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Searching for what was lost: An autoethnography on disclosure, identity, and social construction from a rape victim and survivor's perspective

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Searching For What Was Lost: An Autoethnography On Disclosure, Identity, and Social
Construction From a Rape Victim and Survivor's Perspective

By: Sarah R. Moll

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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2005

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
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Abstract

Research has indicated that rape victims perceive their environment differently, or with a “new reality” after their rape, and their recovery process can be lengthy and traumatic. This auto-ethnography focuses on the recovery process that the author journals, and her transformation from victim to survivor. How are the labels of “victim” and “survivor” important to the rape recovery process? How is the decision to disclose the rape a trust issue? What drives the phases of disclosure development at different communication levels (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public communication)? Once a person has accepted that they were raped and a healing process is well under way, what communication behaviors signal identity changes? How do victims and survivors of rape socially construct a recovery process?

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Thank you to my family and friends who supported me through this difficult process.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all of the victims and survivors of rape who are still searching for what was lost in their lives, and trying to live with their new reality. It is also for the people who have survived rape, and finally accepted that reality. For all of you, I say, May you someday realize that what is missing from the life you now lead is what was ripped away from the person you once were; and is not what you should be searching for, but what you left behind.

Introduction: A Glimpse of Me

When I first heard the word “rape,” it sounded hard to me, and absolutely terrifying. I learned about it from my mother, school, and movies on the Lifetime Network. I knew it was a horrible experience, and I couldn’t grasp the concept. I always thought I would rather die than experience it, and I always knew in the back of my mind that it could happen to me. I wasn’t one of those people who had the “it can never happen to me” idea in their head.

When it actually did happen to me, I blocked it out for over a year. I heard of this happening to people in traumatic situations, but I never really understood it. Not until it happened to me. The weird thing was I didn’t get that choice to live or die by my rapist. At times, I wish I had that decision, but I had to live with a different reality.

I was raped. I don’t remember the act because I had taken a sleeping pill, but I was raped. I went to sleep with my clothes on, and I woke up naked, bruised, and confused. What happened to me? Where were my friends when I needed them? What did I do that could have caused this?

The unrelenting question, what did I do wrong? This is the question victims ask. What did *I* do wrong? The question should not be what did *I* do wrong? The question should be why did *he* do this? No matter how hard you try to make logic out of an illogical situation, you can’t. You can’t turn a rapist into a nice person. You can’t change

the night the rape happened. You can't change the fact that you took your sleeping pill, or the fact that you didn't kick him out of your friend's house. You just can't. After the rape, nothing in life makes sense anymore. It feels like you are on a Tilt-A-Whirl that won't stop spinning; not even long enough for you to get off and vomit.

The truth is, I was lucky. I was lucky to have the chance to live a life. It may not have been much of a life at first, but after some time, therapy, and healing, it was *my* life. It was all I wanted because, after all, that is what he took away from me. He took my trust, my soul, my love, my concept of communication, my strength, and my will to live. This is my story of how I am living with that night of terror. This is my account of the journal entries I wrote during that time, the sadness, the rollercoaster of emotions, and the strength I gained from dealing with my pain. This is my story of forgiveness. Forgiveness of myself, forgiveness of those around me, and yes, even forgiveness of Kyle, my rapist. This is my tale of overcoming the biggest obstacle in life...myself.

Literature Review

Rape is a crime of the soul. It tortures the victim mentally, spiritually, and sometimes physically. The victim is felt to be marked by the rapist for the rest of their life, and now part of a community of rape victims and survivors they never wanted to join, or ever really comprehended until that moment.

The aftereffects of such a tragedy are life-changing. One of the common symptoms of rape is Rape Trauma Syndrome. This is defined as "the acute phase and long-term reorganization process that occurs as a result of forcible rape or attempted forcible rape" (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974, p. 982). The first phase, labeled as the Acute Phase, begins immediately after the rape, or attempted rape. The second phase,

Long-term Reorganization, is specific to each victim, but commonly starts about two to three weeks after the attack (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

In the Acute Phase of the Rape Trauma Syndrome, some impact reactions may be shock or disbelief, fear, anger, anxiety, restlessness, and tenseness. Victims may cry, sob, or smile to show their fear, anger, or anxiety. They may also act calm and composed, and mask their emotions. Some somatic reactions in the Acute Phase may be physical trauma, muscle tension (with possible tension headaches, sleep pattern disturbances, and fatigue), gastrointestinal irritability, and genitourinary disturbance (vaginal discharge, burning while urinating, etc.) (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

Some emotional reactions of the Acute Phase, which is when victims start to deal with the aftereffects of the rape, could be fear, humiliation, embarrassment, anger, revenge, self-blame, and fear of physical violence and death. Self-blame is an emotional reaction, which may be related to the rape victim's socialization to a "blame the victim" attitude (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974). Victims feel that if they can put logic in the timeline of events or somehow take themselves out of that particular place (for instance, "if I wasn't jogging down that side of the street"), then they can erase the incident from their mind by removing themselves from the situation. Victims know that this is not possible, but somehow, feel a need to go through everything they could have possibly done differently at the time of the rape. They put the blame on themselves, before actually putting the blame where it belongs; on the rapist. The rape is never their fault, but they don't realize that, until they receive some therapy (French, 2003), or strong positive social support.

In the "Long-Term Process of Reorganization," victims are beginning to use their coping skills. Their ego strength, social network support, and the way people treated them as victims all affect their coping mechanisms. Victims may take a trip out of state, or out of the country to get away. Many victims feel as if the rapist knows where they are, and will come back for them. Most of the victims turned to social support, such as friends, family, etc (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

Nightmares and phobias may develop, as well. Some victims report being afraid of indoors, outdoors, being alone, crowds, people behind them, or sex. These are all specific to each rape situation. For example, if a victim was attacked while sleeping, she/he may have a fear of being indoors (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is also a common disorder the victim may encounter. PTSD is caused by exposure to a traumatic event that is life-threatening, or other threat to one's personal integrity (DSMIV-TR, 2000), being a witness to a life-threatening event/one that incurs death/threat to another's integrity, or being made aware of someone's tragic death who is very close to you. Symptoms include the feeling of fear, helplessness, and horror, flashbacks, nightmares, feeling like the event is recurring, numbness, avoidance of activity, a sense of foreshortened future (no kids, marriage, etc), sleeping disturbance, anger outbursts, concentration difficulty, hyper vigilance, and exaggerated startle responses. The duration has to be for longer than one month, and is deemed chronic if the condition lasts more than three months. If the symptoms are delayed, PTSD is characterized by occurring a minimum of six months after the trauma (DSM -IV-TR, 2000).

There is also a syndrome called the “Silent Rape Reaction” (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974). This is a condition brought about by a second sexual assault. “This reaction occurs in the victim who has not told anyone of the rape, who has not settled her feelings and reactions on the issue, and who is carrying a tremendous psychological burden” (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974, p. 985). This second rape brought back all of the feelings, and reactions to their first trauma. This person talks about both rapes equally. Some of the indicators are: increasing signs of anxiety, sudden irritation, avoiding relationships, changes in sexual behavior, sudden phobias, self-confidence and self-esteem loss, self-blame, feeling paranoid, or violent dreams and/or nightmares (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

Victims of rape may become confused, and not realize if what happened to them was actually even rape at all. This is very common. The incident itself sometimes happens so quickly, and the victim does not want to believe that what she/he just experienced was actually just as terrifying as it really felt (French, 2003). A woman named Louisa, who was assaulted at 15 years of age, described her confused state:

‘I didn’t know what to think, I felt like, what does this mean? What just happened here? I couldn’t even really believe that it had happened, I mean, I knew that it did, but I knew that I didn’t know what to do about it or what to say about it’ (French, 2003, p. 306).

Accepting rape as a crime acted upon an individual can be a very difficult matter. When acceptance begins, a person may choose the word “victim” when referring to him/herself. This gives the person the understanding that there is nothing they could have

done differently in that particular situation to achieve a different outcome. They then realize that the abuser was the one who victimized them (Montalbano-Phelps, 2003).

A victim of rape may also develop hostility towards the gender of the rapist. According to Simpson and Senn (2003), individuals who were sexually assaulted/raped or experienced attempted sexual assault, were more hostile towards the opposite sex (this study did not cover rape of the same sex) than those who did not experience a form of sexual assault/rape/attempted sexual assault. Females who were raped by men, may become angry at men, and men who were victimized by women may become angry at women.

Anger is a natural reaction to being raped (DSM –IV-TR, 2000). An intense emotion sexual harassment victims encounter is rage from not being able to stop the harassment, according to Wood (1992). Rape victims may also feel this rage because they cannot stop the rape from occurring. If some rape victims develop hostility towards the gender of their rapist, and rage is a possibility, some behavioral changes may take place within the recovery process of the individual who was raped.

Assertiveness may be achieved after labeling a trauma, and yourself as a victim of that trauma. For example, Olsen (2004) stated in her autoethnography of domestic violence, when she labeled herself as a victim, she began to change her life by placing blame on the abuser, and realizing she could become a survivor. “My internal voice was screaming, ‘I DESERVE BETTER! The abuse was not my fault; I am a good, loving person (Olsen, 2004, *The Reconstruction of a Battered Woman’s Identity* section, para. 9)!” After this realization, the author began to reclaim her own voice and became assertive by raising awareness for domestic violence and its prevention. The assertiveness

marks an identifiable change in behavior because the author had a history of being ridiculed and punished by her abusive husband (Olsen, 2004). Even though speaking out may be empowering, silence is sometimes the choice for victims due to the ridicule they have been accustomed to while confessing truths about their lives (Jenefsky, 1996).

