normalization as she

pushed it out of her mind and categorized it as "just something Evan had done." Over the years, as Isabelle became more knowledgeable about sexual assault, she was finally able to reconnect her experience with rape. The role that Isabelle's resistance played in her acknowledgement is unclear, but Peterson and Muehlenhard's (2011) findings would suggest that it may have facilitated her ability to match her experience with her rape script, especially since she used forceful, physical resistance (Ullman & Knight, 1993).

SchoolGirl also spoke of using forceful physical resistance to interrupt the assault (Ullman & Knight, 1993). She was unconscious for the majority of her assault, but when she woke up and realized what was happening she forced her assailant off of her. "I woke up again and like... I guess we were in the process of having sex, and then I ended up kicking him off of me and I ran out of his room." SchoolGirl did not really reflect further upon the resistance that she displayed, but like Isabelle, she was one of the participants who connected her experience with the word rape very early on in the interview. Given that engaging in physical resistance does align with the real rape script, it is possible that by engaging in physical resistance these women found it easier to label their experiences.

In contrast to SchoolGirl and Isabelle, Sherry did not engage in physical resistance at the time of her assault, although she did resist by using what Ullman and Knight (1993) would refer to as non-forceful verbal strategies. The first time her assailant initiated sex, Sherry was insistent that she just wanted to sleep and so he left her alone. After sleeping for a while Sherry got up and rejoined the party. She continued to drink, but then felt like she needed to pass out again so she returned to her tent. Her assailant followed her and initiated sex again, which Sherry refused again. "I pretty

much remember not wanting to have sex, obviously, because you know I was coherent enough to say, you know, like, no are you sure, I don't think we should, and stuff like then." But he ignored her resistance and proceeded to have sex with her, although Sherry blacked out as it was happening and has little memory of having sex.

> I knew I didn't want to do anything, but I was still like in, like drunk kind of, and didn't really, you know, do anything like, like obvious, to like you know, put it out to like no I don't want this, or whatever, and so yeah that's how we ended up having sex, and that was like the worst cause like I woke up in the morning and I was like, no, causes like I wasn't really sure what happened.

When I asked Sherry how she would label her experience, she told me that she felt sexual coercion was an appropriate term because of the persistence that her perpetrator displayed and his disregard for her protests, but she never related it to sexual assault or rape as Isabelle and SchoolGirl did. Sherry expressed a lot of self-blame and implicated herself as having played a big part in what happened. Although she felt that he was more responsible, she maintained that what happened was inevitably because of the actions of both of them. Despite the fact that Sherry indicated her disinterest, she still felt responsible for what happened. Isabelle and SchoolGirl's acts of resistance enabled them to escape from their situations, whereas Sherry's did not. In turn, Sherry expressed much more ambivalence about what happened than either Isabelle or SchoolGirl. It is difficult to know what Sherry's rape script was, since she never spoke about rape or sexual assault, but it obviously did not match with her own experience.

Like Sherry, Grace attempted to engage in non-forceful verbal resistance, but given that she did not fully understand what was happening, resistance was difficult, and it was deflected by her perpetrator who insisted that nothing was happening.

> "I didn't know what was going on until like, half-way through it. And then I... like I was like oh my gosh stop. And he was like, "oh no, no, don't worry about it. Nothing's happening; it's fine. And I was so drunk out of my mind, but like, my phone was ringing and I looked at my phone and it was my dad and then it clicked."

Grace blamed herself for having not prevented the situation from happening, even though her ability to resist had been significantly compromised by alcohol (and potentially drugs). "I just felt really... disappointed in myself for letting it happen, in general." Grace expressed considerable ambivalence because while she was confident that she had not wanted sex and that she was too intoxicated to even understand what was happening, she still perceived the situation as something that she allowed to happen. This ambivalence made it extremely difficult for Grace to label her experience, even though she knew it was "kind of rape". Grace's struggle with ambivalence is a worrisome example of how self-blame is very effective at undermining women's knowing voice.

The presence of physical force and violence is arguably one of the most consistent themes in the real rape script, even though the majority of assaults are perpetrated using only instrumental levels of violence (i.e., the minimum amount required). Rape is presumed to evoke feelings of terror that arise from the threat of imminent physical harm enacted through force. Of course the rub is that perpetrators rarely need to employ physical force, because when women are rendered physically incapable of resisting,

through drugs or alcohol, physical force is unnecessary. Although Canadian law is sensitive to this, the broader cultural discourses on rape still perpetuate the belief that fear and physical harm are an essential aspect of rape (Canadian Criminal Codes, 1985; Ryan, 1988). Consequently, the lack of physical violence during an assault can be a barrier to acknowledgement, even when women recognize that they neither wanted nor consented to what happened. Grace's narrative revealed this directly.

> Cause I'm not, like I'm not entirely sure. I want to say I've never been raped, but like at the same time I was really confused, like, k... what just happened? Did I... was confused... did I know it was happening? Did I want that to happen? Then I realized that no I didn't, and no I didn't. So... just, when I think of rape I think of maybe a weapon being used, like something more like forceful than just alcohol, or like drugs... kidnapping, like things like that. Like I think of much more scarier things than whatever happened to me.

On the one hand, Grace knew that she did not want what happened, and was barely even aware of what was happening. Grace implicitly knew that sex under those conditions was not right, but her situation still did not align with what she knew about rape, and thus she avoided labelling. Given how impaired Grace was at the time of her assault, it is unsurprising that she did not feel fear – given the conditions that she described, how could she have? Yet she perceived the lack of threat and fear that she felt at the time of her assault as evidence that what happened was not serious enough to constitute rape. The fact that the incident was unwanted and non-consensual aligned with

her understanding of assault, but the fact that she had not been afraid or physically harmed did not, which explains the simultaneous presence of knowing and not knowing.

Janna revealed that although her primary rape script aligned with the real rape script, she believed that the term sexual assault could be applied more broadly to reflect any sexually aggressive situation, including those that would be identified as sexual harrassment.

> Umm... I guess it's just... the way that I use it would be different than the way it's used now. Umm... like when I think assault I think, like, being physically harmed or like held and forced into it, or raped in some way, like tied down, getting punched unconscious, something really, really violent and now it's... it's used in a more subjective way like to anything like blanketing that kind of effect at all. Umm... ... yeah, I guess it, it's good that they're trying to... implement that word... to... basically refer to anything of a sexually charged nature, but I still haven't really... it seems a bit harsh I guess, to say to a guy "you sexually assaulted a woman if you call her hot". I don't know, and then some people even say that that's being sexually assaulted and I don't know, I think that's a little bit much...

Although Janna was dubious of the legitimacy of applying the term sexual assault so broadly, it allowed her to consider how her own experience fell under the scope of that label, despite the absence of physical violence. Janna concluded that her complete inability to remember what happened was indicative of the fact that she was not in a position to consent, and like Grace, she realized that it was the absence of consent, not the presence of physical violence, that was the necessary condition.

> I guess I would for that instance call it assault... because I really don't know what happened... and it's even similar events of that nature I've, can recall enough that I know that it wasn't somehow brought on by my actions, you know what I mean? Umm... but in that instance, I mean, as far as I know I didn't have any... bidding in the matter, I just, it kind of just happened.

Where Janna used the term sexual assault to refer to situations that would more accurately be described as sexual harassment, Kristina used the term sexual harassment in lieu of sexual assault. She also espoused the belief that sexual assault was predicated upon the presence of violence, and in her own lived experience this script had been affirmed when she found her cousin in an alleyway after she had been beaten and raped by a stranger. Although Kristina's conceptualization of assault remained linked to the presence of sexual violence, she acknowledged that consent was also a matter of significance. Kristina likened her experience to rape, and concluded that there was a bit of similarity, but she inevitably rejected the label because she did not feel that her experience sufficiently qualified. Instead, she adopted the term sexual harassment, as it accounted for her ambivalence and the part of her that knew a violation had occurred, even if it did not meet her criteria for rape.

> I tried... like I just tried to think it's just sexual harassment, it's like, kind of like, a little bit like rape, kind of thing, but it's not... like, I don't, I cannot say it's rape because... I should have known better, but... it's hard to like say what it is for me... ...because, like, I don't know, for me, like, it's kind of, when you're raped, I... believe that you'd be like, somewhat

> like aware of something that's happening and like, you would have, like, bruises or marks or something, but, I didn't have anything like that, like. I thought you'd get beat up or something, but...

When I asked Sarah about sexual assault she told me that she envisioned a rapist using force to exert power over a woman. Although her conceptualization of rape was not as linked to physical injury, she still emphasized the role of force. When she evaluated her experience in relation to her script she felt that it did not qualify as sexual assault because she did not believe that her boyfriend had sex with her with the intention of exerting power. Consequently, she struggled to label her experience and it remained unresolved for her.

> Like I didn't, I don't know, I didn't consider it rape up to that point, because like when I thought of rape I thought of more, of like a power scenario. And, so like it couldn't, like that was like a really like hard word. So I couldn't, like it was hard, I couldn't label it that…

Because Sarah did not have a script that matched her experience, she struggled with how to process it and name it. In the weeks prior to the interview, however, Sarah had participated in the Sexual Assault Resistance Education program that is offered to first year women at the University of Windsor. This is an intensive 12-hour program that teaches women about sexual violence by using the terms of sexual coercion, sexual assault, and rape, in order to help them recognize situations where there is higher risk for sexual violence, and strategize how to resist it (Senn et al., 2013). Through this program, Sarah was able to access a script for sex that was not physically forceful, but was still

unwanted and non-consensual, and she subsequently arrived at the label of sexual coercion.

> "I was always trying to think like you could say unwanted sex, but that wasn't as good... So like I remember it was actually like when I took the resistance like two or three weeks ago, like said like, talked about like, uhh, sexual co, coercion. And that was like more suitable because it talked about, like there's this situation, and in a way when they were talking about how, like, people more easily coerce if they are under the influence and stuff, so that like, really triggered something."

What is interesting about Sarah's choice of label, however, is that she would also have learned in the workshop that sex that occurs when you are too intoxicated to resist is still legally considered sexual assault. Sarah would have been given a script that would allow her to match her experience specifically to sexual assault, but she chose to use sexual coercion instead. Rather than broaden her script for sexual assault to include more than just physically forceful sex, she added coercion to her lexicon and categorized her experience under that label.

> I see it as sexual coercion, not sexual assault. They are two different things. I think sexual assault is more like a forceful assault, so that's how I would describe it, like more like... physical, like physical, like holding someone or like something like that. That would be more... what sexual assault is to me anyways.

Sarah's decision to use sexual coercion is certainly not inappropriate, as it does describe the conditions of her experience; however, sexual assault would have been more

specific and equally appropriate. The fact that Sarah could have chosen the term sexual assault and chose not to alludes to the complexity of her acknowledgment, which was also mediated by her relationship with the perpetrator.

The Relationship with the Perpetrator

Sarah chose to label her experience as sexual coercion, because even though she believed affirmatively that what had happened was wrong, she did not consider it rape because of how her boyfriend handled it and took responsibility for what happened. She was adamant with her boyfriend that it could never happen again, but she was sympathetic to the fact that her boyfriend was also drunk at the time and that his judgement was impaired. Her evaluation was also influenced by his response, because when he realized that what was happening was inappropriate (because she was unresponsive) he stopped and called her parents. Sarah felt that it was not his intention to take advantage of her, and also felt that he had validated her feelings that what had happened was wrong. For Sarah, labelling her experience involved weighing the actions of her boyfriend against her presumptions of how a man who committed rape would act after the fact. Her boyfriend's actions did not match her script for how men who rape behave, and this mismatch was critical to Sarah's assessment of what happened to her. She explained her decision to not label it rape or sexual assault by comparing it with another experience in her life that she would now label as sexual assault.

In the other situation, when Sarah was 14, a male friend came to her house to comfort her after she had broken up with her boyfriend. She was taken aback when he started to kiss her, and when she resisted and questioned what he was doing he became physically forceful. Sarah responded with what Ullman and Knight (1993) would

describe as forceful physical and verbal resistance and was able to end the situation before it progressed further.

> ...like I remember cause I was sitting there and like he goes to turn, he goes to kiss me, and I'm like, back up and say what are you doing? And he goes, oh why did you ask me over here? If that would have happened now I would have freaked out, but at like that point I was confused and like he kind of like forcefully went on top of me and started kissing me and I pushed him off and I, I yelled at him and he left.

When Sarah evaluated this situation she felt that in addition to the fact that the boy was aggressive, it was his considerable lack of empathy and understanding that made her feel that the situation was an assault.

> It was just... I think it was, like, cause it was the whole like, the sense that like he didn't care. That was the biggest thing that, like even when I was like, he, actually he could tell that I was upset about what was happening. He was like, he was indifferent. He didn't feel like he was doing anything wrong, he was like, he was raising his voice and like 'who do you think you are?'