It has also been shown that victims of rape find it very difficult to disclose their experiences with their social support system, or family. Victims need an environment of acceptance, and willingness to support their needs. If they do not receive this, or receive a negative reaction, this can severely hinder their recovery process; for example, if a friend tells them that what happened to them was not rape. Telling the parents of the victim, the father in particular, is a very difficult matter. According to a rape victim named Clair:

“I felt like they didn’t need to know, [we] went through so many hard times with my ex-boyfriend that I didn’t feel ready to tell them that on top of everything else... I don’t want my parents to think of me as the victim of something (French, 2003, p. 312).”

Some information, such as a personal trauma is held confidential. A person may be reluctant to disclose that information to someone else because they may become vulnerable and risk getting hurt. If the decision to disclose the confidential information is made, there is the possibility of feeling more at ease and receiving more trust in the relationship, but sometimes the risk outweighs the benefits (Rawlins, 1983). With rape victims, part of the reason they may not disclose their rape could be because they are afraid their relational partner may leave the relationship. According to Berger (1986), uncertainty is the central issue in every face-to-face encounter. To continue communication interaction, people must find a way to reduce the shared uncertainty

about their past, present, and future actions. People are already confused enough about the meaning behind messages, so reducing uncertainty in a relationship can help a person choose the correct response to a message in order to keep the interaction going (Berger, 1986).

According to Montalbano-Phelps (2003) in a study examining narratives of domestic abuse survivors during disclosure, abuse survivors may also feel the need to convince others they are not crazy, insane, or paranoid, but are indeed experiencing the abuse they claim. Some rape victims feel that no one will believe them (French, 2003), or experience paranoia (Silent Rape Reaction), which can impede their disclosure process (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1974). If you are paranoid, you may not trust anyone with confidential information, such as a rape disclosure.

Intrapersonal disclosure is also an issue with rape victims. This may be the acceptance of the rape, or just being able to admit that they were raped out loud. There may be a struggle within a victim as to whether to accept such a heinous act was committed upon them. They may begin to notice a change in their personality before they are ready for acceptance, "I privately began to question what was happening to me." "I was struggling to find a purpose, a passion for life like I once had. I could no longer deny the strong-willed voice of independence that was buried deep inside of me (Olsen, 2004, *The Reconstruction of A Battered Woman's Identity*, para. 1)". This victim wondered about the woman she used to be, and finally realized that she was not the same person anymore. She then realized that she did not have to live a life of domestic abuse, and started her recovery process. Rape acceptance parallels in the way that the victims

may realize that they are not the same person, and then may finally accept the fact that they were raped, and start their recovery process.

Another reason individuals may not accept that they were raped is because they may repress the memory. Memory repression is a controversial subject. In repression, the memory of the rape will eventually surface in flashbacks, which are vivid scenes of what occurred on the night of the rape. They will not be in a particular order, or come with any sort of warning. Once the flashbacks start coming, there is no way to stop them from flowing in, or any way to control how quickly or slowly the information will come back to a victim (Golier, Yehuda, Southwick, 1997). Outside forces, like a culture or society, may also try to oppress a victim from confessing a rape. This is "...the ways members of subordinated groups have resisted, broken through, defied, or otherwise maneuvered around oppressive forces that threaten to silence them" (Jenefsky, 1996, 48).

Deciding to report a rape is a very difficult decision. The fear of being blamed for the crime (at the police station, or on trial), not having enough evidence to launce an investigation or press charges, the feeling that the police may not believe the victim, the possibility of the performance of a rape kit examination, or taking the chance to disclose such a personal matter to a law enforcement officer who may not have adequate training in rape reporting are all harsh realities to a rape victim. The victim must weigh the benefit of getting the sexual predator off of the street and into prison, to all of these harsh realities. When it comes to acquaintance rape victims, some women feel it is their personal failure versus rape that occurred (French, 2003). According to Adams-Roy and Barling (1998) in a study to confront or report sexual harassment, those individuals who are more assertive, or believe that the organization they are reporting to upholds justice,

may be more likely to report the crime. Since rape is also a sexually-oriented crime, victims who are more assertive or believe our laws and system are just may be more likely to report rape.

Public (or eventually mass) disclosure is usually one of the last forms of disclosure. To share a personal truth that is difficult to disclose in the first place, but a truth, nonetheless, that is an unspeakable act, such as rape, demands a great deal of courage. Some people speak for their own empowerment, and some as a preventative measure for helping others (Wood, 1992).

Even though a victim is exactly what they are, rape victims consider the word "victim" to connote a very weak person. In French's study (2003), Clair, quoted earlier in the literature, did not want her family to think of her as a victim. Rape victims do not want to think of themselves as weak. Who does? We all want to think of ourselves as strong people. If victims do not think of themselves as strong people anymore, why would they think anyone else would? Fortunately, most people do not feel that way when they hear that someone has been raped. They understand that it is a crime that has been committed against that person, and not something the person has inflicted upon themselves. According to Owens and Chard (2001), as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms increase, so does self-blame in a study of women reporting childhood sexual abuse.

So, why does the word "victim" have such a negative connotation? Is it because victims are going through the stage of self-blame and associate weakness as part of their self-blame? Once their self-blame stage is over, do they then realize that being a victim is not a sign of weakness?

In a study by Young and Maguire (2003), ten ethnographic interviews were performed to analyze the language that victims used while talking about their assaults. Many of the women in the study related the word “victim” as connotating weakness, and the word “survivor” as connotating strength. Several of the women mentioned that they used both terms while recovering from the aftereffects of rape, depending on their progress with their recovery. The authors stated, “It is not that you *are* a victim or you *are* a survivor. Instead, you move from one end where something was done to you (victim) to where you do something about it (survivor)” (Young, & Maguire, 2003, p. 49).

Placing a label, for instance “victim” or “survivor”, on someone who was raped may impede their recovery process. These labels, and others, are influenced by a “culture’s construction of sexual violence” (Young, & Maguire, 2003, p. 50). This is the culture’s view of sexual violence, for example, the defense blaming the victim if a rape case were to be prosecuted, which may lead to the public blaming the victim. Another cultural term is “Aggravated Criminal Sexual Assault” (National Drug Intelligence Center [NDIC], & Sexual Assault Services Office of George Mason University [SACO GMU], 2003, p. 32), which is used in the state of Illinois to represent a drug-facilitated sex crime. The words “sexual assault” are also used in the state of Illinois when referring to rape. This term confuses the victim at times. They may think, “Do they not believe that I was raped? Why are they calling this sexual assault?” The victim may refer to a different time in her life when she was “sexually assaulted,” and not actually penetrated, or raped, and feel that her crime is being trivialized in a way (Young, & Maguire, 2003). Every state is different, of course. Some states do call rape exactly what it is; rape. In

Louisiana, drug-induced rape is called forcible rape (NDIC, SACO GMU; Office Of The National Drug Control Policy Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse, 2004).

Using the label “victim” may also cause difficulties. It allows people to talk about their experiences and feelings, and in turn, may point out that they were not at fault with the rape, but it can also reflect the myth that the victim needs to be protected because they are powerless. The label “survivor” gives the notion of control, but that person may not feel able to talk about the rape when they need to (Young, & Maguire, 2003). Francis (1997) found that the bereavement therapy in her study, concluded the survivor (positive identity) was a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person than the negative identity. The negative identity would relate to a rape victim’s stage of “victim”.

Date rape was not always labeled a crime, and therefore it was more difficult to get the help that is available to us today (Wood, 1992). Before date or acquaintance rape had a label, society conceived rape as a crime being committed by a stranger. Women as a result had difficulty identifying the situation (French, 2003). The same difficulty occurred with marital rape. Now we finally have names for date rape, marital rape, and acquaintance rape; and we also know that they are not the victim’s fault.

Another label which victims must decipher is their new identity from their old identities. Francis (1997) deduced from a social support study that once a sufferer (person in therapy for divorce or bereavement) forms a positive identity, and rids themselves of their negative identity, which is more self-blaming, that person can no longer be responsible for the negative act (death, divorce). Therefore, the other person involved (the spouse) is responsible for the event. The positive identity must then forgive

the weak person at fault for the event, and move on with their life interacting positively with others. This is also similar in rape recovery, as well.

Victims are not the same person they once were, and have to form a new identity. During and after a recovery process, women find a new, stronger voice, which renews their spirit (Olsen, 2004). A victim who suffers from Rape Trauma Syndrome finds the world a very different place, than the way she/he left it before the rape. One victim in Burgess and Holmstrom's (1974) research of Rape Trauma Syndrome stated, "On the exterior I am OK, but inside, [I feel] every man is the rapist" (p. 985). According to Rosenfeld (1969), Burke's "Identification may be the relation between an act and a larger unit of action of which it is a part" (p.183). The act can symbolize rape, and the unit of action can symbolize recovery from rape. Victims' identification then changes because of the trauma of rape, but evolves during their recovery process. Victim's identities are evolving within the constraints of a culture, as well (Wood, 1992). As more victims speak out against sexual violence, more assertive identities may emerge.