When she examined his actions she felt that he showed no respect for her boundaries or expression of disinterest. The callousness of his behaviour aligned with the behaviour she associated with sexually aggressive men, whereas the behaviour of her boyfriend did not. For Sarah, it was the intention behind the behaviour that was more significant than the physical act that occurred, which is why she concluded that she felt being forcefully kissed had been an example of sexual assault, but when her boyfriend

had sex with her when they were both really drunk it was not (even though she knew she could not consent, the fact that he had not intended to assault her was paramount).

Jade also evaluated what happened to her based upon her relationship with her perpetrator. Like Sarah, Jade was also in an intimate relationship with the man involved as he was her husband. Although they were officially separated at the time, Jade explained that there had still been sporadic intimacy between them because “in any relationship when you put so much into it, you flip flop, you go back and forth, and back and forth, to make sure it is the right decision for you”. Sex, however, had become a significant point of contention in their relationship and on the night she was assaulted she was insistent with her husband that she absolutely did not want to have sex. Jade was heartbroken when she realized that sex had occurred, and felt extremely angry and betrayed. Despite these feelings, labelling was a conflicted experience for Jade because although she could intellectually access the language of sexual assault, she struggled to apply it to her husband because of the long history of their relationship.

> So I guess in a sense, like I feel victimized, but I don't. I understand that he was working through many things, many issues himself... I think if it was somebody, like... that I just didn't know, or somebody that I knew very briefly, that had done it and that had hurt me, and that, you know, physically maybe hurt me as well as emotionally, then I might be able to label it more so, that yes, that's what that is. I don't know why... it's just like... ... it's like I said, it was probably more so because.. of... the fact that he, it was somebody that.. I had a relationship with, like a very long relationship.

Jade was able to see that if the man involved had been someone other than her husband she would have been more comfortable naming what happened as sexual assault. The ambivalent feelings that Jade had toward her husband fueled her ambivalence when it came to labelling her rape. “Because I do love him. I still do. You know... but, he's not a good man.” When Jade allowed her feelings of anger towards her husband to take primacy she was more at ease with labelling. This was most evident when she actually took her husband to court for various violations, and specifically included sexual assault in the list of charges. She dropped the charges, however, because her ability to be compassionate and understanding toward him surpassed her feelings of anger. “I think because I knew him. I knew every inch of him, and what he was about and how caring he can be. And... the capacity that, I knew he loved me at one point, you know.” Although Jade never faltered in representing what happened to her as a violation, it was a struggle for her to label her husband’s behaviour as rape, because she saw him as someone who loved her, or at least had loved her. For Jade, rape was an act of callousness and violence that was antithetical to love, and thus the semantic weight of the word made it impossible for her to wholly apply it to her situation, given her perception of her husband.

In this way, the relationships that the women had with their perpetrators affected how they negotiated labels, in part because those labels had specific implications for the men involved. Knowing their experience as rape meant also knowing the man involved as a rapist. Despite the fact that many of the women in this study experimented with the word rape, and some acknowledged that it was an appropriate label, none of the women ever used the word rapist to describe the man who was involved. All of the women in

this study were assaulted by friends or intimate partners, and given the stigma that is attached to the rapist label, it is unsurprising that women would be reluctant to assign it to men in their lives.

Sarah, Jade, and Isabelle each expressed reluctance to label because of the impact that it would have upon their relationship with the perpetrators or others known to them. Sarah was assaulted by her boyfriend, whom she continued to date at the time of the interview. She was hesitant about labelling because she was aware of how upsetting it would be for him to hear it. “Well I said, I don't think I used the word rape cause I think it would have... like sounded harsh to him.” Sarah saw the assault as an aberration in their relationship, and believed that it would never happen again; consequently, she was careful to negotiate a response that would allow her to maintain the relationship. Sarah preferred to just describe why the behaviour was unacceptable, rather than assign a label to it.

When I asked Jade how she labeled what had happened, she alluded to the fact that she found her husband’s behaviour offensive and unacceptable, but she avoided explicitly labelling by just describing the course of events.

> More so just saying he was a complete douche. Like I (laughs), it sums it up, you know, like I just... I told them exactly what happened and I didn't, I never labeled it. I never said that he raped me; I never said that it was a sexual assault; I just said, you know what, I told him no, he said, you know, he did whatever...

Although Jade would eventually divorce her husband, she continued to have regular interaction with him because they shared custody of their children. When I asked

her if she felt safe with him, she indicated that she had no choice but to believe that she was safe because she relied upon him to care for their children while she was at school.

> I have no choice but to feel safe right now. I have no choice. Because I'm kind of put in a position with going back to school... I'm working, I work straight nights. And... I have nobody else to watch the girls except for him and my mum. And my mum's burnt out. She can only do so much, and I work until like 10 o'clock at night, I'm in school 'til 10, so I don't get home til 11. So I have no choice but to trust him in my house because my kids don't want to sleep at my mum's anymore.

For Jade, attaining substantive emotional distance from her husband was not a possibility, so she had to find a way to reconcile herself with what happened in order to be able to interact with him, in a civil manner; avoiding using a label made this easier. However, Jade's narrative does provide insight into the ambivalence that she struggled with when it came to labelling, because she revealed that at one point during her divorce proceedings she did label what her husband did as sexual assault. During their separation Jade's husband engaged in a range of obsessive, coercive, and violating behaviours that significantly impacted Jade's quality of life. In the context of her divorce proceedings and custody negotiations Jade became motivated to label his behaviour because it strengthened her case, but when she and her husband negotiated a more civil relationship she was impelled to drop the charges. Jade was never comfortable labelling what had happened as rape, but she did so instrumentally when there were actual benefits to be gained. In the end, Jade was too uncomfortable with the consequences of labelling, and

thus returned to describing what had happened without assigning labels to her husband's actions.

Unlike Sarah and Jade, Isabelle was not involved in an intimate relationship with her perpetrator, but he was a member of her immediate social circle. Isabelle was still disinclined to label her experience because of the disruption it would cause among her friends, and the possible social ostracization that she may have faced as a consequence.

> I think it was more of something that... you're in a group of friends... everyone's really close, they're all good friends with this guy, they're all, there's a big group of hockey players, we were all their girlfriends, or their friends. We were all, it was a fun group, right? We'd always get together, always had this group... that stayed together, so you didn't wanna cause any animosity, didn't want to cause any drama. There was enough drama in itself that you didn't want to bring more to it, or draw attention to yourself, against someone else in the group, it seemed.

Isabelle's narrative exemplifies the way that coercive discourses of heterosex function as a form of social control (Gavey, 2005). Women are afraid of resisting or protesting the coercion because of the implications that it can have upon their social standing. Fortunately, when Isabelle moved to attend university and developed a new group of friends she gained new social supports; as she relied less upon her old group of friends and acquired emotional distance from them, her motivation to label shifted and she was able to acknowledge that she had been raped without the social risks that she would have once faced.

The Semantics of Sexual Violence

The parlance of the language surrounding sexual violence was often a source of ambivalence, because even when the women knew that they had been violated, they were sometimes unsure of which words were appropriate for their situation. Consequently, they avoided labelling. The semantic differences between the words rape and sexual assault, and the sexual acts that would be corralled within their definitions, posed a particular problem. Janna likened her experience to rape during the interview, but concluded that sexual assault was probably the most appropriate label. When I queried her distinction she explained that it was because her experience had involved oral sex but not intercourse.

> Umm... no? Because he told me that we didn't actually have sex. Well, I guess like... if you're using penetration to mean sex, umm... and... since it didn't go past that threshold, it was for some reason... less disturbing? Even though... it... it really seemed silly to think that now, because I mean... what difference was there really? Like... we still... ended up in bed together overnight, no clothes on, umm... like there's a very thin line for what we apparently didn't do. Umm, to this day who knows if that actually did happen. If it had then... I... I guess it would have been rape. I mean I... I didn't consent to it.

Janna's conclusion that what happened to her constituted sexual assault, but not rape, is reflective of the coital imperative that is fundamentally linked to the heteronormative discourses that define sex as penile-vaginal penetration (Gavey, 2005). Rape is predicated upon the occurrence of sex, which means that if sex was not perceived

to have happened, then it follows that rape could not have happened. Fortunately, Janna was able to find a label that felt appropriate to her, as sexual assault provided a broader script that she could match with her own experience.

The Construction of Victimization

A significant source of ambivalence emerged from the discourse of victimization, and the connotations that are imbued in the words rape and sexual assault. For some of the women, ambivalence emerged from the fact that they believed what had happened to them was not sufficiently victimizing to constitute rape, and thus they were precluded from labelling it as such. These women felt that they were not legitimate victims because their assault had not been sufficiently traumatizing. In comparison, other women did feel victimized but were averse to being thought of in that way, because of either the negative connotations of the victim label or the fact that it made them feel worse about what had happened.

Grace was influenced by her expectations of what rape victims are like after they are assaulted. She believed that women who had been raped would be traumatized by their experience, and would struggle to cope and live normal lives after the fact; because she managed to cope on her own, and was eventually able to put the experience out of her mind, Grace concluded that she was not that severely affected by what happened, which is in keeping with Gavey and Schmidt's (2011) discourse of the "trauma of rape".

> I know it was kind of rape. I know in a general sense that is kind of what it is, but I have a really hard time coming to reality with that, like I have a hard time... cause I know people, most people who have been raped, it's been a lot more traumatic. So I can't really call it that because it didn't,

> like affect me that badly in the long run, I don't think. Like it's obviously really sucked at the time, but I'm ok now, like I don't have a fear of men, or... like, I don't have any long-standing problems from it...

However, during the interview Grace began to cry when we talked about how the assault affected her, and the self-condemnation she felt, revealing the fact that there was more trauma and distress than she allowed herself to acknowledge. Prior to the interview, Grace had never spoken with anyone about what had happened, and had tried to push it from consciousness by denying the effect that it had upon her. The ambivalent voice that we hear, which both recognizes and denies that her experience was rape, arises from the tension between her thoughts and her feelings. When Grace evaluated her situation cerebrally she concluded that it was relatively non-traumatizing, and subsequently could not be rape; but when she evaluated her feelings about what had happened, it was hard to deny that she had not been profoundly affected by it.

Some of the women were hesitant to label their experience, specifically because of the emotional weight of the words sexual assault and rape, and their connotations. SchoolGirl was reluctant to use these labels because she wanted to believe that what had happened to her was not serious enough to be considered sexual assault. Labelling made her feel that the violation was more significant. “I mean, you, it, it was definitely a sexual assault, and some people might even classify it as a rape, but I mean... it, it, it, as far as I’m concerned it is, but I don’t want to consider it that way...” Jade was motivated to avoid labelling because of the implications that it would have for her relationship with her husband, but she was also motivated to avoid labelling because of the consequences it would have for how she viewed herself. Jade’s text revealed that she was not technically

an unacknowledged victim as she was able to objectively talk about her experience as sexual assault. Jade articulated an explicit decision, however, to not know her experience in this way because of what she believed was associated with the label. Jade's decision to not use the label was conscious and purposeful, which is a pattern that has also been observed by Peterson and Muehlenhard (2011).

> And it was very difficult for me to say he sexually assaulted me. I didn't, I don't know it it's that I didn't want, I didn't want the label. Or if I didn't want him to have the label. I, I think it's more so me, like it was like uh, ok, you know what, he just, he, it was just something that he did. It's not something I really want to be known as an abused person, because I don't act like an abused person. I'm not a victim. I move past things.

Jade stated specifically that she did not want to be known as a victim of sexual violence because the word victim was laden with meaning. Being labeled a victim was disempowering and made her feel worse about the situation. She did not want to see herself as being weak or abused, nor did she want others seeing her that way. Jade feared being seen as an abused woman, and being subjected to the pity that she believed people would direct towards her if they knew.

> I don't. I don't want people to be like '(sigh) there's Jade. Her husband's really being mean to her'. Like you know, I don't want it to be like that. You know, I'm, 'hey, there's Jade, that girl, she's got it going on!' (laughter) You know, like, I guess it's like a persona that I want to just, I want to know I am strong, I am moving past this. I am, you know, I'm not a victim, you know. I've learned from being victimized... but I'm not a

> victim. I'm not going to hold that because I see so many people in the professions that I've been in, there like, they, they milk it. You know, I'm a victim so I can't do this, I've been victimized. You know there are women who have been assaulted and those women... truly are victimized. Those women are truly hurt and they need help. I, I'm ok. You know? I'm ok.

When Peterson and Muehenhard (2011) conducted interviews with women who were unacknowledged they found that the participants avoided using the word rape because it was upsetting and made them feel less in control. This was also evident with the women I interviewed. Even when women knew that what had happened to them was actually sexual assault, their substantial aversion to the meaning and feelings attached to these labels fueled ambivalence and resistance to acknowledgement. Kristina, for example, acknowledged the similarity between what happened to her and rape, but rejected the label because of the distress that it caused her.