The recovery process that a rape victim goes through can be extremely traumatizing; but, one that rape victims socially construct. Once rape victims accept the crime acted upon them as rape, and enter into a recovery process, they usually have difficulty disclosing the rape to another individual; possibly because they are afraid no one will believe them. Shadden and Agan (2004) said it best when referring to the spouse of an Aphasia (social dysfunction from a stroke) sufferer, "I never realized how much I saw myself through the way he treated me (p. 175)." Is it possible that rape victims are seeing themselves the way that the rapist treated them, or how society treats them? Often rape victims blame themselves for the rape (French, 2003) (Burgess, & Holmstrom,

1974), even when the term “victim” releases them from any blame; and so does the concept of rape. Could it possibly be because the rapist may tell the victim that the rape was his/her fault? Could it be because of the way society treats the victim?

In French’s (2003) rape survivor narratives, some rape victims felt the need to help others during and after their recovery process. If they are still faced with their rapist, daily life can be terrifying with the fear that they will be raped again. Torturous replays of the rape may recount what happened to them in flashbacks and memories (Golier, Yehuda, & Southwick, 1997). Some victims may seek therapy for their rape recovery process because it is so terrifying. Five of the seven women in French’s (2003) study pursued therapy, and Young and Maguire’s (2003) study centers around a rape crisis center (rape crisis centers usually have therapy available).

What language is the media using that can possibly affect the victim’s view of society’s social construction of rape? Do we hear the word “rape” so much that society is desensitized to it? Does the media’s language diffuse the severity of the crime? If reporters use stronger or more direct language in their reporting, would society have a better understanding of how cruel and horrific rape actually is? Would musicians and individuals then use the word “rape” in the text of their songs or in regular conversation as a word meaning nothing more than disrespecting someone, or “pulling one over on them” so much?

The fact is that the media does need to use the word rape so much because the crime occurs so often, but sometimes rape is even disguised in another crime, or not even mentioned in the headlines; for instance, “Teenager Indicted In Home Invasions” (Hundsorfer, 2004). This “Teenager” was also indicted for raping his victim. Of course,

the reader would not know this until they read the whole news article. Which crime do you think is more severe; a home invasion, or a rape? What about the language used in other headlines?

Sometimes, the media mentions the act, for example, “Girl Fears She May Have Been Raped At Party” (Brueggemann, 2005). If you hear this in the media, do you feel that you should be more careful of a criminal on the loose? If rape victims hear this, would they feel that the blame was placed on the girl in the second headline (“Girl Fears She May Have Been Raped At Party”)? Would this affect whether or not a rape victim discloses her rape, and whether or not she reports it?

Some headlines actually warn the public to be careful of a drug, instead of a rapist; for example, “‘Date Rape’ Drugs Threaten SIUC Students”(Retter, 1999). “‘Date Rape’ Drugs Threaten” actually warns the college students to be careful of the drugs. The article mentions that there was a man who pled guilty to charges of manufacturing and selling GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate, the most common ‘date rape’ drug [NDIC, SASO GMU, 2004]). It does not tell you to beware of the predators who bought the GHB from the man, and who will eventually put the GHB in someone’s drink. Instead, it warns you of the mysterious drugs that somehow plunge into your drink while you are not watching (Retter, 1999). So, who exactly should these students be cautious of?

There are many drugs used to facilitate rape besides GHB, which is most common next to Rohypnol (flunitrazepam). GHB is a central nervous system depressant used for its euphoric and sedative effects (NDIC, SASO GMU, 2004), and is also mentioned to have a salty taste, which is usually masked by mixing GHB in a drink. Rohypnol is a benzodiazepine, which is up to 10 times stronger than Valium, and completely illegal in

the U.S. It is prescribed, however, in 70 countries, including Mexico as a preanesthetic medication or treatment for sleep disorders (NDIC, SASO GMU, 2004).

There are many other drugs used in sexual assault. A few of them are: Ethanol, Alcohol (alcoholic beverages), Marijuana, Codeine, Morphine, Heroin, Zyrtec, Tavist, Benadryl (as dimenhydrinate), Phenergan, Elavil, Doxepin, Trazodone, Mellaril, Ambien, Soma, and Phenobarbital. Some of these drugs may not be thought of as typical date rape drugs, but when given in large amounts, or mixed with other drugs, alcohol, or medication, they can be very dangerous (Lebeau, & Mozayani, 2001; NDIC, SASO GMU, 2004).

Looking at alcohol as a major concern for rape cases is very important. In a study titled, "Trends in Alcohol-Related Campus Violence: Implications for Prevention," 488 males and 462 females completed a questionnaire on assault and alcohol. The research suggests that "In 1996, three times as many females as males said they were the victims of unwanted sexual activity and approximately 85% of both these groups said that alcohol was involved" (Nicholson, Maney, Blair, Wamboldt, Saxton, & Yuan, 1998, p.46). Not all rapes happen on a college campus, of course, but many assaults do involve alcohol. The Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault Resource Guide states, "Sexual assaults have long been linked to the abuse of substances, primarily alcohol, that may decrease inhibitions and render the user incapacitated" (The National Drug Intelligence Center along with George Mason University, 2004, p. 2).

An example of a man accused of sexual allegations and being a sexual predator by many women is Senator Bob Packwood. He is a man who would be extremely dangerous considering his political position of power and intimidation at the time the allegations

surfaced in 1992. In an analysis by Moore (1996), Kenneth Burke's Principle of Perfection is applied to Senator Packwood's response to the sexual charges against him. In stage one, which is Apology, Packwood "reinforced social attitudes about sexual misconduct by regretting that his behavior appeared as such and transcended allegations by emphasizing his record as a women's rights activist" (p.15).

In stage two, Refutation, Packwood created a drama of his own to overpower the allegations of the women. He started to intimidate them by collecting information about their sexual past. This was countered by the Senate Ethics Committee, due to the Federal Rape Shield Rule. The last stage is Diversion, in which the Senator pleaded that his rights to privacy were violated when he was asked to give his diaries to the Senate (Moore, 1996). So, with Apology, Refutation, and Diversion, some sexual predators, or alleged sexual predators who may not fit the usual criteria of having decreased levels of social skills can be very manipulative.

So, if rape victims experience traumatic aftereffects, such as fear, phobias, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms, not to mention the lack of trust in other people and themselves (self-blame) after being raped, how do rape victims have to learn how to communicate in a way that suits their new reality (the way they now feel, what they experience, and how they live their lives)? This literature leads to the following questions investigated in this thesis:

R1: How are the labels of "victim" and "survivor" important to the rape recovery process?

R2: How is the decision to disclose the rape a trust issue (trusting the person/persons you are disclosing to not to share the information, or abandon the relationship)?

R3: What drives the phases of disclosure development at different communication levels (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public communication)?

R4: Once a person has accepted that they were raped and a healing process is well under way, what communication behaviors signal identity changes?

R5: How do victims and survivors of rape socially construct a recovery process?

Methodology

This study uses the journal entries, poetry, song writing and experiences from one individual to interpret the changes in communication interpretation as she moves from rape victim to rape survivor. This is accomplished by sharing relevant text, and using narrative analysis and reflections about that text to arrive at a way of understanding answers to the research questions. In the process, research about rape and communication will also be analyzed and discussed. This autoethnography engages practices from Goodall (2000), and Ellis and Bochner (1996) to address the text. I am both the victim and survivor in this thesis.

The research covers multiple disciplines. First, communication literature was consulted to address research questions in the areas of identity, disclosure, social construction, the importance of labels, coping, social support, intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, behavior, framing strategies, rhetoric, and ethnographies. To address the acceptance and social construction of the recovery process,

the *American Psychological Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2000 [Text Revision]) was used to obtain definitions and background information on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depressive Episode, and Major Depressive Disorder. The book *Trauma and Memory* was also used for information on repression. Multiple journal articles from the disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, and education were consulted for information regarding clinical definitions, redefining identity, gender hostility, and alcohol-related violence.

Newspaper articles were used for analysis of language in headlines to understand social constructions of rape in order to look at popular representations of the experience. Law enforcement drug-facilitated sexual assault manuals were analyzed and added to this study to give information on date rape drugs, which is pertinent to the drug-facilitated rape in this auto-ethnography. Due to the difficult recovery process with rape, a sexual assault crisis counselor was consulted and personal communication with her is included. The counselor also interviewed me about my recovery on audio tape, which I use as data. The other personal communication was a friend included because of interpersonal disclosure issues and trust issues that rape victims have to overcome.

A Nirvana song was analyzed because of its graphic terms and repetition of the words "rape me" which illustrates a study analyzing language desensitizing society to the term "rape." The State of Louisiana: Profile of Drug Indicators was used to compare a legal code that includes the term "rape" to one that does not (i.e. my state).

For the purpose of this study, "intrapersonal disclosure" is finally realizing and accepting that which you have repressed. Throughout the thesis, a "new reality" for a

rape victim is discussed. The “new reality” for the purpose of this auto-ethnography is the way my life has changed since I was raped.

The main reason ethnography is the best choice for my study is because it accesses data for all of my research questions, so that my readers can see how I made my deductions, and truly feel and know what my experience was like. The method is suitable because it addresses research along with personal experience to interpret my responses to the research questions. Personal narratives provide rich data in the form of thick description (Geertz, 1973). The form is so rhetorically compelling that readers gain access not only to the facts and structure of the story, but also to the very human emotional dimension of an experience. It gives more insight and understanding about what victims and survivors go through. Given my topic and research questions, this method is most appropriate.