> It's like, kind of like, a little bit like rape, kind of thing, but it's not... like, I don't, I cannot say it's rape... They, my dad just said, it was... like, it was pretty mu--, my dad said it was rape, but, I just said no it can't be rape, so.

Naming her experience as rape made the experience feel even more traumatic for Kristina, so she found it easier to cope if she labelled it something else. Unfortunately, by refusing this label she struggled to explain to others what had happened to her. She tried to explain that it was unwanted and non-consensual, but did not know how to refer to it. Kristina settled upon the term sexual harassment, and while it was helpful in

capturing her ambivalence and uncertainty about what had happened, it did not precisely capture what actually happened to her. By using sexual harassment, Kristina was able to denote that something inappropriate had occurred, without accepting the emotional burden taxed by the word rape.

Blair too demonstrated considerable ambivalence because of how the word rape made her feel. Blair was considerably older than Kristina, as she was 47 at the time of the interview, and had many more years to reflect upon her experience. During that time, Blair had volunteered with Victim's Services and raised two teenage daughters. Objectively, Blair was very knowledgeable about rape and sexual assault and in the interview she stated that she knew that these labels appropriately described what had happened to her; however, she was emotionally unable to reconcile herself with those words, because it was just too painful for her. Consequently, Blair willfully spent 33 years distancing herself from what happened. She tried not to think about it and refused to speak about it so that she could avoid confronting it. For Blair, labelling required that she process what happened to her and the implications that it had on her life, and that was something she felt emotionally unprepared to deal with.

Dusty: So, umm... in trying to... think about your experience now, have you, have you ever tried to label what happened to you? Just for yourself?

Blair: Not really.

Dusty: Mhmm.

Blair: No.

Dusty: Ok. Why do you think that is?

Blair: Just sort of ignore it, and kind of, don't want to think about that part of it.

The interview was very difficult for Blair, as it was the first time she had ever disclosed and ever directly labeled her experience. When I asked her what the hardest part of the interview was she told me that it was "acknowledging that it happened". For Blair, acknowledging her experience as rape made it worse because she had to confront the trauma that it produced, and the way her life spiraled out of control in the years that followed. Blair was not comforted by having an explanation for the risky and harmful behaviour that she engaged in as a teenager; instead, she was more upset by knowing how different her life could have been had it never happened.

Theorizing Ambivalence

Peterson and Muehlenhard (2011) have offered the match-and-motivation model as a framework for understanding how women label their experiences of non-consensual sex. They explained that we tend to hold the assumption that women (and men) have clear definitions of what they believe sex is, and from this we further assume that they will evaluate whether or not their own experiences are sex based upon their own definitions. What Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007) discovered, however, is that labelling is a more complicated process because of the motivations that also colour the labelling process. Labelling is influenced by how closely a woman's experience aligns with her available scripts – but this is coupled with her expectations of what the outcomes of labelling will be. What Peterson and Muehlenhard (2007; 2011) have found is that if the anticipated outcome of labelling is positive then the likelihood of labelling is increased, whereas it decreases if the anticipated outcome is negative. Labelling is thus

informed by both the match between the label and a woman's experience, and the "anticipated consequences" that are associated with that label.

This model illuminates the ambivalence of both knowing and not knowing, and the struggle that women face when it comes to negotiating labels. When rape is presumed to be predicated on the presence of force or physical violence (Ryan, 2011), and the scripts for accepted sexual interactions (i.e., hook-ups) are indiscernible from actual instances of rape, it is predictable that women will struggle to know their experiences as rape. After all, the overwhelming majority of women who do not acknowledge report experiences that occurred when they were too intoxicated to consent and the women in this study were unexceptional in this regard. Consequently, the women were required to negotiate labels from a liminal space that is culturally scripted as both normative and deviant.

This study, and the voice of ambivalence in particular, provides support for the match-and-motivation model. Peterson and Muehlenhard (2011) identified four specifc themes that related to match and that offer insight into the potential conflux of scripts that influences ambivalence. These included the victim's behaviour prior to the incident, the level of force involved during the assault, the resistance engaged in by the victim, and the relationship between the victim and the man involved. In this study, each of these four themes was articulated by at least some of the women, and factored into their negotiation of labelling. Peterson and Muehlenhard also identified five themes that related to women's motivation to label or not label their experience as rape, which included: to avoid calling the man a rapist; to avoid the negative label; to avoid feeling worse; to avoid distrusting all men; and to avoid having to report it. Of these, the first three were

also represented in the women's narratives of ambivalence. The findings from this study, support the theorizing of Peterson and Muehlenhard, by providing a deeper analysis of the struggle that women face when it comes to voicing their narratives and labelling their experience. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for a multidimensional examination of acknowledgment that accounts for conflicting positions.

The Fluidity of Ambivalence

The narratives in this study revealed that the ambivalent voice is not static, and affirmed the suspicion that labelling is not rigidly dichotomous. I would offer that acknowledgement is best understood as a dialectic of knowing and not knowing, whereby these two processes constantly pull upon one another, shifting ambivalence closer to or farther from knowing. Even within the course of each interview, I could see this tension and the shift in women's perceptions. Over time, scripts change; as women accrue new experiences and are exposed to alternative ideas, their scripts for rape and sexual assault can change and a script that initially was a mismatch with a woman's experience can become a match. Isabelle's narrative illustrated how ambivalence is dynamic, and how her labelling of the situation shifted back and forth.

> Umm... I actually, after it happened, like after I had talked to a couple of people and dealt with it a little bit, I never thought about it at all, until maybe... two years ago when I was doing a, I was doing I think an online study about like sexual assault, and I'm like, no, I've never been raped, nothing's ever happened to me like that, nothing, nothing, and then I thought about this situation and I thought, I was actually talking to a friend

> about it, and I'm like, 'oh my god, no, that has happened to me.' And that's when I realized that was a sexual assault and like a rape situation.

The time between Isabelle's assault and the interview was more than five years, and by the time of the interview she was nearing the end of her undergraduate degree. Through her education and the ideas that she was exposed to, Isabelle's conceptualization of rape changed and eventually she was able to map in onto her own experience. In the years that immediately followed her assault, Isabelle dismissed her experience as just something that had happened and she stopped thinking about it until she participated in research that presented her with a description of rape that aligned with what had happened to her.

> At the time it was more of just, something that Evan had tried to do, and then it was kind of forgotten. So. I don't even, like, I didn't even mean to like repress it or anything, it just... wasn't really in my train of thought until I was answering questions about it... and then I realized... that that has happened to me, so.

Isabelle's process of acknowledgment was also facilitated by attaining distance from the man who perpetrated her assault and the peer group that they both belonged to. Within their circle of friends it was common for the male members of the group to sexually coerce the female members, particularly when alcohol was involved. For example, Isabelle recalled an instance when another girl was pressured into giving one of their friends oral sex. Isabelle explained that coercion was so normative that the girls just accepted it and did not challenge their male friends, even when they were upset by it. "I think we were just really naive in thinking that things these guys were doing were ok,

because they were in our group of friends that it was acceptable. Or even if it was not acceptable, fine, but we let them get away with it." Accepting the coercive behaviour was perceived as necessary to maintaining group cohesion, so the girls conceded to it, which they then viewed as an indication that they must have wanted it. "And then in our minds we were like, well we did it, so it's not like it was rape, but... it also wasn't... we... it wasn't wanted, either."

When Isabelle moved to attend university and made new friends, she was able to gain both emotional distance from her former friend group, as well as perspective on the social norms that dictated their interactions. Labelling her experience as rape or sexual assault would have required that she confront the unacceptable behaviour that was taken for granted among her friends, which would have been accompanied by social risks. Given the risks, Isabelle was not motivated to label her experience; however, after several years passed and she had acquired a new social network, the consequences of labelling were diminished. The shift in Isabelle's comfort with labelling supports Peterson and Muehlenhard's (2011) theorizing on the role that the anticipated consequences of labelling have upon the acknowledgment process.

What I realized during my analysis is that there is a cultural assumption that knowledge is acquired through a linear process. We begin by not knowing something, and then we know it a little more, and a little more, until eventually we know it well. We entertain the possibility that knowledge may stagnate and not develop beyond a certain point, but we never assume that it recedes. We assume that once we arrive at the point of knowing something we do not revert to not knowing it. Accordingly, when it comes to acknowledgment or "knowing" one's experience as rape, the expectation is that women

either know it or they do not, and once they know it they cannot unknow it – a principle that is illustrated in the idiom “you can’t unring that bell”. My findings, however, suggest otherwise, and reveal that acknowledgement is complicated by the fact that knowing and not knowing are not mutually exclusive. Rather than constructing acknowledgment as a linear process of knowing, I suggest that we re-imagine acknowledgment as the process of fitting a puzzle together without having the picture on the box to guide us. We move the pieces around and depending upon the arrangement we sometimes more closely approximate a whole picture. The knowing and not knowing voices are the pieces of the puzzle, only the not knowing pieces do not actually belong to the puzzle that we are trying to fit together – but we don’t know that because we don’t have a schema or picture that allows us to realize that the pieces do not belong to the puzzle. The more knowing pieces that we have, however, the closer we are able to come to knowing our experiences as rape, and subsequently labelling it.

CHAPTER IX

FINAL THOUGHTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Theorizing Acknowledgement

The aim of this research was to further the rape acknowledgment literature by providing a qualitative discussion of how women articulated their experiences of rape in the absence of the legally and culturally meaningful labels of rape and sexual assault. The intention was to provide women with the opportunity to discuss their experiences in their own language in order to understand the process by which they approached or distanced themselves from labelling. Additionally, I sought to identify the factors that influenced women's labelling, particularly those that functioned as barriers to acknowledgement.

Within psychological research there is a history of examining individual-level phenomena, such as personality, attitudes, and behaviours, while overlooking the situational and sociocultural variables that influence the experience of the individual (within the sexual violence literature see Gavey, 2005, for exception). Feminist researchers have emphasized the necessity of explicating the cultural and structural embeddedness of violence against women, and have exposed the misconception that violence occurs as an individualized event that is independent of these systems (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabrall, 2009; Heise, 1998; Koss & Harvey, 1991).

When we theorize violence against women we need to account for the fact that it does not occur in social isolation. Beyond the actual physical experience of rape, there is significant social meaning that is attached to rape, which influences how women react to it and process it. Regardless of whether or not women disclose their experiences, rape is a socially embedded experience, and women are influenced by the way that it is

constructed and articulated within their social milieu and the culture more broadly. Rape acknowledgment is not simply an individual level process that occurs independently of interpersonal relationships and social norms, thus our theorizing must be broadened to account for these influences.

The sociocultural context is constructed from normative patterns of social meanings and permissions that provide norms for conduct and provide us with a framework for interpreting our experience and ascribing meaning to it. It provides the backdrop for how women understand and construct the story of an assault. Women are influenced by the cultural norms that guide our behaviour and provide parameters for what is considered culturally acceptable and culturally deviant. In regard to rape acknowledgment, I would suggest that there are three particularly salient aspects of North American culture that influence how women negotiate meaning and label sexual violence, which are rape culture, neo-liberalism and cultural dialectics.

Rape culture. Rape culture is the term that is widely used to describe the confluence of socio-cultural variables that perpetuate rape through the normalization, trivialization, and legitimization of sexual coercion. In the narratives told in this study, the influence of rape culture could be heard in the not knowing voice as women normalized their assault experiences, and avoided labelling them as sexual violence because they did not see them as sufficiently aberrant to warrant doing so. The normalcy of sexual coercion in their lives revealed the influence of rape culture. Similarly, the dismissal heard in the not knowing voice is indicative of the way rape culture undermines the seriousness of sexual violence in women's lives. Rape culture is essential to understanding acknowledgment and labelling because is responsible for influencing the

broadly understood cultural definition of rape, and thus provides the cultural parameters for interpreting an experience and ascribing labels.

Rape culture is a reflection of attitudes and behaviours that have alternatively been described as rape supportive, or rape prone (Sanday, 1996). A central indicator of rape culture is the tendency to construct rape as a female problem by positioning women at the center of prevention efforts (Mardorossian, 2002). Rather than focusing on the violence of perpetrators and the false beliefs that justify their behaviour, rape culture redirects our attention to the behaviour and presumed responsibility of the woman involved (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 1993). According to Buchwald et al. (1993), rape culture is responsible for rape apologism and victim blaming. Under these conditions, the behaviours of sexually coercive men are dismissed or forgiven, while victimized women are interrogated. Rape culture construes rape as being the problem of individual women, rather than an outcome of a socially unjust and oppressive system of misogyny.

Rape myths are one of the primary mechanisms through which rape culture functions, and these myths are strongly influenced by prescribed gender norms that dictate how men and women are expected to behave. Women, specifically, are expected to abide by these rules, which generally involves conforming to expectations of conventional femininity, in order to protect themselves from being raped (Ward, 1995). When women break the rules (e.g., by being intoxicated or dressing promiscuously), rape is considered understandable, and it is thus she, and not the rapist, who is held to account. These myths foster the false assumption that rape is inevitable, even though Sanday (1996) has demonstrated that not all cultures are rape prone. The appeal of rape myths is that they support the just world hypothesis (Lerner, 1980), which is the belief that people deserve what happens to them. It is deeply unsettling for people to believe that they do

not have control over whether or not negative things like rape happen to them. One of the ways that this discomfort is reconciled is by justifying the bad things that happen to other people. In the case of rape, rape myths serve as justification for why certain women get raped, by creating the false belief that women who do not engage in those behaviours are protected from being raped (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Subsequently, rape myths are directly linked to the victim-blaming that permeates and defines rape culture. Victim-blaming is one of the most common responses that sexual assault survivors receive upon disclosing, which is unfortunate given that it is consistently linked with a reduction in wellbeing (Ullman, 2010). The women in this study were aware of the cultural proclivity to blame victims, and this was identified as a reason for choosing not to disclose. When women received blaming messages from their friends and others around them it exacerbated the self-blame that they have been culturally primed to experience. The women evaluated their unwanted sexual experiences in relation to the rape myths that frame the discourse on what constitutes sexual violence in our culture, which is biased against them. Rape myths and victim-blaming are essential to understanding how women label their experiences of assault. They were at the core of women's not knowing voice, and significantly influenced how women matched their experiences with appropriate labels.

Neo-liberalism. The victim blaming that infuses rape culture is aided by an even broader neo-liberal cultural narrative. Neo-liberalism is a political and economic theory that has evolved from the social philosophy of liberalism. According to Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005), "neo-liberalism straddles a wide range of social, political, and economic phenomena at different levels of complexity" (p. 1), but in each manifestation it can be recognized by the primacy of individual rights and freedom of choice. Neo-liberalism

presumes social conditions that are fair and meritocratic, where everyone has equal ability and opportunity; consequently, it privileges personal responsibility and presumes that individuals, regardless of their social position, have equal opportunity to negotiate their lives and experiences (Fitz, Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2012). Although this theory has been most commonly used to explain the current political-economic culture of North America, and it is not generally applied to individual behaviour, scholars such as Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras (2008), Bay-Cheng and Zucker (2007), Fine and McClelland (2006; 2007), and Rich (2005) have demonstrated its utility when combined with a feminist analysis of victimhood and purported responsibility for sexual experiences.

Neo-liberal theory has yet to be applied to the literature on rape acknowledgement, but Bay Cheng and Eliseo-Arras (2008) have explored the way it illuminates women's responses to unwanted sexual experiences. They have examined the intersection of sexist gender norms with neo-liberal norms and have demonstrated the influence that this intersection has upon women and the way that they make sense of unwanted sexual experience. Namely, they have found that women's use of the neo-liberal rhetoric of choice and responsibility is related to the expression of self-blame, as well as and the tendency to dismiss the significance of what happened. Bay Cheng and Eliseo-Arras' findings align with the not knowing voice that I identified in this study. Like the women they interviewed, the narratives of the women I interviewed were often guided by feelings of self-blame, and these feelings of responsibility influenced their use of labels. The women also created space between themselves and the experience of being victimized by dismissing and/or normalizing what happened to them.

Neo-liberalism is centered upon an assumption of personal liberty, and is sustained by the belief that we, as individuals, have the ability to freely choose the course

of our actions. According to neo-liberal rhetoric we are all responsible for ourselves, and self-determination is within our control as individuals (Adam, 2005). The colloquialism of “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps” is symbolic of this ideology and alludes to its widespread acceptance within North American culture. With its emphasis on the individual, neo-liberalism displaces the role of systemic injustice, and instead attributes it to the freely determined choices of the individual. It obscures the structural and cultural oppression that constrains choices in proportion to degrees of marginalization.

Neo-liberalism intersects with our understanding of sexual violence in that it influences how we attribute blame and responsibility. Bay-Cheng and Eliseo-Arras (2008) explain that victimization is antithetical to the values of neo-liberalism. In a cultural system where personal responsibility and choice are valued at a premium, the loss of control and choice that are implicit in victimization makes victimization an untenable construct, or at the very least a highly undesired one. Victimization erodes the presumption of control and reveals that individuals are not simply free actors who self-determine every aspect of their lived experience. Instead, it reveals how individuals are impacted by circumstances that they do not freely choose. Consequently, victim blaming is a useful mechanism for reconciling the dissonance that is produced by the intersection of presumed control and victimization. Again, I draw upon the just world hypothesis offered by Lerner (1980), which speaks to the desire to maintain our own sense of control and safety by attributing the victimization of others to their choices and actions, rather than the broader social circumstances that also stand to affect us.

The overlap of neo-liberalism and rape culture has led to such institutionalization of victim-blaming that even advocates who have received training in how to appropriately respond to and support survivors of sexual violence express beliefs that

maintain victim-blaming attitudes. Maier (2013) conducted interviews with advocates who had received specific training on rape and found that although the majority never relayed victim-blaming attitudes, a quarter of her sample implied that the choices women make influence whether or not they experience sexual violence. They used the language of “bad choices” and “unwise choices”, contrasted with “better choices” and “smarter decisions”, which are sentiments echoed in the narratives of the women in this study. The advocates in Maier’s study qualified that they did not think women were ever to blame for their assault, but they noted that the women could have made themselves less vulnerable if they had engaged in less risky behaviours (e.g., by not becoming intoxicated, accepting drinks from others, getting into a car with a man they did not know). The tendency to evaluate victimization in relation to the choices of the victim is so pernicious that it continues to influence the attitudes of even those who should be the most sensitive, the most aware, and the most critical.

When it comes to women’s experiences with sexual violence, neo-liberalism cannot be examined in the absence of a discussion on rape culture, and patriarchy more broadly. Neo-liberalism is founded on the assumption that power is equally distributed and every individual is granted equal opportunity to make choices and negotiate their circumstances. Neo-liberalism shrouds the fact that not all social actors share equal power, and it is disproportionately beneficial to those who already have power. Under patriarchal conditions of gender inequity, the presumption of control and choice is more tenuous for women than it is for men. This is evidenced through normative discourses of heterosex, which presume that women are passive receptacles for male desire and not equitable partners with independent needs and desires (Hollway, 1989). Together, rape culture and neo-liberalism capitalize on the gender inequity of patriarchy by allowing

men to use their power to attain sex through coercion, while insidiously masking the influence that coercive norms have upon women.

This has implications for how responsibility is parsed and victimization is discerned in instances of sexual violence. In turn, it has implications for how labels are ascribed. Neo-liberalism supposes that both participants in a sexual interaction have equal power and are able to freely choose the activities that they engage in. However, under circumstances of coercion, force and impairment, the ability for women to freely negotiate their participation is constrained, if not completely removed. For example, women who are unconscious are incapable of making a choice about whether or not to engage in sex. Their power is in fact absent, not equitable. The other party, however, does not have to negotiate their interests, as they are freely able to choose whether or not they engage in sexual activity, and the nature of that activity, as the woman cannot effectively resist. Moreover, they benefit from the rhetoric of free choice because they can defend their abuse of power by claiming that the woman involved chose to put herself in the situation. For victims of sexual violence, the neo-liberal presumption of individual choice is fallacious under these circumstances, but unfortunately remains profoundly influential due to its significance within the sociocultural system. When women evaluate their unwanted sexual experiences they do so through the lens of neo-liberalism, which unfairly colours their perspective by insisting that they had equal agency, and thus responsibility. Given that the words rape and sexual assault imply an imbalance of power, and connote the undesirable consequence of victimhood, it is predictable that women would struggle and potentially want to avoid applying these labels.

Beyond obscuring the fact that rape is a social problem and not an individual problem, the danger of rape culture and neo-liberal discourse is that they perpetuate a false sense of security. Women assume that if they are careful and they abide by the rules (delineated through rape myths) they will be safe. This not only restricts women's behaviour, but also fails to protect them. Further, it poses a potential problem for women who have been sexually assaulted but refrain from labelling their experience as such. When women assign responsibility to themselves, or when they dismiss the significance of what happened, they are prevented from charging their perpetrators with adequate responsibility for their violating behaviour. Although there has been very limited longitudinal examination of women's risk for revictimization, there is some evidence to suggest that women who do not label their experiences are more likely to be revictimized (Littleton, Axsom et al., 2009). It has been found that women who do not label their assaults are more likely to maintain relationships with their perpetrators, which increases their risk for revictimization (Layman et al., 1996; Littleton, Axsom et al., 2009). Marx and Soler-Baillo (2005) also found that when women who were unacknowledged were presented with a hypothetical assault scenario, they took longer to identify that the situation had gone "too far" than did women who were acknowledged or non-victims. These findings, which allude to the normative voice that was discerned in this study, suggest that women who are unacknowledged may be more likely to view coercive situations as normative, which may decrease their likelihood of discerning risk. Regardless, rape culture and neo-liberalism are responsible for normalizing sexual violence and holding women accountable for it.

Cultural Dialectics. Understanding the ambivalent voice is critical to understanding acknowledgment, and I have found it helpful to use a framework of

cultural dialectics to consider the influence that ambivalence has upon women's labelling. Peng and Nisbett (1999) have identified dialectical thinking as the tendency to accept contradiction in thought. In a cultural comparison of Chinese and American participants they found that Americans have a much lower threshold for dialectic thinking than their Chinese counterparts, which is unsurprising given that the history of Western thought has been derived from philosophical traditions that are generally averse to contradiction (Peng, 1997). Consequently, North Americans demonstrate a strong preference for integration, or the resolution of contradictory thought.

Peng and Nisbett (1999) have suggested that there are four possible responses that one can have to contradictory thought. The first is denial, which is a decision to avoid dealing with the contradiction by rejecting both positions. This was not represented in this study, but we can imagine that it would be possible in the case of a woman who was assaulted while unconscious and chose to deal with the conflict of whether what happened was rape or sex by insisting that if she could not remember it, then it never happened at all. Although it is quite likely that these women exist, they would not have been selected to participate in this study because they would not have reported experiences that fell within the selection criteria (which requires reporting that sex *did* occur). A second somewhat similar response is to distrust both positions, which Peng and Nisbett refer to as discounting. The third response is known as differentiation, and involves the evaluation of both possibilities followed by a decision about which option is the right option. For North Americans, differentiation tends to be a preferred response. The last possible response is contradiction, and it has been defined as the belief that two opposing positions may both be true. This process is the acceptance of ambivalence, and is thus not preferred in North American culture.

The cultural proclivity for differentiation poses a problem for women who negotiate ambivalence and the simultaneous influence of both the knowing and not knowing voices. I would suggest that the cultural tendency towards discomfort with contradiction makes ambivalence about labelling particularly uncomfortable for women, as they may feel obliged to arrive at a definitive conclusion about what happened to them. Indeed, psychologists have found evidence that contradiction is a source of dissonance and we are motivated to eliminate the dissonance by resolving ourselves with one of the options (Peng & Nisbett, 1999).

What this study and others (Phillips, 2000) have shown, is that in the absence of complete certainty of their own culpability, women are more inclined to undermine the legitimacy of their assaults. From the narratives in this study, and the high rates of unacknowledged rapes reported in the quantitative literature, it seems that in the face of ambivalence, the pendulum tends to swing towards not naming one's experience. Of course this makes sense if we situate it in the context of rape culture, where the profusion of rape supportive myths and victim-blaming attitudes and behaviours prime women to not know and thus not label their experiences. It is worth noting, however, that dialectical thinking becomes more important as we age (Baltes & Staudinger, 1993), which may explain why women are more likely to label as they get older. It may not necessarily be the case that older women fully resolve their ambivalence, but rather they may reconcile themselves with it in such a way that they do not allow their not knowing voice to fully obstruct their knowing voice and preclude labelling. With regards to future research, cultural dialectics may prove to be a productive theoretical framework. Coupled with the findings from this study, there is certainly an argument for more multidimensional examinations of rape acknowledgment.