Searching For What Was Lost: An Autoethnography on Disclosure, Identity, and
Social Construction From a Rape Victim and Survivor’s Perspective

I keep waiting... waiting for a morning I wake up, and the memory isn't there.

Waiting for a night, when the last thing on my mind isn't the nightmare of that day.

Every thought I have is about being violated.

Every time I turn around, I'm terrified I'll see him.

He's everywhere.

He creeps into my stream of consciousness at the most inconvenient times.

There is never a convenient time, because rape is not a convenient crime.

I pray for the moment I can push the bad thoughts out of my head,

or the time that I don't care.

Mostly, I just look forward to that one day when he's not there.

He's Not There (Written May 3, 2004)

I wrote this poem at one of the darkest moments in my life. I couldn't eat, sleep, or breathe without thinking about my rapist, and what he did to me. What he "did" to me... well, that is what I called it for a long time. I couldn't quite grasp the concept of rape, and on some days, it is still so traumatizing that I just want to pretend "it" didn't happen, so I have to remind myself that it wasn't a nightmare, and it actually did happen. He raped me.

I am not a statistic. I am a woman; although, before the rape I often referred to myself as a girl. My name is Sarah. I was 25 years old when I was raped, and I have grown more as a person in the last year and three months than I have in my entire life. Although, I was raped on January 24, 2003, I did not start my healing process until April 2004 due to repressing some of the memories of the night I was raped. I said goodbye to the girl I was on that chaotic night.

Being raped by Kyle wasn't my first sexual assault. I was attacked by my boyfriend when I was fourteen years old. This is very important because I knew what happened to me as a teenager wasn't right, but I didn't know what to do about it, or what to call it until a therapy session about eleven years later. I still have flashbacks from this attack. I never realized that until this very moment, as I am typing these words in my laptop. I can't believe I am having flashbacks from two assaults, and I am just so

accustomed to dealing with them that I don't think about it anymore. It is like breathing. You just do it because you have to. You aren't given a choice in the matter, so you don't think about what would happen if you stopped. That would be interesting, wouldn't it? Gee, I think I'll take a break from breathing today. I'm tired, and I find it rather exhausts my energy. This is the sort of break you receive from flashbacks. There isn't any, because you aren't rendered a choice in the matter, so you just give in, and eventually deal with them as they come.

So, the only time I spend with Ted, my attacker (I call Kyle my rapist, just so we have those two separate), is in my flashbacks because I haven't seen him in ten years. I talked about Ted assaulting me to my friends, but I never talked to a counselor until eleven years later. Basically, I was in healing purgatory with my assault. I wanted to heal, and knew I needed to heal, but I didn't know how to go about doing it. I found myself searching for something, only I had no clue what was at the end of my search. I just knew that it was crucial to my happiness.

So, here we start our rollercoaster ride. That is exactly what it is, a roller coaster ride of emotion and healing. Immediately after rape, victims of trauma will go through extreme ups and downs in emotion. This is all part of the Rape Trauma Syndrome and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974) (DSMIV-TR, 2000). Some days will be really bad, angry, sad, or just a little bad. Then, we will have a decent day (very few and far between) where some things aren't so bad. On all of these days, we will cry sporadically, yell, scream, want to be alone, or laugh for no reason. There are other emotions, too. These are just a few. Every day is a guessing game to predict if it will be a bad, really bad, horrible, or not so bad day at first. Eventually, there are good

days; then, the good days outnumber the bad. This takes some time. Hence, the rollercoaster ride. We will continue our journey with Ted.

Ted

It was the summer after my eighth grade year, and Ted was my third boyfriend. Ted was the first guy I ever kissed, and was way too experienced for me. I went to a Catholic School, and their sex education did not prepare me for Ted, neither did the talks my parents gave me about unwanted touching. Ted was the handsome and charming (at first) boy from the public school who had me mystified.

I remember once in my basement when my parents were out of town, and I had some friends over, Ted was there with his buddies and about 15-20 people. I was sitting on the couch next to Ted, and he puts a pillow on my lap. He then puts his hand in between my legs, and started penetrating me with his finger. All of his friends knew what he was doing, but I had no clue. It was not pleasant or wanted at all. I just glanced at him with this clueless expression on my face as if to say, "Are you getting anything from this, because I'm not?" That should have been my first sign that Ted was way out of my league. Did I mention that with all of his experience he forgot to learn how to kiss? When I kissed him, I ended up wiping my entire face afterwards. Oh yeah, forehead and all. He had braces, but that is no excuse. He was just an aggressive kisser. He was a very fast and hard kisser.

There's another thing, probably the scariest thing of all. Ted talked about a little girl in the neighborhood where he lived. I can't remember her name, but for some reason he hung out with her a lot; an abnormal amount of time for a 14 year old boy to want to hang out with a little girl because he wasn't a nice guy. He would ask me if I would wear

tight pants or shirts for him, and when I would say no, he would respond with, why not? Jane does. We'll call her Jane because I don't remember her name. He's referring to the little girl. Thinking back, I wonder what he did to little Jane. I pray he did nothing to her, but I fear he hurt her.

All of this background leads us to the day of the attack. I was with my best friend at the time, and we walked to Ted's house. He invited us over before he went to the Cardinals baseball game that night. He had two friends over who were brothers. It was just the five of us in the house. When we first walked in, he showed us around a little, but he didn't show us his room. He said it was a mess, and that he would only take me back there for other reasons, implying sex. I was not at all interested in sex, so I was very happy staying in the garage that his parents had remodeled as a family room.

For some reason, we were making out on the couch, which was standard practice back then to do in front of your friends. Yuck! First of all, I was way too young, and we had an audience. Little did I realize that was the only safe way to kiss Ted. All of the sudden, he sat up and said, "Let's go in the bedroom." I said, "No, you have to leave soon for your game, and I don't want to." He was going to a Cardinal game that evening. So, after many no's, he decides to pick me up and carry me to the bedroom. I must have been smiling a little, so not to act as if I was scared in front of my friends (Why did I care!!!), because they laughed, and kept watching the television.

At this point, I am still in the family room, but saying "No, no, stop, I don't want to go!" I was also grabbing onto the doorway with my hands trying to stay in the room. I fought with everything I had to stay in that room. As my last finger fell from the wood of the doorway with Ted's arms around my waist carrying me to his bedroom, I had to think

fast. I started kicking him and elbowing him. After a struggle, he finally threw me in a recliner in the living room. I remember being relieved that we weren't in his bedroom, and that our friends were only about 20-30 feet away but, why weren't they coming? Why didn't they hear me struggle? Why didn't they help me?

With my knees on his shoulders pushing him back, he was like an octopus all of the sudden. He was everywhere, and all over me at once. He was kissing me on my face and my neck, and grabbing my breasts. He was holding me down and pushing me back all at the same time. He was so strong, and I was so little (I was 5 feet tall, and weighed about 95 pounds). I was trained in self-defense (Karate-Do), but none of it helped in this situation. I panicked. He was hurting me. I was so scared he was going to get me into the bedroom. It was just a short carry down the hall...I was able to fight one of my hands free, and slap him in the face. I hit him hard enough for him to back off. I pushed him away, and ran into the other room.

After I composed myself, and tried to figure out what just happened, I realized that he had left hickies so big on my neck that there was no way they could be covered up. They were huge bruises, and they hurt. I pretended like I was okay because I did not know what had just happened, and I did not want to make a big deal out of nothing. I also did not want to get Ted into trouble. I was very naïve, but so are a lot of sexual assault victims. They are so confused about what happened that they end up pretending that it never existed, so they don't have to decipher the situation.

I laughed about my hickies with my friends, so they wouldn't know I was upset. I had to wear turtlenecks until they faded away. I only told one friend partly what happened. I felt ashamed, and I thought it was my fault because I was making out with

him at the time. I thought that if my friends didn't come to help me, I must not have been fighting hard enough, or yelling loud enough.

It wasn't my fault! I, of course, didn't figure this out until about eleven years later in therapy. I carry that day with me everyday of my life. It is a part of me, an emotional scar. But, at least now I have moved on. You can have a scar, and not think about it every minute, or every day. It becomes part of your mental environment, if you will.

If you compare it to a physical scar that you received falling off of your bicycle as a child, you might understand. The scar is on your body, of course, you carry it everywhere with you, but you aren't constantly aware that it is there.

I eventually told my friends everything, but not until college. I was too scared, and didn't realize that what Ted did was a criminal act. Looking back, it seems so obvious now, but I was just a child then, and so naïve. I did not want to believe that someone I trusted would want to hurt me, let alone violate me. This was a lesson I had a hard time learning again at 25 years of age.

I often wondered if there was any way that Ted could have misinterpreted the verbal and non-verbal communication I used, but I always come up with the same answer. No. I told him "No, Stop! I don't want to go!" I was fighting him off, and pulling at the door frame just to avoid being alone with him. There is no way to misinterpret that.

What lasting effects did this have on me besides emotional scars? Well, I was claustrophobic from that moment on. So claustrophobic in fact, that for a while, I couldn't even sit in back seats because the back of the front seat was too close to me. I was in competitive Judo for two years in college. It is basically wrestling in Japanese. I was horrible at pinning people, and getting pinned because of my claustrophobia. I did

okay standing up or grappling, but once we were wrestling on the floor, I was terrified to be in that position again; my knees on someone's shoulders pushing them away.