Future research should also seek to compensate for the limitations of this study. Most obviously, the sample in this study was relatively homogenous, as it was comprised of undergraduate women who were drawn from a psychology participant pool. This sample was appropriate for the topic at hand, given that undergraduate women are a high-risk population, when it comes to sexual violence; however, the women in this sample were primarily young, white, and of middle class background. Future work would benefit from the inclusion of community-based samples that provide more diverse demographic representation, including race/ethnicity, age, and economic class, as we know very little about rape acknowledgment in the wider population (for exception, see Gavey, 2005; Littleton et al., 2008). Additionally, the experiences of all of the women in this study involved assault that occurred while they were too intoxicated to resist. Consequently, future research would benefit from the inclusion of women who were unacknowledged and had experiences that occurred due to physical force or the threat of force. Finally, while I believe that narrative analysis was an important qualitative starting point, I also feel that this literature would benefit from a more discursive analysis, given the significant influence that discourses (of heterosex and trauma, for example) have upon women's negotiation of knowing and labelling.

Reflection on the Achievement of Epistemic and Emotional Justice

Epistemic justice. From the onset of this project, is has been my aim to further what is known about unacknowledged rape through the pursuit of epistemic and emotional justice. According to du Toit (2009), conducting research on rape that is epistemically just requires acknowledging the political significance of rape, while also representing the experiences and feelings of individual women. In order to further our understanding of rape it is necessary to try to avoid the myopia that can occur when one

of these pursuits is prioritized over the other. Through my methodological choices and the narrative that I have constructed I have attempted to negotiate this balance by coupling a feminist analysis of the systemic patterns of unacknowledged rape, with the narratives of individual women. I have tried to make a meaningful contribution to the academic field, but have also tried to do right by the women who so graciously allowed me to hear their stories and borrow their voices.

When I began this research I had concerns about the process of asking women who did not label their experiences to talk about them with me, for fear of leading them to think about what had happened in a way that spurred feelings of distress. The ethics of recruiting women to participate in a study that necessarily excluded the label of rape (both because they were unlikely to identify with it, and for fear of imposing a label) while still providing sufficient information about the content was a challenge, and I worried that the women might not be emotionally prepared to talk about their experiences so specifically. Although some women did experience distress during the interview, I was relieved to find that they overwhelmingly considered it to be a positive experience, and an important opportunity for women who have experienced coercion. Blair volunteered to participate in the interview, knowing that it was about sexual coercion, but in doing so she opened herself to a history that she had not dealt with or labelled for 33 years. Blair chose to participate because she felt that it was a way of contributing to work that she thought might help other women, and she did not express regret for having participated, but when it came time to review the transcripts she did report that she did not want to revisit her assault again.

Other women, however, spoke to how the interview actually helped them process their experience and understand their own feelings about what had happened. Sarah provided the following reflection on the interview experience.

> I think it's actually... it's kind of nice because it's... I don't know, I feel like for me anyways the more I go over something the easier it is to talk about. And like... you kinda, like when you're talking about, when you're asking how did you feel at that point, it's kind of like revisiting that and it helps you to identify like what was going on, whereas before, especially more recent to the events that had happened, I would have been like, I wouldn't want to talk about it, I wouldn't want to think about it. And it's almost like... I feel like I've gotten past it in a way, like having, being able to talk about it again.

For a number of the women in this study, the interview was their first opportunity to talk about what had happened to them. They often avoided disclosing because they were (understandably) fearful of being judged and blamed for what happened. For Emma, it was an opportunity to talk to someone who she felt actually cared about what had happened to her and took it seriously, suggesting that the interview offered a safe and validating environment in which to explore thoughts and feelings that were unwelcome, and perhaps risky to express in other social contexts.

> I mean it's good to talk about it, like I don't really have, like, it's kind of like I wouldn't discuss it with this deeply with like a friend or anything. It's not like, you know? They try to get me, like how I felt about it, or I don't know... they would care.

A number of the women also spoke to the potential benefits that they thought their participation could have for other women, which motivated them to share their stories. Janna perceived the research as being mutually beneficial to both her and me.

> I guess that like, it always feels good to like talk about anything that's making you feel uneasy. And especially in an experience like this. Maybe some women aren't as apt to talk about their feelings, or to even entertain them as thoughts. Umm, so if they're put into an experience like this, you know, it goes both ways. Like the researcher gets something out of it, maybe one day these talks will turn into some kind of remarkable research that could help women in general all over the place, umm, and then on a more micro-scale you're getting a chance to talk about it, and a chance to get to know yourself better.

The interview as an intervention. When I proposed this research I remember that one of the questions that was posed by a committee member was whether or not I believed that acknowledgment was necessarily a positive thing. I did not then, nor do I now, believe that there is a universal answer for this. The avoidant strain of the not knowing voice illuminated the fact that under certain circumstances there can be benefits to being unacknowledged. I maintain that I do not have the authority or insight to prescribe acknowledgement for all women who have experienced assault; however, as a feminist I do believe that we are limited in our capacity to change that which we do not name. I believe that by coming into relationship with me, and having their experiences heard and validated, often for the first time, women were able to begin to think about their experiences in potentially positive and illuminating ways.

The women entered the interview with varying labels and descriptions for what happened to them, and when they left their interviews there was still considerable variation. However, I believe that all of the women who participated experienced a shift in how they viewed their experience, as even the women who were most diffident about their assaults at the beginning of the interview began to express indignation about the normativity of coercion and violence by the end of the interview. The scope of responses ranged from the almost immediate and outright acknowledgment of Isabelle, who claimed with authority that she had been raped and that it was unacceptable, to Emma, who never assigned a specific label to her experience, but found a voice to express her frustration with the way men treated her, and their presumption that they could harass and coerce her into having sex with them. Although the women often avoided using labels by simply describing what happened to them, many also used the interview as an opportunity to test labels that they may have previously resisted or not felt entitled to use.

Throughout the course of this work I have tried to be sensitive to power, particularly the power that I have as a researcher, which I feel is evident in the fact that I was able to influence how these women came to perceive and speak about their experiences of assault. I tried to respect the power of the participants by viewing them as experts of their own experience, but I did not unilaterally validate every idea that they expressed to me, as I could not, in good conscience, support ideas that clearly reflected the norms and biases of rape culture. I did not begin the interviews with the intention of purposefully influencing how women perceived their situations, but I think that this process occurred somewhat organically as I listened to them with empathy and tried to attenuate their feelings of self-blame by sharing my knowledge of rape myths and normalizing both their experiences and their feelings. When women did acknowledge

their experience as a form of sexual violence I affirmed that I too would see it in that way.

Prilleltensky (2008) has written that oppression is most effective when it is internalized and individuals attribute their suffering to deficiencies of the self, rather than to exploitive political conditions. When people begin to recognize the political sources of their oppression (e.g., rape culture) that exist beyond them they begin to be liberated from that oppression. Although I never used the words oppression or politicization during my interviews, it was my aim to politicize the oppression of these women in my interactions with them. I used the power that I brought to the research setting to provide information (e.g., that corrected rape myths and redirected blame) and validation that situated responsibility outside of the women, and in doing so, I believe that I have helped the women see their experiences in a less oppressive way.

Although the inclusion of my perspective might be perceived as an interference in these women's lives, I feel that it is compatible with the ethic of care that guided this work. In conducting interview-based research, we have the opportunity, as interviewers, to "create interruption" (Tolman, 1992; Brown & Gilligan, 1993) in the lives of our participants, and this can be positive. I believe that one of the reasons many women participated in this research was to gain knowledge and understanding of what happened to them from an "expert". In reflecting upon the interview process for this study, I have formed the opinion that research environments can be valuable sites of intervention because they are intellectual and not therapeutic environments. The literature has shown that women who are unacknowledged are less likely to seek support following their assaults, and thus are unlikely to pursue therapy. I would even proffer that some may have an aversion to seeking therapy because they do not want to fully engage with the

emotions of what happened to them. Participating in research can be an appealing alternative, as it offers them the opportunity to process their experience without being expected to necessarily engage in the associated emotional labour. The intellectual context that women anticipate gives them permission to maintain more cognitive distance, although I tried to also create a safe emotional space so that they women could express feelings and obtain emotional support if they wanted it.

From the beginning of this project, as I began to carve out the methodology, the question that loomed was, what will I do if one of the women asks me how I would label their experience? This happened. Fortunately, I had discussed how I would approach this with my committee and was prepared. When Grace timidly posed this question, my immediate response was that for the time being I did not want to impose my view of the situation, but assured her that at the end of the interview I would certainly offer my perspective if she still wanted me to. Grace's interview was already the most difficult for me because I personally identified with her in a way that I did not with other participants, as much about her demeanour and interactional style mirrored my own. Further, I was overwhelmed with compassion for Grace because of the substantive blame that she attributed to herself, and the scathing judgment that arose from it. Everything about her narrative was heartbreaking.

At the end of the interview I turned off the tape recorder and cautiously asked her if she still wanted to know my thoughts on what happened to her. She whispered to me that she did. So I told her plainly, and with considerable sadness, that I believed she had been raped. I added that I was actually quite confident that her rape had been drug facilitated, given her description of the events of the evening, her physical symptoms, and her own suspicions. I watched her crumble before me as she wept into her hands. For

the next 40 minutes, I cried with her and we grieved together, mourning the violation of something precious and our shared vulnerability as women. There was an enormous sense of compassion and solidarity between us, and even though it was terrible to watch Grace realize that she had been raped, I was also afforded the opportunity to witness the relief that came over her as she realized that she could put the blame on someone else, relieving herself of the feelings of profound self-contempt. I feel enormous gratitude to have had the opportunity to validate her, support her, and bear witness.

Emotional Justice. I have allowed myself to be troubled by these women, to be troubled by their stories and their words. I have allowed myself to be troubled by the ambivalence, theirs and mine together. We have each been troubled by voices of knowing and not knowing. As researchers, we pose questions and seek answers. We are compelled to interpret findings and offer conclusions, even if they are little more than tentative. We struggle with the liminal space that is ambivalent knowing, the simultaneous occurrence of knowing and not knowing, because it suggests that we have failed to do service to our work. In being troubled I have allowed myself to reside in this liminal space, both knowing and not knowing how to label women's experiences. Residing in this liminal space had made me uncomfortable at times. This dissertation reflects years of work, culminated into one document; my integrity and authenticity as a scholar is predicated on my ability to know, and I have done the task of presenting the knowledge that I have constructed in as true a manner as possible. But the truth, as I know it, is troubled, and where my work both ends and begins is with this factum: rape is both something we know and something we feel. Though it is often both, to be legitimate it need only be one or the other. Some will know it more concretely than others; some will feel it, but not know the language to articulate it. In the end, even as a researcher,

my ability to *know* rape decisively, to pick it out in a line-up and assign it to others is less important than my ability to acknowledge the experiences of women, to sit with them, and allow myself to be troubled with them and by them. I have learned that to pursue an ethic of care is to learn how to lean into the discomfort.

I want to know
if you can sit with pain
mine or your own
without moving to hide it
or fade it
or fix it

From *The Invitation* by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

END NOTES

[1]After much consideration I decided to set the remaining four aside for further analysis at a later time, as I realized, upon conducting the interviews, that they did not clearly fall within the inclusion criteria for participation. One woman, for example, accidentally reported an incorrect answer on the SES questions on the pre-screening survey and thus was wrongly categorized as qualifying for the study. Another woman reported an experience that was very clearly an attempted rape, but she successfully resisted and was able to remove herself from the situation before the rape occurred.

The remaining two women were excluded because their experiences seemed to fall more clearly within the realm of unwanted but consensual sex. In both instances they had been consuming alcohol, and I was hesitant to exclude them given the possibility that their ability to resist may have been impaired. I asked the women if they felt that their ability to give consent had been comprised, and both said that they did not feel it was. They felt that they were "drunk enough to make bad decisions", but that they could have said no. Although their experience is still concerning, it appeared to be a matter of ambivalence regarding the wantedness of intercourse more so than a matter of consent. Given the normativity of coercion in women's sexual experiences, discerning the line between normative sex and sexual assault is a challenge. I was troubled about whether to include these interviews for months, but inevitably when I compared them to others in the sample the experiences that these women described were quite different, both in the way that the women described the experience and in the feelings they expressed about it. Neither woman expressed distress or trauma, and the negative affect and concern that arose following the experience was primarily linked to the perceptions that they feared

others would have of them for hooking-up and have casual sex with someone they were not dating. Given that women's experiences with coercion and violence exist on a continuum I feel that closer examination of these interviews is important, however I inevitably felt that they reflected a different point of inquiry than the one outlined for this project.

[2] The names of all individuals spoken of during the interviews have been changed.

[3] The *Bringing in the Bystander*™ workshop is a three-hour program on sexual assault prevention that is offered to select undergraduate students at the University of Windsor. It is a modification of the program developed by Mary Moynihan, Victoria Banyard and Elizabeth Plante at the University of New Hampshire, and educates students about sexual assault on university campuses and the possibility of interrupting assaults by being a pro-social bystander.

[4]The Sexual Assault Resistance Education program is part of a clinical trial on sexual assault intervention that is being conducted at the University of Windsor as well as the University of Calgary and University of Guelph. Participants who attend the SARE program include women in their first year of university who have been randomly assigned to the program condition. These women receive 12 hours of programming on sexual assault resistance, and cover such topics as assessing for risk of sexual assault, and verbal and physical strategies that can be used to resist sexual assault. Further information on this study has been reported by Senn, et al. (2013).

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APPENDIX A

Modified Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982)

Since the age of 14, have you experienced any of the following situations? Please answer yes or no.

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) with a man when you both wanted to?

2. Have you ever had sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) with a man when you didn't want to because you felt pressured by his continual arguments?

3. Have you ever been in a situation where a man TRIED to have sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) with you when you didn't want to, by using (or threatening) some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.), but for various reasons sexual intercourse did NOT occur?

4. Have you ever had sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) or experienced sexual acts (oral, anal or vaginal penetration by objects other than a penis) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force?

5. Have you ever been in a situation in which you were incapacitated due to alcohol or drugs (for example, you were physically unable to resist, passed out, or unaware of what was happening) and had unwanted sexual intercourse (oral, anal or vaginal) with a man?

6. Have you ever been sexually assaulted?

7. Have you ever been raped?

APPENDIX B

Participant Pool Instructions

These instructions are provided to all students, prior to completing the Participant Pool pre-screening survey.

"It is important to answer all questions accurately. Researchers use your responses to these questions to determine if you are eligible for experiments. If you are accepted into an experiment based upon providing inaccurate information on this survey, you may be turned away by the researcher without receiving credit. It is to your advantage if you answer accurately. Please be aware that at any point during your time at the University of Windsor, if you are experiencing distress, the Student Counselling Centre is available:

Student Counselling Centre Room 293 2nd Floor CAW Student Centre

(519) 253-3000 Ext. 4616

Email: scc@uwindsor.ca

General Inquiries responded to during office hours.

Hours: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm Monday through Friday

The Participant Pool administrators and any individual researchers who receive information I have provided are charged with maintaining the confidentiality of that information in accordance with ethical guidelines for research with human participants."

APPENDIX C

Telephone Recruitment Script

Hello, may I speak to___________.

Hi, my name is Dusty Johnstone and I am a PhD student in the psychology department at the University of Windsor. I'm calling about a potential research study and I was wondering if this is a good time for you to talk?

If they say no I will ask if there is a better time when I can call them, or if they would prefer to be contacted via email.

Do you have privacy right now?

If answer is 'no', I will ask them if they can move somewhere that is more private or if I can call them back at a better time.

If they say yes, the conversation will proceed as follows:

I received your contact information from the Psychology Participant Pool because I am conducting a study on women's experiences with sexual coercion, which *many* young women have experienced. This would include experiences with men who have used verbal pressure or threats or physical force to try to have some form of sexual experience with you. It could also include experiences with men who tried to have sexual contact with you when you were too intoxicated to resist. If you have experienced anything like this, since the age of 14, you are eligible to participate in this research. Do you have any questions so far, or would you like me keep going?

The purpose of my research is to get a better understanding of what women's experiences with sexual coercion is like, and how they think and potentially talk about these experiences. In order to do this I am hoping to conduct interviews with women who have had coercive experiences and who would be willing to talk about them with me.

I know that talking about such experiences can be difficult for some women, so I want to let you know that if you are interested in participating in my study you would have complete control over what you are willing to talk about, and you would also be able to choose when the interview takes place and where. We could to it in private office on campus, or any other private place where you would feel comfortable, such as your home potentially. You will be able to ask me questions, and if you find the interview experience to be uncomfortable you would be able to withdraw at anytime without penalty. The interview will be completely confidential, and my supervisor (Dr. Senn) and I will be the only people who have direct access to your full interview. Your name will not be associated with your interview in anyway.

The entire interview process should take an hour and a half to two hours. For participating in the study you will receive two Participant Pool credits (or if you already have your points, you will receive $30). Two weeks following the interview you will be asked to provide verbal or written responses to several brief questions asking about your experience of participating in the interview. You will be able to give me these answers over the phone or submit them via email or mail. For completing the follow-up questions you will receive an additional half-point Participant Pool credit, or $10, if you already have your points. Finally, there is the added benefit that by sharing your experiences you will be able to improve our understanding of what young women's experiences with coercion are like, which may help the lives of other women.

Do you have any questions?

Do you think you would be interested in participating?

If they say no I will thank them for their time and end the conversation.

If they say yes:

When would be a good time for you to participate in this interview?

Where would you be most comfortable having the interview?

I will provide you with a reminder the day before the interview. Would you like to be reminded via phone or email? I will not reveal the topic of this study to anyone in the reminder that I provide.

Thank you so much for your time. I look forward to meeting you.

End call.

Email Recruitment Script

Dear:

My name is Dusty Johnstone and I received your contact information from the Psychology Participant Pool because I am conducting a study on women's experiences with sexual coercion - which many young women have experienced in some form or another. This could include experiences with men who have used verbal pressure, or manipulation, or threats, or physical force to try to have some form of sexual experience with you. It could also include experiences with men who tried to have sexual contact with you when you were too intoxicated to resist. If you have experienced anything like this, since the age of 14, you are eligible to participate in this research.

The purpose of my research is to get a better understanding of what women's experiences with sexual coercion is like, and how they think and potentially talk about these experiences. In order to do this I am hoping to conduct interviews with women who have had coercive experiences and who would be willing to talk about them with me.

I know that talking about such experiences can be difficult for some people, so I want to let you know that if you are interested in participating in my study you would have complete control over what you are willing to talk about, and you would also be able to choose when the interview takes place and where. We could do it at your home, or in a private office on campus, or any other place where you would feel comfortable. You will be able to ask me questions, and if you find the interview experience to be uncomfortable you would be able to withdraw at anytime without penalty. The interview will be completely confidential, and my supervisor (Dr. Senn) and I will be the only people who have direct access to anything that we discuss. Your name will **not** be associated with your interview in anyway.

The entire interview process should take an hour and a half to two hours. For participating in the study you will receive **two Participant Pool credits** or if you already have your points, you will receive $30.

In the week following the interview I will send you a couple of questions asking you to tell me about how the interview experience was. If you choose to do this you can either answer the questions via email, or give me your answers over the phone. I expect that it will take about half an hour and you **will receive either another half participant point** or $10.

The benefit of participating is that by sharing your experiences you will be able to improve our understanding of what young women's experiences with coercion are like, which may help the lives of other women.

If you think that you would be interested in participating please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that you might have. You can reply to this email, or if you would prefer to discuss the study over the phone before you decide to participate I

will happily give you a call. Just let me know when it would be a good time to reach you, and what phone number you would like to be contacted at.

Please note that this study has received clearance from the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

Thanks kindly for your time.

Dusty Johnstone

APPENDIX D

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: **The Women's Experiences with Coercion Study**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Dusty Johnstone, M.A**., under the supervision of Dr. Charlene Senn, from the Department of Psychology at the University if Windsor. The results of this study will contribute to Dusty Johnstone's PhD dissertation requirements.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact:

Dusty Johnstone		Dr. Charlene Senn
519-253-3000 ext. 4703	or	519-253-3000 ext. 2255
johnstod@uwindsor.ca		csenn@uwindsor.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate women's experiences with sexual coercion. Sexual coercion includes experiences with men who have used verbal pressure or threats or physical force to try to have some form of sexual experience with you. It could also include experiences with men who tried to have sexual contact with you when you were too intoxicated to resist. The study is designed to explore what women think about these experiences, and how they process this experience after it has happened. The results of this study are expected to enrich our understanding of how women experience coercion, how they are affected by it, and how they communicate about it with others.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

First you will be asked to complete a brief background information questionnaire. Second, you will be asked to answer a short survey on your previous experiences with sexual coercion – these questions may be familiar to you, as you will have answered them for the Participant Pool pre-screening survey. Your answers to this survey will be confidential, meaning that your name will not be attached to them, and I (the interviewer) will be the only person with access to them; however, your responses will not be anonymous as I will briefly review them and will use them to initiate our interview discussion.

Once you have answered the background questions you will be asked if you want to proceed with the interview. If you do not feel comfortable continuing it is completely acceptable for you to withdraw your participation at this time without penalty. If you decide now, prior to starting the interview, that the study is not for you, you will be credited with .5 bonus point or if you have already earned your bonus points, $10, to thank you for your time up to this point. If you choose to proceed with the interview you will be asked to choose a pseudonym that will be used during the interview, rather than your own name. Transcripts of this interview and any reports will also use this pseudonym. The interview will take approximately an hour and a half to two hours.

Within or two weeks I will contact you via phone or email (you can let me know your which you would prefer) to complete a couple of short questions about your experience of participating in this interview. You will have the option of completing these questions either over the phone, via email or by mail.

Following the interview I will send you typed transcript of your interview, which you will have two weeks to review, if you want to make changes or correct omissions. If you would like to have an electronic copy of your interview, or a copy of the typed transcript, for your own records, this can be arranged.

Finally, if you desire, you will be contacted following the completion of the research project and will be provided with a summary of the results.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Talking about our experiences of sexual coercion can be an emotional and challenging experience and you may experience some distress as a consequence of this. However, your comfort during this process is of the utmost importance. Although I have prepared a list of questions that I will ask you, you have the right not to answer any questions that makes you feel uncomfortable. You also have the right to answer these questions with as much or as little detail as you want. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time. If you need to take breaks during the interview that is completely fine. If the interview experience becomes uncomfortable for you, you are able to withdraw at anytime and still receive full compensation for your participation. If you withdraw from the study you will also have the option of withdrawing any data that you have contributed. The interview will be completely confidential, and my supervisor Dr. Charlene Senn and I will be the only people with direct access to your full interview or survey responses.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By participating in this project you are contributing to a much larger body of research on women's experiences with coercion (which ranges from pressure and threats to physical violence), and are providing us with a better understanding of how women experience sexual coercion, how they feel about it and who they discuss it with. This kind of information can help us to educate and raise awareness about the problems associated with sexual coercion. At the end of the interview you will also be provided with a

resource package that contains information on sexual coercion and violence against women, which you may find relevant for yourself or for someone you know. This package also contains referral information for counseling and healthcare services, should you feel the need to access them for any reason.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

For your time and effort in participating in the interview, you will receive 2 bonus points for the Psychology Participant Pool or if you have already earned your bonus points, you will receive $30. If you complete the follow up questions one to two weeks following the interview you will receive either .5 bonus points or $10. If you decide now, prior to starting the interview, that the study is not for you, you will be credited with .5 bonus point or if you have already earned your bonus points, $10, to thank you for your time up to this point.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.
The interview data and background information will be stored in locked file cabinets in the research office of the researcher and her supervisor. Electronic files will be password protected and stored on a private, secured server. Your real name will not be associated with your interview in any way. The electronic recording of your interview will be erased once the study is complete and you have verified the transcript for accuracy. Information will not be provided to a third party for any reason, unless you disclose the current and ongoing sexual abuse of a minor, which I am obligated by law to report.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. If you withdraw at anytime after starting the interview you will still receive both bonus points (or $30 if you already have your points). You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You also have the option to remove your data from this study at any time, up until you review (or decline the opportunity to review) the typed transcript of your interview.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A summary of the findings of this study will be available by December 31, 2012. At this time you will be able to access the summary at the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board website, which is www.uwindsor.ca/reb. If you would like an electronic or paper copy of the complete results, you may indicate this to the primary investigator, who will contact you via email when this becomes available.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data may be used in subsequent studies.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for **The Women's Experiences with Coercion Study** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

____
Name of Participant

______________________________________ ____________________
Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____________________________________ _____________________
Signature of Investigator Date

CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

Name:____

Title of the Project: **The Women's Experiences with Coercion Study**

I consent to the audiotaping of my interview for this study.

I understand these are voluntary procedures and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping is stopped. I also understand that my name will only be revealed to the Participant Pool for the purposes of assigning my bonus points. It will not be released under other circumstances. Tapes are filed by number only and will be stored in a locked cabinet; any electronic files will be filed by number and will be stored in password-protected folders on a private server.

The audio recordings of your interview will be kept until you have reviewed (or have declined the opportunity to review) the typed transcript of your interview. After this the audio recording will be erased and only the transcript will be retained. Your name will not be associated with this transcript, and a pseudonym of your choosing will be used throughout. Anonymous transcripts may be kept indefinitely.

I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audiotape will be for professional use only.