It would trigger a flashback that I wasn't ready for, or willing to deal with at that moment. Little did I know that the claustrophobia I developed was part of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (DSM –IV [2000] text revision). The DSM IV-TR (2000) states, “physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event” is a characteristic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (p. 428).

I don't know where Ted is, but I do know that he did a lot of damage to women. He raped one of my best friends after he assaulted me. He was also rumored to beat up another girl he dated, who I have come to know very well now. I have never asked her. He moved to another town in high school, and I heard that he left many women in the same situation there.

For a while, I felt like it was all my fault. If I had just reported it, than maybe all of these women would have been spared. But, the fact is that I didn't report it. I can't go back in time and change that. I can wish all I want, but back then we were not as educated about what characterizes sexual assault. I did not understand what kind of person Ted really was, and how much damage he could do.

I talked to my friend who was raped once about how hard things were for me, and I asked how she was doing. She is now living an amazingly happy life with her husband and daughter. She still thought about the rape, and I don't think she really wanted to talk about her feelings in detail. She was trying to put it behind her, and I don't know if she ever went through counseling or not. Most people are not willing to discuss the intimate

details of their lives, and you cannot get much more intimate than discussing how you feel after you were raped. Even ten years after the attack, I still considered myself a victim from Ted's assault. Now, looking back, almost 13 years later, I can finally say that I am a survivor. I am coping with a much larger matter than little old Ted, now. That is how I feel about him. He is in my past, and a small part of it. I may still have the flashbacks, and claustrophobia from time to time, but it does not rule my life or me anymore. I do.

Ted and I broke up shortly after the attack. I think it was a matter of days.

Before The Rape: A History of Kyle

And then there was Kyle... Kyle and I met at a sports bar in an adjacent town to where I currently live. He actually attended the same high school I did, but he was two years behind me in school. We had mutual friends, who were girls, so I immediately felt safe with him. I knew those girls pretty much all of my life, and if they trusted him, why shouldn't I, right?

So, I had my eye on him all night at the bar, and noticed that he had his eye on me. Kyle is very attractive, and knows it. Neither one of us wanted to go home, or say goodbye after the bar closed, so we continued our evening with the rest of our friends. We went with a bunch of people to a hotel lobby (don't ask me why) and hung out there for a while. Supposedly, one of his friends was staying at the hotel. Kyle was obviously a little wasted, and we were out of hangout options. So, we went back to my place. I live with my parents, so I knew I felt safe there. But, why did I care? I already trusted him.

We sort of watched T.V., but mostly made out. Yes, the first night we made out on the couch. I am not usually one of those girls, either. But, for some reason, I was that

night. I remember thinking that Kyle did not look very cute anymore. Maybe it was because he was drunk, or because I felt like we were moving too fast, but I wasn't all too interested in him by the end of the night.

So, we exchanged numbers, and I didn't really care if he called; but, he did. I am very detached with most men that I date for some reason. I can take them or leave them. Don't get me wrong, if I am in a relationship, or I care for a person, I am very much attached while we are together. But, the moment I have closure, I am over it. Maybe this has something to do with my attack from Ted. Now, when I go through this, it seems a little more extreme, and I have almost no emotion at all with dating. I relate this to my "not letting men get too close to me", and "keeping my guard up" issues I received from the rape. I do not want to trust men fully, therefore I will not let myself get attached enough to care when they leave.

I went out with Kyle a few more times, and ended up really liking him. I was dating someone else at the time, too, though. Kyle and I both understood that this was just casual, and we really did not see each other all that much. Kyle and I did have talks about his family and my family. He revealed to me that his father was an alcoholic, and that he was afraid he was going to be just like him in that way. He told me that sometimes when he drinks, he blacks out. I remember thinking that he did drink quite a bit, and that blacking out may be somewhat common for some of his friends, but it's not normal. I remember telling him that he wasn't his father, and yes, alcoholism was in his blood, but that didn't mean he had to become one. Only he could control his behavior; something like that, anyway.

So, eventually Kyle moved on, and we stopped seeing each other. I had no closure from dating him, and I still had feelings for Kyle because of this, but I was mostly leaning towards the other guy I was dating.

When it didn't work out with the other guy, I started thinking about Kyle a little more. I still had a major crush on him. My friend at this time had a major crush on one of Kyle's friends. We'll call him Paul, and her Karla (This is not their actual names to protect their privacy. Kyle's name is actually Kyle. I do not feel the need to protect his privacy because he never took mine into consideration. If I am using my full name, at least his first name will be used.).

So, Karla works for Kyle's mom at her part-time job, which I mentioned earlier. Karla and I met at our full-time jobs. We were really good friends at this point.

The Night of the Rape

Karla and I were out at the same bar I met Kyle, having our girls' night out. We were having a great time, when my cell phone started ringing. Guess who calls out of the blue? It's Kyle. Since, the bar is loud and whichever bar he is at is loud too, we play voice mail tag for a while. Finally, we talk on the phone. He asks us what we are doing after the bar closes. He says that he and Paul (Karla's crush) are looking for something to do, so we invite them to Karla's.

The scene of them driving up is priceless. Paul is driving because Kyle can't even walk straight let alone have the hand, eye, and foot coordination to drive a car. So Paul gets out of the car and walks toward us. Kyle opens the car door, and practically falls out. He mildly catches himself, and proceeds to come over and give me a hug.

So, at this point, I'm pretty much holding the guy up. We walked into Karla's apartment, and for some reason, Kyle and John are all about the booze. "Let's do shots." They pulled out the hard liquor, and mixed drinks and poured shots. I drank a little, but most of the time stayed in the background. Jack Daniels was not my favorite drink "straight up" back then (I learned to appreciate it about a year later), so I was definitely not drunk. I may have been a little "buzzed" for about an hour, but that wore off very quickly, and this night lasted for what seemed like an eternity.

At this point it is about 2:45 a.m. or so because the bars close at 2 a.m. I was the soberest of the crew, but Karla and Paul were not totally annihilated like Kyle. Kyle was stumbling and weaving as he walked. He was very, very drunk. I remember thinking that he had a much larger beer gut than before, and I did not sign up for babysitting drunk boy tonight. But at this time, I was still glad to see him. He was standing, correction I should say leaning against the counter for support, and he beckoned me toward him. When I went over, he started immediately hitting on me. It was weird because Kyle wasn't like that when I dated him. He never treated me like this. He grabbed my hand and tried to get me to go into Karla's bedroom with him. When I looked confused, and said no, he proceeded by himself.

I sat down by Paul and Karla at the kitchen table for a while, who were now deep in conversation, and they asked me what Kyle was doing. I told them he went into Karla's room, and they asked me what he was doing. I said I didn't know, I guessed he was sleeping. I decided to check on him.

I went in to the dark bedroom, and Kyle was laying on top of Karla's Winnie the Pooh bedspread on the left side of her bed. I went over and asked him how he was. No

sooner did I sit next to him, did he pull me on top of him kissing me with his hands all over me. At first, I thought, it's okay, just kiss him and let him stay above the waist. But, Kyle's kissing wasn't normal Kyle kissing. He was kissing me hard and he was grabbing my breast so hard and pinching me that it hurt. I was in pain. He started for my pants, and I pushed his hand away. He went for them again, and I said "No!" This did not deter him for long. Before I noticed what he was doing, he had ripped my pants open. They were button-ups, so he didn't actually rip them. He had just pulled so hard that they all came unbuttoned at once. I pushed him away, and jumped up. I said "Stop it, Kyle, you're hurting me! I told you no!" I buttoned my pants back up, and left the room.

I went back in by Karla and Paul for a safe place, and just sat there in shock. I could not believe it; Kyle surely did not know what he was doing. He had never done anything like this to me before. It didn't make any sense. I was confused as to what just happened.

Well, Kyle didn't leave me alone for long. He followed me in the kitchen, and beckoned me over to him again. When I just sat there in disbelief, Karla and Paul looked a little confused. Eventually, I went over to see what he wanted. He actually wanted me to go in the living room with him. You've got to be kidding me! I said no, and stayed in the kitchen. He went into the living room and lied on the couch. Karla and Paul asked me why I wasn't in the living room with Kyle, and I didn't want them to know what happened, so I made up an excuse. I was ashamed and embarrassed that Kyle was treating me that way. I certainly did not want anyone to know that did not have to know at that point. I did not realize he was already out of control. I thought I could wait to see if his aggression got worse. Now looking back, why would I take that chance?

Sooner or later, Kyle came back in to get me, or I finally peeked in on him to see if I was safe. He saw me, and asked me to come in the living room. I went.

What a mistake! As soon as I sat on the couch to ask him how he was feeling (considering he barely stumbled into the living room), he started mauling me again. I kept fighting him off and saying no. I told him I didn't want to make-out, I just wanted to talk. We talked for about two seconds, then he would come at me like I was his favorite meal, and he had not eaten in days. He went to take off my pants again, and I left the room.

I was not afraid to voice my concern at this point in the night. I told Karla that Kyle was scaring me, and that he hurt me. I told her he was being forceful, and trying to rip my pants off. I told her I said no, and told him to leave me alone, but he would not. I asked her to keep him away from me, and not to leave us alone no matter what. She agreed.

Karla and Paul were going into her bedroom to lie down, and I sure was not going to be left alone, so I went with them. So, picture the three of us lying in Karla's bed together like one happy family. It was the perfect picture of a threesome on a Winnie the Pooh comforter, which if it could talk would probably have voiced that it felt just as violated as I did; although, obviously nothing happened with the three of us. It was Paul on the left, Karla in the middle, and me on the right. I did not care, as long as Kyle stayed away. It had been awhile, so we all figured that Kyle passed out on the couch. Paul had no idea of what happened between Kyle and me.

What I did not tell you about me is that I have Fibromyalgia. It seems like a strange time to tell you, but it is important now. Fibromyalgia is usually accompanied with a sleeping disorder. I have a sleeping disorder, so I take a sleeping pill. At that time,

I had to take it almost every night to help me sleep. I had it with me, and I was not at all tired considering how freaked out I was about being violated. I knew that it was very late, and I need some sleep. I also felt if I was with Karla and Paul, I was safe. I took Ambien at the time, and it affected my personality. The truth is, it completely changed my personality, and made me very drugged. Once, after taking Ambien (at 25 years of age), I crawled into bed with my parents. I haven't done that since I was about 2 years old. I am close to my parents, but not that close. I even tucked a stuffed animal into bed with me after talking to it for about 30 minutes one night. So, you get the general idea that I am not myself when I am on my sleeping pill.

I decided to tell Karla and Paul that I was going to take my sleeping pill. I explained to them that I am not myself when I take it, and to watch me, and make sure I do not leave the room. I whispered to Karla that I wanted her, especially, to watch me to make sure I do not leave the room because Kyle is on the other side of the door. I also told her that I am a completely different person, so please make sure that I am safe. She said she understood.

Right at the end of our conversation, in walked Kyle. He laid down next to me on the bed, of course, and tried to kiss me. I pushed him away, and rolled over to Karla. He puts his arm over me, and what I don't realize is that he is rubbing Karla hard in between the legs, mistakenly thinking she is me. When she realizes what he is doing, she throws his hand back at him. He had hurt her, too. She now knows how aggressive he is.

At this rejection, he tries to sleep, or at least that's what I think he is doing. After some time passes, I feel like Kyle has passed out, and I again tell Karla and Paul in front of Kyle about my sleeping pill. I then take it, and lie down. Ambien takes effect within

about two to five minutes for me, and I told them that. After about two minutes, Kyle stood up and said, "Come on, let's go" and reached his hand to me. I, open to the power of suggestion, went with him. Karla and Paul, too involved with each other, didn't stop me.

So, was Kyle really sleeping? In my opinion, no. I think he was plotting how he was going to get into my pants ever since the last rejection. He had ample time to sober up at this point. So, like I said, I am different person under the influence of Ambien. I went along with Kyle, and let him do whatever he wanted to me, except have sex with me. I was sober enough to ask Karla and Paul for a condom. At this time, wouldn't you think the wheels in Karla's head would be turning, wondering why the sudden change of heart for Kyle? Well, apparently they weren't because she and Paul just laughed and said no. Don't get me wrong, I am not blaming Karla or Paul for my rape. It is not their fault. There is only one man who can take responsibility for that, and his name is Kyle; or shall I say Mr. Hyde? He is only Dr. Jekyll when he is sober. You know the type.

Just to give you a visual of the massive make-out session on the couch, I had to put my clothes on just to go and ask Karla and Paul for a condom. I have flashbacks of that make-out session still. It was rough, but it doesn't hurt as bad physically when you're not constantly fighting him off. Unfortunately, this all ties in with "lack of evidence" (physical, too) when I report the rape. If you don't fight back, you are less likely to have physical evidence that it occurred if you report the rape. I was certainly not of sound mind when this make-out session occurred. When I got back to the couch, I told Kyle they didn't have a condom, and he said, "That's okay. We don't have to have sex, anyway." Big change of heart for the fella, don't you think? Especially, considering he's

been trying to tear my pants off all night. Well, there's more. I refuse to have sex without a condom no matter what personality or sleeping pill I'm under the influence of at the time. If they would have given me a condom, I (under the influence of Ambien) probably would have had sex with Kyle. I will *not* have sex without a condom because there are way too many risks involved. The last thing I remember is looking up at him fully clothed and falling asleep or blacking out in his arms. Call it what you want.

The next thing I remember, I woke up in the morning on the opposite side of the couch as Kyle, as if placed there. I was completely naked. My underwear and my clothes were just thrown on the floor, and I had finger bruises on the inside of my upper thighs and arms. It was late in the morning, around 10:30-11:30am or so. I grabbed my white cotton underwear with pink and red hearts, which I have since trashed and I think ripped to shreds, and scrambled to put them on. I grabbed the rest of my clothes off the floor and quickly got dressed before Karla, Paul, or Karla's roommate saw me naked. I then woke Kyle up, and asked him what happened, very embarrassingly. I asked if we'd had sex, and told him that I didn't remember because of my sleeping pill. He denied it, and said that Karla didn't have a condom. When I asked why I was naked, he just said I fell asleep that way.

I knew this wasn't possible because even when I take two Ambien, and I have changed my clothes in that drugged state, I always make sure I'm clothed. If I fall asleep naked, which I have done at home, fallen asleep mid-change, I wake up because I am so uncomfortable with other people home (my parents) and quickly put my clothes on. I only took one Ambien that night, and I didn't have enough alcohol in my system at that time to affect me that much. I know my body!

After I questioned Kyle, he went to wake Paul, and they left in a hurry. I told Karla and her roommate what happened, and that I was confused. They both found it fishy, as well. So, with Karla and her roommate present, I decided to call Kyle that night and tell him what he did to me (the sexual assault that occurred when I was sober), and again inquire if we had sex.

I called from Karla's apartment to Kyle's cell phone. He was at work on the Saturday evening I called him. I told him that he hurt me the night before and explained what he did to me (sexual assault). I mentioned how rough he was, and the bruises he left on my body. I told him that I said no when he tried to go any further, and asked him why he would treat me that way. He said he didn't remember things that way, and if he hurt me he was sorry. I was talking to the sober Kyle. This was not the monster from last night or this morning who raped me while I was passed out and ripped off my clothes. I told him that if he didn't remember, maybe he blacked out, and if he did, that's not normal. I said that he was a completely different person when he's drinking, and that's he was going down the wrong path. I knew that he was afraid that he would turn into his dad, and I thought he was an alcoholic. I told him he needed help. He seemed very confused, but didn't reject my advice all together. So, we said goodbye.

A little time went by, and I was miserable trying to deal with what Kyle had done to me. I wanted to know if he was getting help. So, I called him again and asked him. This time he told me that I didn't remember the events of the night properly, and that I was the one that asked for the condom. He turned everything around on me, and said he didn't need help, and he wasn't an alcoholic. Although I did ask for the condom, I certainly was not at fault for the events of the night.

One more thing, along with some of the flashbacks, I have this vision of Kyle's penis being very close to my vagina. I don't remember if it was before I blacked out, or after, but it's a very vivid flashback.

Kyle's "Principle's of Perfection" As Motive

First, when I told Kyle what he had done to me, and what I was feeling, both physically and mentally, he apologized. Kyle seemed confused, but yet he apologized. He may have been confused because I told him he needed help for his alcohol problem. He did not admit his guilt for sexually assaulting me or raping me; he just apologized *if* he did anything inappropriate. "And even a poet who works out cunning ways of distorting language does so with perfectionist principles in mind, though his ideas of improvement involve recondite stylistic twists that may not disclose their true nature as judged by less perverse tests" (Burke, 1966, p. 16). By Kyle saying that he didn't remember doing the things I mentioned, but he was sorry *if* he did anything inappropriate, he was still maintaining his non-guilty status, or his "perfection" (Burke).

Kyle's "Principle of Victimage"

When I called Kyle the second time, he denied everything, and blamed me for the nightmarish event. He twisted the situation around to remove the blame from him, and target me. Basically, Kyle in striving for perfection, by lying to seem as if he did nothing wrong, was using me as his scapegoat. "The negative helps radically to define the elements to be victimized. And inasmuch as substitution is a prime resource of symbol systems, the conditions are set for catharsis by scapegoat" (Burke, 1966, p. 18). This

applies to my intrapersonal disclosure, and why it took me so long to finally accept the fact that I was raped. Kyle was actually convincing me, at the time, that he did not have sex with me, therefore rape me (due to me not being in the state of mind to consent).

When I reported my rape, I was told by law enforcement that even though I reported Kyle for sexual assault (rape is a degree of sexual assault in Illinois), if he was not brought up on charges, no one would ever know that I filed my report. Even if another person was to file a report on Kyle for sexual assault in the same county, but another town, and an investigation was started, not even the police detectives would know that it was the second report filed on Kyle. Charges would have to be filed in order for that information to be released. He was protected by privacy laws.

In this case, the privacy laws meant to protect us from predators like Kyle, eventually protect the predators (or alleged predators), and obstruct vital information from another sexual assault case. The tables are turned, so to speak, and the victim feels as if he/she is viewed as the person who wrongfully accused the predator. That is how I felt, at least. Don't you think that if someone is accused of the same crime twice, their privacy should not be protected anymore, especially if it is sexual assault? I mean, what is the likelihood of someone being wrongfully accused of the same crime twice? Do the words "slim to none" come to mind? It is not as if everyone needs to have access to the reports filed previously; just the law enforcement where the second and third, etc. reports are being filed. I found this very disturbing to say the least.

What about my privacy? Where were privacy laws when Kyle was ripping my buttons open to my pants, taking my clothes off, and raping me? I surely didn't have any privacy when I woke up naked in an apartment full of four other people, did I?