____________________________ ______________________________

Signature Date

APPENDIX E

Background Information Questionnaire

1. Age (in years): ___________

2. Do you self identify as (please choose the MOST relevant):
   - ☐ bisexual
   - ☐ heterosexual
   - ☐ lesbian, gay or queer
   - ☐ two-spirited
   - ☐ other:____________

3. Current year in your university program:
   - ☐ first
   - ☐ second
   - ☐ third
   - ☐ fourth
   - ☐ other (please specify): _______________

4. Relationship Status:

   - ☐ single, never in relationship
   - ☐ single, not currently in relationship
   - ☐ currently in relationship
   - ☐ common-law
   - ☐ married
   - ☐ separated/divorced
   - ☐ other (please specify): _______________

4. Which Racial/Ethnic group(s) do you most identify with?

   - ☐ European Canadian (e.g. English-Canadian, French-Canadian)
   - ☐ Aboriginal (e.g., Iroquois, Métis)
   - ☐ Asian or Southeastern Asian-Canadian
   - ☐ South Asian
   - ☐ Middle Eastern (e.g. Persian, Arabic)
   - ☐ Central American or Latin-Canadian
   - ☐ Black or African Canadian
   - ☐ Oceanian or Pacific Islander
   - ☐ Multiracial/multi-ethnic (please specify): ________________________
   - ☐ Other (please specify):_______________________

APPENDIX F

Interview Schedule

A. Orientation to the term sexual coercion

As you know, we are going to be talking about sexual coercion today. I was thinking that we could just start with a general discussion about what you perceive sexual coercion to be.

1. When you hear the term sexual coercion what does it make you think of?

2. How common do you think that it is among the girls and women that you know?

B. Women's accounts of their assault experiences

On the questionnaire that you completed at the beginning of the interview, you indicated that you had an experience of _________.

1. Would you be willing to tell me about this experience? You can use as much or as little detail as you would like.

   Potential follow up questions

   - Can you describe what happened?

   - How long ago did you experience this event?

   - What was the nature of your relationship with this person?

   - What kind of contact have you had with him since that time?

2. What went through your mind after this experience happened?

   Potential follow up questions

   - How often do you think about it?

   - Do you feel that anything changed for you, after it happened? Can you tell me what changed or didn't change? Were these changes negative, positive or both?

C. Talking about and naming assault experiences

1. Have you ever told anyone about this experience?

Potential follow up questions if they say Yes

- Who did you tell?
- What did you say to them?
- Did you use any particular labels when you described your experience?
- Was it difficult for you to find the right words?
- What was their response?
- Did their response change or affect anything for you?

Potential follow up questions if they say No

- Why did you decide not to tell anyone?
- Do you think that you will tell anyone in the future? Why or why not?
- Have your thoughts or feeling about the event changed since it happened?

3. Have you found it difficult to name or label your experience?

- What has made it easy or difficult for you to name or label your experience?
- How important has it been for you to name or put a label on it?
- If you told anyone else about it, how important did it seem to them to name or label it?
- If you were to use a label or description to tell someone, what would it be?

D. Women's experiences with the interview process

Now I would like to ask you about your experience being interviewed today, because this helps me to improve my own interviewing skills, and adjust the interview to better meet women's needs.

1. How has it been for you to talk about these things with me?

    - Was anything about it particularly good or bad?

2. In general, do you think it is helpful for women to talk to researchers, like myself, about their experiences with sexual coercion?

    - Why is this?

3. Can you think of any questions that I haven't asked you, that you think I should ask other women when I interview them?

4. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about with me?

5. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX G

RESOURCES

Psychological and Counselling Resources

The Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

This Sexual Assault Crisis Centre (SACC) provides free services to victims of sexual victimization and violence. You may contact their *24-hour crisis line* for emotional support, problem solving, information and when necessary, referrals. Additionally, in person counselling is also available to female and male victims of sexual victimization (for example, sexual assault, sexual abuse and incest) who are 13 years or older that reside in the Windsor and Essex County area. A counselling program is provided for children under the age of 13 years in coordination with the Children's Aid Society. Support is available to non-offending significant others. The centre will also provide information to those who are assisting victims of sexual violence, such as a friend, family member and other community organizations.

Location: 1407 Ottawa Street, Unit G (intersection of Ottawa Street and Moy Avenue)

Phone: **(519) 253-3100**

The Sexual Assault Crisis Centre 24-Hour Hotline: (519) 253-9667

You are STRONGLY encouraged to call this hotline if you experience any distress following this interview, or in relation to any unwanted and potentially coercive sexual experience. They are available to talk to you any time, day or night!

For more information visit **http://www.wincom.net/~sacc/**

The Student Counselling Centre

The Student Counselling Centre (SCC) is located in campus, in the CAW Student Centre, and provides *free* crisis and short-term counselling to full-time and part-time students at the University of Windsor. The staff at the SCC is comprised of clinical psychologists and a social worker, all of whom are licensed in the province of Ontario. Senior doctoral level students in the Ph.D. Clinical Psychology program at the University of Windsor also provide counselling under the supervision of our clinical staff. The SCC staff is required by law and professional ethics to protect the confidentiality of all communications between staff and clients. Consequently, staff cannot discuss with anybody else on campus the details of your situation or even indicate whether you are in counselling if someone were to call and ask.

If it is your first visit to the Student Counselling Centre, you are required to go to the office in person to make your appointment. You will be asked to complete an

application, which includes your contact information, space to indicate your concerns and a consent form to read and sign. If you would prefer, you may complete the copy of the application and consent form have been included in this package, and bring it to the SCC during regular business hours, which are 8:30-4:30 (although they are closed between 12:00 and 1:00) from Monday to Friday.

The SCC makes every effort to see students as soon as possible, and your first appointment with a therapist can usually be scheduled within a few days of your initial application. During busy times of the year, however, you may have to wait a little longer. That being said, the SCC is also a crisis centre and if you feel that you must see someone right away (and it is during their regular business hours), you may go to the centre and if possible they will fit you in right away.

Location: Room 293, Second Floor, CAW Student Centre

Phone: **(519) 253-3000** Ext. **4616**

Email: **scc@uwindsor.ca**

For more information visit **http://web4.uwindsor.ca/SCC**

Private Therapy - Giselle Harrison, BA, MSW, RSW

Giselle Harrison is a registered social worker with over 10 years of experience working with survivors of sexual assault and abuse. She is available for private therapy, if this is of interest to you. Her regular fee is $85 per hour, but she may be able to offer you her services at a reduced sliding scale fee, if you call to inquire about this.

Phone: **(519) 816-2701**

Medical Resources

Sexual Assault Treatment Centre

If you have recently been assaulted and want to seek medical attention and potentially have a rape kit done, the Sexual Assault Treatment Centre (SATC) provides 24/7 emergency care to women, children and men who have been sexually assaulted or who are victims or survivors of domestic violence (intimate partner) abuse. Services include: emergency medical and nursing care, crisis intervention, collection of forensic evidence, medical follow-up and counselling and referral to community resources.

Location: The Windsor SATC is located at the Windsor Regional Hospital (Metropolitan Location) 1995 Lens Avenue (intersection of Lens Avenue and Kildare Road).

Phone: **519-255-2234**

For more information visit **http://windsoressex.cioc.ca/record/WIN2261**

Student Health Services

If you are concerned that you may be pregnant, or would like to be tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or HIV/AIDS, you can go to Student Health Services (SHS). In addition to providing comprehensive primary healthcare (like any other family doctor), SHS provides free pregnancy tests, as well as STI and HIV/AIDS testing.

Pregnancy Testing

- If you are concerned that you may be pregnant you can drop by SHS from Monday to Friday, between the hours of 9:30am-11:30am, and 2:00pm-4:00pm. No appointment is necessary.
- You will need to provide a urine sample. Do not go to the bathroom before arriving.
- After registering with the receptionist, a nurse will administer the test and refer you as appropriate.
- If you are concerned that you may become pregnant due to unprotected intercourse within the past 120 hours, contact any pharmacist for the Morning After Pill (Plan B), which is a form of emergency contraception that is available without a prescription, for $40. Some health insurance plans do cover the cost of Plan B if a woman has a prescription (which you could obtain from a doctor at SHS); however, it is not covered by the Student Drug Plan, University of Windsor.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

- If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to a sexually transmitted infection you can make a doctor's appointment by calling SHS.
- Signs of an STI could include: any abnormal discharge, rash, swelling, or pain. Some STIs do not have any symptoms. If you are unsure of your partner's history, or if a partner tells you they have an STI, make a doctor's appointment to be assessed. Prompt treatment is very important.
- You will probably have to have an internal examination. They may ask you to provide a urine sample, a blood test or they may take swabs from inside the vagina or from skin lesions in your genital area or mouth if necessary, for testing.
- At SHS it is very likely that you will be seen by female nurses and physicians, however, you can feel free to ask if you want to be sure that you will not be examined by a man.

HIV/AIDS

- Counselling and testing for HIV/AIDS is done at SHS. If you think you may be at risk you should call and make an appointment to speak with a physician. The physician will then ask you to come in during the regular nurse’s hours to have the required blood test taken. If you ask the receptionist when the nurse’s hours are, she can probably schedule your appointment to occur at that time.

- It is important to note that an HIV/AIDS test requires that you have blood drawn. Your regular PAP test DOES NOT screen for HIV/AIDS.
- If you have an HIV test at Student Health Services, you will always be asked to return in person for your results. HIV tests done at Student Health Services are not anonymous.
- For anonymous HIV/AIDS testing in Windsor you may contact the following places:
    1) HIV Care Program, Windsor Regional Hospital (Metropolitan Location, 1995 Lens Avenue), provides anonymous testing, individual and group counselling, and follow-up care. Phone (519) 254-6115.
    2) Windsor Essex Health Unit (1005 Ouellette Avenue) provides anonymous HIV and STI testing. Phone (519) 258-2146.

Location: Room 242, Second Floor, CAW Student Centre

Phone: **(519) 973-7002**

For more information visit **www.uwindsor.ca/health**

Windsor Essex County Health Unit

If you are concerned that you may be pregnant, or would like to be tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) or HIV/AIDS, you can also go to the Windsor Essex County Health Unit, as they provides free pregnancy tests, and STI and HIV/AIDS testing.

Sexual Health Services

- Birth Control (Bring a prescription and we'll fill it at cost)
- Free Condoms
- STI screening and Treatment
- Physical Exams and PAP smears for women under 25
- Confidential Pregnancy Testing and Counselling
- Emergency contraceptive Pill
- HIV Testing (anonymous and confidential)
- Hepatitis A and B Immunization (if eligible)
- HPV vaccine

Location: 1005 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor

Phone: 519-258-2146

Hours: Monday to Friday, 8:30-4:30

APPENDIX H

Dispelling Myths About Sexual Assault

Our society's understanding of sexual assault is complicated by myths. Many of these myths blame or shame the survivor of sexual assault, instead of holding the offender responsible for his actions. To dispel these myths we need to ask ourselves:

Do I believe that . . .

1. . . . ***women often provoke sexual assault by their behaviour or manner of dress?***

Fact: No behaviour or manner of dress justifies an assault. Such a belief takes the onus off the offender and places it on the survivor. A man should always ask to ensure his advances are wanted. The idea that women "ask for it" is often used by offenders to rationalize their behaviour. Offenders are solely responsible for their own behaviour.

2. . . . ***most women lie about sexual assault?***

Fact: Sexual assault is actually one of the most under-reported crimes. A Canadian statistic tells us that victimization surveys show that only about 6% of women who are sexually assaulted report the assault to the police; most women do not report due to humiliation or fear of re-victimization in the legal process.
(Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002, *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*, p.19).

3. . . . ***when a woman says "no" she secretly enjoys being forced, teased or coerced into having sex?***

Fact: No one enjoys being assaulted. No one asks to be hurt. "No" means "no". It's the law. If a woman says no, it is the responsibility of the man to accept and respect her "no". Sexual assault can have serious effects on people's health and well being. People who have been sexually assaulted feel fear, depression and anger. Survivors can experience harmful physical and emotional effects.

4. . . . ***saying "no" is the only way of expressing your desire to not continue?***

Fact: Many offenders will rationalize their behaviour by saying that because she didn't actually say "no", they thought she was consenting. The law is clear: without consent, it is sexual assault. Consent means saying Yes to sexual activity. In addition to saying No, there are many ways of communicating non-compliance.

- "I'm not into this right now"
- "Maybe later"
- "I'm not sure"
- silence

- crying
- body language (squirming, stiffness, shaking)
- If a person is too intoxicated to say No, there is no consent
- If a person is too scared to say No, there is no consent
- If a person is asleep or unconscious, there is no consent

5. . . . ***sexual assault only occurs when there is a struggle or physical injury?***

Fact: Many survivors are too afraid to struggle. They may freeze in terror or realize that the overwhelming size and strength of their attacker makes resistance very dangerous. In cases reported to police, 80% of sexual assault survivors knew their abusers (Statistics Canada, 2003, The Daily, 25 July). Acquaintances, friends or relatives are more likely to use tricks, verbal pressure, threats or mild force like arm twisting or pinning their victim down during an assault. Assaults may also be drug assisted. Lack of obvious physical injury or knowing the attacker doesn't change the fact that sexual assault is violent and against the law.