Flashbacks, Therapy, and My Safe Place

When my flashbacks first started coming, two events occurred that week. First of all, I was sexually harassed at my workplace. It affected me traumatically. The second factor, and the last straw, which led me to all of my flashbacks, was being pushed by an ex-boyfriend.

I was out with my friends at a bar, and saw my x-boyfriend on the dance floor. We got into a disagreement, and instead of saying goodbye, he pushed me out of the path to his friends. I was so upset that he had actually pushed me that I decided to push him in return. His friends had to hold him back. At that point, I was so distressed that I walked away. I threw up in the parking lot outside where I parked my car from being so upset. The flashbacks started shortly after the pushing incident.

From that point on, things moved so quickly that I was struggling to keep up. I called the Call For Help, Inc. Crisis Hotline number I heard on the radio for victims of sexual assault. I just couldn't take the flashbacks and stress any longer. I broke down one day in the parking lot of a hospital after a doctor's appointment. The counselor on the phone was certainly using all of her training that day! She was able to calm me down, and get me to talk about what I was going through. She told me about the services they offered, and how their counseling is free and confidential. Those two things were very important for me.

I started counseling soon after that. It was the best thing I ever did for myself. My counselor says that she is just a reflector, and when I talk, she just reflects information back to me (Stacy Thoma, personal communication, 2004). I guess you could call her my mirror. Well, she is definitely more than that to me! Without her, I would not be so far

along in my healing process. I may have pushed my anxiety and fears deep down inside and refused to deal with them.

When I first started therapy, I refused to use the word “rape” when referring to my rape. I did not want to believe that happened to me. Mostly, I didn’t want to believe that I could be so stupid as to let someone that evil and aggressive stay in the house with me that night. I was afraid of losing trust in myself. It is hard to get that back. According to Botta and Pingree (1997), how we categorize a trauma characterizes how we allow ourselves to cope with our trauma. I wanted to acknowledge a sexual assault at this time, therefore was in the healing process from sexual assault. If I chose to accept the fact that I was raped at this point, I would have had to go through a much tougher healing process (a rape recovery process). If a victim is in denial of rape, and feels sexual assault was the crime acted against them, they can impede their recovery process. “The fact that the women who definitely acknowledge their assault blame the perpetrator almost completely (4.6 vs. .5) and themselves almost not at all (1.4 vs. 1) is crucial to their recovery” (Botta & Pingree, 1997, p. 208-9). If I would have acknowledged my rape, I would have been able to address my self-blame issues earlier. Even though I acknowledged an assault, that recognition alone did not address the degree of shame and guilt I felt after realizing I had been violated to the extent of a rape. After the “rape realization,” I blamed myself for so much more than I did when I thought he had only sexually assaulted me (as if that is not enough). According to Olsen (2004), finally recognizing that you are a victim gives you someone else’s perspective on your situation. By claiming the label of “victim” (temporarily, before survivor), you can start to change your life, and recognize that the abuse in the relationship is not your fault, but the abuser’s (Olsen, 2004).

I wrote this journal entry when I was struggling with this issue.

Why Me? April 20, 2004

"Why me?" she screams, as she wipes the tears from her eyes.

Why anyone How can something meant to be so beautiful,

be used for something so disgusting and so easily discarded?

Why was I used like a tissue? Just used once,

and thrown away to never be thought of again?

How could someone be so cold and drunk?

Why does alcoholism give someone the personality to do something so evil, so

wrong? He left bruises! I don't want to write it down because it makes it too

permanent.

Like it didn't happen, if I don't write it down.

How does that thought process work?

He probably raped me!

I was under the influence of my sleeping pill,

and I don't know what happened.

He tried to rip my clothes off before the pill.

It was sexual assault before the pill.

I kept telling him NO! over and over.

At this point, I was able to accept the fact that Kyle may have raped me, but I still did not want to admit it. I did not want the visualization in my head. I still have a hard time with it. Me, lying on the couch unconscious while Kyle takes off my clothes, just as an embalmer would a cadaver, and then starts pulling down his own pants. Then, he has

to pry my legs apart, but it takes some work because I am not helping him at all. Of course, my arms are probably in the way considering it is a couch, and they are probably at my side while he is pushing my legs apart, so he has to put them somewhere; maybe up above my head. Lastly, he climbs on top of me, and with one thrust after another, rapes me.

Of course, I have no idea if it actually happened this way. I can't believe that I put this in writing, but I think that I need to. I believe in order for me to know what I am feeling, I need to understand what I am thinking, too. This is part of my intrapersonal communication. This is something I have to live with everyday. It is not pleasant, or uplifting, but it is reality. I will always wonder what he did to me, although, I do not really want to know.

According to my therapist, Stacy Thoma (personal communication, April, 2005), it is possible that the mind only gives you what you can handle at that time, but it is also possible that when your mind has a blank spot, it may try to fill it in with possibilities of what could have occurred during that memory lapse. I had two flashbacks of the rape, but they do not feel like the other did (the others felt like memories). I still do not want to believe them as true because they are so rough and Kyle rapes me so violently in them.

Eventually, all of these thoughts become parts to the nightmare I cannot seem to wake up from. I was saved many nights by keeping a journal. I say "saved," because sometimes the hardest thing you have to deal with after a traumatic ordeal is yourself. At night, my thoughts were going in different directions, and I couldn't seem to focus on one thought, let alone get that thought straight in my head. Writing it all down in a journal, helped me keep my mind focused, and put my thoughts in the right order, so to speak.

When my flashbacks came back, I never knew when I was going to have one, or in what order of the night it would have occurred. My counselor suggested that I write down what I remembered from the night of the rape. It sounded strange to me at the time. Why would I want to write that down? It's such a bad memory, and I can't stop thinking about it the way it is. But, you know what? It helped enormously. Events started coming back to me about that Friday night that I didn't even know I remembered. Eventually, I had all of the information I have now. I still have a lot of missing pieces, but at least I have some of the puzzle.

Part of the healing process for me was escaping from the flashbacks to a safe place free from Kyle.

My Safe Place April 20, 2004

My safe place is never here, but if I close my eyes and imagine, it's always near.

When things get messed up in my head, and the flashbacks keep coming in instead; I drift away, and dream of a place. It's calm, and serene, and full of grace.

In this place, no nightmares are welcome, and I don't feel nervous, helpless, or numb.

When I go to my special place, he's not there waiting. There's no screaming, shame, pain, or blaming.

I am not sure why I live in a world where I need an imaginary safe place, but I'm grateful I have one, if for a moment, I can block out the memory of his face.

The "memory of his face" is very important. Kyle's face is ingrained in my mind so much that I see him everywhere. He is the student who passes me on campus. He is the

man driving next to me on the interstate, or the man waiting for a green light in the car next to mine. He is in every bar I go to, and sometimes works out at my gym. This man has only actually been Kyle once for sure, and possibly twice.

Rape makes you paranoid. Being sexually assaulted twice makes you even more paranoid. I am not paranoid with all men, just a few, and Kyle and Ted are at the top of that very short list. I am not afraid of them anymore, but I wouldn't want to see them, either. It's not the fear of them, it's the fear of what will happen when I do see them that scares me. I am not afraid of them hurting me again, but I am afraid of them triggering more flashbacks, and throwing me back into PTSD, which has already happened to me once. Just worrying about this can sometimes cause enough stress to bring on stronger PTSD symptoms. It is not that if I just do not think about it, then the symptoms will be prevented. It's not that easy to just not think about your rapist, and your attacker approaching you again; Especially, when you have filed a report with the police on one of them, he knows where you live, and he still lives in the area. For me, it is a matter of re-training my mind, and refocusing my attention on things that I can control. I learned this from my therapist, also.

That is exactly why I needed a safe place. My counselor described my safe place as somewhere no one else can harm me, and I feel completely at peace (Stacy Thoma, personal communication, 2004). If we had these places, we would not only imagine them, we would move there with our families, set up shop, and board up the entrance behind us, so no one would invade our safety. Well, that is sometimes the issue with our safe place, I was told. Some rape victims do not feel safe anywhere. So, sometimes you have to create an imaginary safe place. Mine, at first was a real place until I made the mistake of going

there at night when I did not feel safe. So, eventually, I resorted to an imaginary safe place.

Forgiving Myself

Forgiveness April 21, 2004

When life seems dark, and you feel alone, remember your safe place and picture the one person you trust most in the world there with you.

You'll find a way.

Have faith that an angel will come when the moment's right.

Don't be too hard on yourself.

Forgive yourself.

You're only human.

At this point, I was realizing how important it was for me to forgive myself for not arranging the night differently after I was assaulted (At that point, I hadn't accepted the fact that I was raped yet). I started to realize that I blamed myself for being assaulted, and I needed to let go of all of that anger, resentment, and self-blame.

I was trying to comfort myself in my poetry, but I didn't quite know how. I needed to forgive myself for taking my sleeping pill when I knew that Kyle had already violated me that night. I at least knew that I didn't trust him to be around me when I was on it, and it was very daunting on me to deal with the fact I took my sleeping pill. It wasn't forced down my throat, or placed in my drink. I took it willingly. I put myself at risk.