6. . . . ***if it really happened, the survivor would be able to easily recount all the facts in the proper order?***

Fact: Shock, fear, embarrassment and distress can all impair memory, as can alcohol and drugs such as Rohypnol and GHB, among others. In addition to this, many survivors actively attempt to minimize or forget the details of the assault to help them cope with its memory.

7. . . . ***a woman who has agreed to sex previously with the offender (for example, her husband, boyfriend or acquaintance) cannot be sexually assaulted by him?***

Fact: Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual activity forced on one person by another. Sexual assault occurs whenever a person does not want to have sex but is forced into the act, regardless of previous consensual sexual relations. The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women found that 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends. Although illegal in Canada since 1983, few of these assaults are reported to police.

8. ... ***some women cannot be sexually assaulted, or will not be targeted for sexual assault: for example, lesbians, women of color, women with disabilities, and sex trade workers?***

Fact: Many of the above mentioned groups are at higher risk for any type of violence, including sexual violence.

- Women with low household incomes, low levels of education and/or who are unemployed are at higher risk of being sexually assaulted than women in general. (H. Johnson, 1996, *Dangerous Domains: Violence Against Women in Canada*, p.108-109)

- 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. (L. Stimpson and M. Best, 1991, *Courage Above All: Sexual Assault against Women with Disabilities*)

9. . . . ***if a man − for example, a husband, boyfriend or acquaintance − buys a woman dinner or drinks, gives her a present, or does her a favour, she owes him sex?***

Fact: No one owes anyone sex. It cannot be assumed that friendliness and openness are an invitation to sex.

10. . . . ***once a sexual assault report has been made, the alleged offender will be prosecuted and found guilty?***

Fact: Sexual assault is a difficult crime to prove as there are rarely witnesses, there is not always physical evidence of the crime, and sexual assault myths affect the efficacy of the criminal justice system. The majority of all reported sexual assault cases are not resolved through the criminal justice system. According to Statistics Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. Of the 6% of sexual assaults that are reported, only 40% result in charges being laid; and of those cases where charges are laid, just two-thirds result in conviction (www.citizenship.gov.on. ca/owd/english/ publications/sexual-assault/reporting.htm). These figures continue to deter women from reporting sexual assault, in particular if their offender is known to them.

11. . . .***There is no such thing as a male survivor of sexual assault?***

Fact: Men and boys can be sexually assaulted too. Women and girls are considerably more likely than men to be targeted; however for males, being under 12 years old heightens their vulnerability to sexual offences (Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006, Statistics Canada).

Adapted from: http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/Default.aspx?pageId=535956

APPENDIX I

Self Care After Sexual Assault

Good self-care is a challenge for many people and it can be especially challenging for women who have experienced rape, sexual assault, incest and sexual abuse. It can also be an important part of the healing process.

Physical self-care is an area that people often overlook.

- Food
  - People are often so busy that they don't have time to eat regularly or that they substitute fast food for regular meals.
  - It's not always reasonable to expect people to get 3 square meals a day (plus snacks!) but everyone should make sure they get adequate nutrition.

- Exercise
  - Exercise is one of the most overlooked types of self-care. The CDC recommends at least 30 minutes of exercise 5 times a week.
  - Exercise, even if it's just a quick walk at lunchtime, can help combat feelings of sadness or depression and prevent chronic health problems.

- Sleep
  - Although everyone has different needs, a reasonable guideline is that most people need between 7-10 hours of sleep per night.

- Medical Care
  - Getting medical attention when you need it is an important form of physical self-care.
  - Some survivors put off getting medical care until problems that might have been relatively easy to take care of have become more complicated.

Emotional self-care will mean different things for different people. It might mean…

- Counselling
  - This could mean seeing a psychologist, a clinical social worker, or therapist.
  - Local rape crisis centers often provide counselling or can connect you with a provider. In Windsor you can contact the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre (see the Resources page for more information).

- Keeping a Journal
  - Some survivors find that recording their thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary helps them manage their emotions after an assault. Make sure that it is kept in a place that is secure.

- Meditation or Relaxation Exercises
  - Relaxation techniques or meditation help many survivors with their emotional self-care. For example: Sit or stand comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor and your back straight. Place one hand over your belly button. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and let your stomach expand as you inhale. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then exhale slowly through your mouth, sighing as

you breathe out. Concentrate on relaxing your stomach muscles as you breathe in. When you are doing this exercise correctly, you will feel your stomach rise and fall about an inch as you breathe in and out. Try to keep the rest of your body relaxed—your shoulders should not rise and fall as you breathe! Slowly count to 4 as you inhale and to 4 again as you exhale. At the end of the exhalation, take another deep breath. After 3-4 cycles of breathing you should begin to feel the calming effects.

- Emotional self-care can involve the people around you. It is important to make sure that the people in your life are supportive!
    - Nurture the relationships that make you feel good about yourself! Prioritize spending time with friends and family members who have a positive influence on your life.
    - If you have trouble finding people who can support your experience as a survivor, consider joining a support group for survivors.

- Be wary of…
    - Friends or family members who only call you when they need something
    - People who always leave you feeling tired or depressed when you see them
    - Friends who never have the time to listen to you
    - Anyone who dismisses or belittles your assault experience

- You can deal with these people by setting limits…
    - You don't have to cut them out of your life (especially with family, that may not even be an option!) but choose the time you will spend with them carefully.
    - Make sure that your time with these people has a clear end.
    - Cut back on the time you spend with people who don't make you feel good, or spend time with them in a group rather than one-on-one.
    - Screen your calls! There is no rule that says you have to answer your phone every time it rings. If you don't feel like talking to someone, call them back when it is convenient for you.

- You can deal with these people by letting go…
    - If there are people in your life who consistently make you feel bad about yourself, consider letting those friendships or relationships go. This can be a difficult decision. Remember that you deserve to have people around you who genuinely care about you and support you.

Another challenge can be in finding time for fun leisure activities. Many survivors have full time jobs, go to school, volunteer and have families. Finding time to do activities that you enjoy is an important aspect of self-care.

- Get involved in a sport or hobby that you love!! Find other people who are doing the same thing! Knowing that people are counting on you to show up can help motivate you.
- If you have a spouse or partner, make a date night and stick with it. Turn off your cell phones (within reason. If the babysitter needs to be able to find you, consider leaving him/her the number of the restaurant so that you can turn off your ringer!)

- Treat leisure appointments as seriously as business appointments. If you have plans to do something for fun, mark it on your calendar.

Adapted from: http://www.rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-recovery/self-care-for-survivors

APPENDIX J

Recommended Reading

Books

Yes Means Yes – Jaclyn Friedman
(available at the Leddy Library)

To view one of the essays from this book you can visit:
http://www.racialicious.com/2008/12/21/original-essay-the-not-rape-epidemic/

Recovering From Rape – Linda Ledray
(available at the Leddy Library)

Internet

Resources and General Information on Sexual Assault

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network http://www.rainn.org/

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres http://www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/

Scarborough Hospital Sexual Assault Care Centre http://www.sacc.to/home/home.htm

Canadian Sexual Assault Laws

http://www.sacc.to/sya/crime/law.htm

http://www.aasac.ca/txt-fact-sexual-assault-abuse.htm

Blogs

Fugitivus http://www.fugitivus.net/

Shakesville http://shakespearessister.blogspot.com/2009/10/rape-culture-101.html

APPENDIX K

Post-Study Information for the Women's Experiences with Sexual Coercion Study

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study! The time that you have spent talking with me has enriched this research, and I value your willingness to share your experiences of sexual coercion with me. By being involved in this project you are contributing to a much larger body of research on women's experiences with coercion and violence, and are providing us with a better understanding of how women experience sexual coercion, how they feel about it and who they discuss it with. This kind of information can help us to educate and raise awareness about the problems associated with sexual coercion.

Talking about our experiences of sexual coercion can be an emotional and challenging experience, however, it often helps us make sense of our experiences and can ultimately help us to move on. It is important to talk to people who are supportive and understanding, and who do not try to blame us for our experiences. You may find that it is helpful to talk about your experience with someone you trust and feel safe with, for example, a close friend, a family member, or a counsellor. If you would like to talk to someone, but don't have anyone if your life who seems appropriate, I would encourage you to call the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre hotline (see the resources list for contact information). Even if you have never been sexually assaulted or raped, it is perfectly acceptable for you to call them to discuss your experiences with coercion.

I have included a package of resources that I would encourage you to read through. You may not find that they are all relevant to your personal experience, but you may have a friend, or know of another woman for whom they would be beneficial. I have included a list of books and website that you may find helpful, if you want to do further reading on sexual coercion. If you need additional referrals or resources, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Once this study has concluded I will post a summary of the findings on the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board website, which can be found at www.uwindsor.ca/reb. The findings from this study will be available by December 2012. If you would like to receive an email notifying you of when the findings have been posted, please let me know. Also, if you would like to have an electronic recording of your interview, or a paper copy of the transcript, please let me know.

If you have any questions or concerns following this study, you may contact me by telephone at 519-253-3000, ext. 4703, or by email at johnstod@uwindsor.ca.

Sincerely,

Dusty Johnstone, M.A., PhD Candidate

APPENDIX L

Follow-up Questions

1. Now that some time has passed, how do you feel about having participated in the interview with me?
2. If you could go back to the time before this interview, do you think that you would choose to participate in it again?
3. Have your thoughts or feelings about your coercive experience changed at all, since the interview?
4. What was the best part of the interview?
5. What was the worst part of the interview?
6. Is there anything that you think could be changed or done differently, to make the interviews better for other women in the future?
7. Do you have any further comments that you would like to add, or questions that you would like to address?

APPENDIX M

I poem excerpts

Isabelle

I was drunk
I was kind of just like letting it happen, but
I was
I finally realized
I was intoxicated
I was in high school
I probably couldn't have drank,
I probably didn't drink
I drank too much
I didn't talk to him for a while
I didn't
I don't even know if
I even said like we had sex
I just said he was trying to have sex with me

Grace

I wanted gum
I was gonna
I wanted to go back to the truck
Before I knew it
I honestly
I was so drunk
I couldn't feel my body
I had no idea
I had no idea that…
I was, it kind of clicked after
I was like, what are you doing?
I was…
I didn't know what was going on
I… like, I was like, oh my gosh stop
I was so drunk out of my mind
I looked at my phone and it was my dad and then it clicked
I just got out of the car
As fast as I could
I got out of the car

Jade

I didn’t
I never labelled
I never said that he raped me
I never said that it was a sexual assault
I just said
I told him no
I
I know
I have worked through
I’ve
I have forgiven him because
I have to

Sarah

I didn’t realize.
I didn’t even
I went home
I didn’t remember
I kind of, it was like...
I kind of remember parts of it
But I don’t really remembered what happened

Janna

I had a few weeks
I guess after
I found out
I was angry
I was just like
It was my own fault
I shouldn't have
I shouldn't have led him on
I say, and
I know it's stupid
I started thinking
I brought it on myself

Sherry

I didn't know what to do
I was like
I know this person
I'm not really sure
I knew
I didn't want to do anything
I was still like
I don't want this
I woke up in the morning
I was like, no
I wasn't really sure what happened
I woke up in the morning
Did I really do this?
I was like
I was drunk
I wasn't sure
I do remember
I pretty much remember not wanting to have sex
I was coherent enough to say
I don't think we should

Emma

I...
I just remember
I was, like
I was really, like intoxicated
I don't, like
I just feel like
I guess it's only, like,
I wouldn't have, like...
I wouldn't have done that
If I was sober
I feel like
I was probably just
I don't know
I was probably
I don't know what happened
I had to like ask
I got really worried
I didn't know if he used a condom
I had to go and make sure everything was ok
I don't even know what happened

Kristina

I did not know what was happening
I just was
I just did not know
I don't remember talking to him
I got drunk
I actually,
Apparently I went in a taxi with him
I know that umm
I was already on birth control pills
I knew
I was like safe from getting pregnant
I know that he didn't use a condom
I was really freaking out about that
I got myself checked
I was...
I was just wearing jeans and a t-shirt t
I didn't expect anything to happen that night
I don't remember going home with him
I was completely wiped out.

Blair

I mean it was
I'm not even
I don't remember
Whether I was aware
I was drinking alcohol
I was only in grade 9
I'd only drank beer or something
I don't even remember
I just remember being really upset

VITA AUCTORIS

Name:	Dusty Johnstone
Place of Birth:	Newcastle, New Brunswick
Year of Birth:	1983
Education:	North & South Esk Regional High School, Sunny Corner, New Brunswick, 2001
	Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, B.A. Honours, 2005
	University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, M.A., 2007