Even so, Kyle is the one who chose to rape me. I could not control his behavior. It was not my fault, so why was I blaming myself for taking the sleeping pill? Why did I

need to forgive myself? It was part of the process of moving on for me. It may not be for everyone, but it is for some people. Part of Rape Trauma Syndrome is self-blame after a rape or attempted rape. Victims may think, if they were just smarter, or didn't wear that outfit, they didn't take that pill, didn't walk alone, or changed their behavior the rape wouldn't have happened. It's not true. We can not go back in time. No matter how you act, how much you drink, what pill you take or do not take, or where you walk, the rapist is the one who makes the decision to violate you. The decisions people make can be preventative measures and can be effective, but are *not* by any means the decisions that place victims at fault. What rapists want is power over their victims. Rape is not about sex. It is about control (Stacy Thoma, personal communication, 2005). If you say no, you take something away from the rapist, then by the rapist forcing you to have sex, they take it back.

Nightmares and Harassment

My nightmares started after the incident and never stopped. I feel that dreams and nightmares are an extremely important role in intrapersonal communication. They help you realize what you are really feeling, and what is important to you in your life at that moment, sometimes without you realizing it. Every time a person changes, their dreams and nightmares are affected by it. Anytime you go through a traumatic experience, it is usually replayed in your most vulnerable state; your sleeping state. Melrose (2003) mentions that dreams are efforts to resolve conflict between instinct and the demands of society. The demands of society are very daunting on a rape victim. There is a "blame the victim" attitude towards rape victims, plus we are also pressured to report the rape and remove our rapist from society (filing charges and putting him in prison, if possible),

regardless of our circumstances relating to the rape. On the other hand, by being blamed for the crime by the part of society that does blame us, how can we report a crime that is our fault? It is a "Catch 22" situation that leaves us in mental anguish. No wonder so many rape victims do not report the crime right away.

Eventually, after a few nightmares of standing up to my demons, I conquered one of my own, so to speak. This man had been harassing me for awhile, and was actually scaring me, whether he intended to or not. He was continuously asking me out, even when I told him that "I don't date," and I wasn't interested in him. I was very blunt, and even rude a few times to get my point across. Did he falter from his pursuits? No. He introduced me to his daughter after a few rejections. He said, "I have someone I want you to meet," as if we were dating. I was extremely uncomfortable, and found myself feeling sorry for his daughter. So, finally, he hit my last nerve. I stood up to him that night, and told him to "leave me alone," and that "I have made it very obvious that I am not interested in you," etc. I haven't seen him since. I was trembling, and my voice was shaky, but I did it! I did it all by myself! I stood up to him, and he went away. It felt so good to be able to say to him, "Leave me alone," and have him actually leave-me-alone! I hope he stays away.

After I reported Kyle to the police, and dealt with the "Fear Factor" of it all (this was not knowing if he was going to come after me or not), I had fewer and fewer nightmares.

Dealing With Depression

April 28, 2004

The doors are all locked, the windows all shut. I feel like the walls are closing in on me. Even when I'm outside in the open, it's like I'm in a prison. It's a cell of nightmares, and visions I can't escape, no matter how fast I run or how hard I reach, there's no hand to pull me up. There has never been. I've never needed that hand more than I do now, but I just keep reaching, and no one is there to grab my hand.

There is darkness everywhere. There was light. There was hope. It went away. I reached too far, and I fell. I keep falling back, but there's no one left to catch me. No one left to care. No one I trust to make time to care.

It's a whirlwind of sadness. Only depression remains. I'm not sure where to go from here. I'm supposed to fight. I was told I'm so much stronger than I give myself credit for. When can I relax? I'm tired of fighting. I'm exhausted everyday. I just want to sleep. If I could just not be afraid of sleeping, and the nightmares.

Only one person keeps me going. He is only eight months old. He is my strength. My sister does her best, and I love her, too. Everything else I could leave. I hate to say it, but even the work that keeps me going each day. It is my purpose now, but I'm replaceable. They would get over me quickly.

I need to talk. Want to talk. I don't know how. I don't know how to start. I'm afraid I won't be able to stop.

And trust, what a joke! Like, I could ever do that again! How can you ever fully trust anyone? It doesn't exist. Trust is given fully by blind love. People are just foolish. We're all fools. We think with our emotions instead of our brains.

I don't believe in "meant to be" anymore, either. It's all bull----! God has better things to do. People who say that just can't handle the fact that we control our own fate, and if we make mistakes, then we screwed up our master plan.

Destiny probably does not reassert itself, either (at least, not until death).

I was very depressed when I wrote this journal entry, and was at one of my low points. I did not necessarily stay low for a long time, maybe just a few days, but when it was bad, it was really bad. Sometimes, it would only take a phone call from a friend, a night out with the girls, or a day with my nephew to bring me to my higher point. Unfortunately, the high points did not last very long the first six months after the "rape realization" (my term for my transition for accepting the fact that I was raped). Then, it was back to the severe depression. I was lucky enough to have a counselor to nurse me out of that depression. The type of depression that a trauma victim typically develops from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is Major Depressive Disorder or a Major Depressive Episode. Major Depressive Disorder is a depression with a fifteen percent suicide mortality rate, which is characterized by the having one prior Major Depressive Episode. I had never had a depressive episode prior to this one, so my best guess is that I was having a Major Depressive Episode. This is characterized by having a sad mood the majority of the day, lack or minimal interest in previously pleasurable activities, a large amount of weight loss or gain without dieting, insomnia or hypersomnia, "psychomotor agitation or retardation", fatigue, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, indecisiveness, inability to concentrate (or diminished ability), recurrent thoughts of death, thoughts of suicide without a plan, suicide attempt, specific plan for committing suicide (DSM-IV

[2000] text revision, p. 349, 356). These symptoms must persist for at least two weeks (DSM-IV [2000] text revision).

My traumatic experience caused a response or reaction (depression) created by my mind. I didn't choose the life of highs and lows, but it somehow overcame me. I even sometimes felt I would rather stay at home and cry, than go out and be with my friends. That was part of my depression.

At this time, when I did actually go out with my friends, it was also extremely difficult for me to cope with men who approached me at bars. It would make me want to vomit. I would think all of them were a potential Kyle, and would immediately run the other way just to avoid them.

Bar Conversation 2-18-05 Broadway Oyster Bar 4:57pm

Me: Ordering a drink at the bar while standing up...

Man at the bar sitting next to me on a bar stool: "HI!", with a beer in his hand.

Me: I glared over my left shoulder at him, and then quickly turned away. "Hi.", reluctantly.

Man: After a few seconds... "Have a seat!", smiling the very large I-want-to-take-you-home,-and-do-dirty-things-that-would-make-you-cringe smile.

Me: Not even looking at him... "No thanks. I'm going outside."

Man: Still annoyingly excited to talk to me, "It's cold outside!"

Me: Rather annoyed at this point, and avoiding eye contact, "No, it's not bad." I then turned and walked away rather hurriedly, and what I'm sure was rather rude after receiving my drink from the bartender.

The scene is a blues/jazz/Cajun oyster bar. It is very small inside, but larger outside on the enclosed patio. I am hosting a happy hour for some of my colleagues, and a few of my friends at 5p.m. We are in St. Louis, MO. I teach at a community college about 30 minutes away from there. The weather is crisp, and very up and down on the temperature scale lately. None of my colleagues are here yet, and I only received two maybes for attendance. My friends are not expected to show until about 6:30, so I am on my own until then. Before I arrived, I was sort of hoping to have a nice conversation with a stranger to kill time, but after the last one, I realize I would rather sit in the cold alone and self-reflect than mingle among what may be a bar full of more guys, who are often rejected, but holding out for that one dame who is too drunk to say no. Then, he will take her home, and have his way with her. Of course, for her, going home with him was only one of the worst mistakes she has ever made, and cannot quite pinpoint after this encounter why sex doesn't have the same sensation, or why she all of the sudden distrusts men.

So, my disinterest with men in bars, and my abrupt language used to communicate with them is certainly influenced by my assault and my rape. I was always assertive when I had to be with men, but never right away, and not usually so rudely before the rape. I just learned that in some cases you need to be firm with your communication, so that you leave no doubt in men's minds as to the meaning behind your message.

Sometimes while conveying our messages, a "Monster Within" rears its ugly head. This is the ugly rapist that reveals himself or herself when the occasion permits.

For instance, Kyle's occasion would have been after abusing alcohol. His "Monster Within" rears its ugly head when he is really drunk.

This "Monster Within" is one part of a split personality that sometimes, deters the victim to disclose the rape. They may be scared of the "Monster Within" coming back to hurt them again, therefore, they keep quiet until they can no longer do so. Society may also play a part in desensitizing rapists, or the "Monster Within" by the language used in the media, everyday conversations, and music. For example, one song that comes to mind is Nirvana's, "Rape me" (Nirvana, 1996-2005). The song states "Rape me" over and over again until the audience is singing along with the band, even if they do not like the two words used together or what they represent. I find myself in a trance singing along, and I hate the lyrics.

Now, do I look at every man who hits on me in a bar as a member of this "Monster Within" breed? Well, considering the fact that I met many of my ex-boyfriends in bars, my answer is no. I would not choose to meet a man in a bar now, but the answer is still no. Let's just say I have a better idea of who the "Monsters' Within" are now. I can, if you will, see the fangs behind the mask at times. There are still some who trespass my radar, but there always are, aren't there? Otherwise, those of us who are experienced would hold seminars called, "Fangs Behind The Mask," or "The Monster Within." Unfortunately, nothing is one-hundred percent effective, so we have to rely on our instincts and our friends' instincts.

The Raw Realization of Rape

The next journal entry I wrote is very wavy emotionally because I actually realized I was raped while I was writing it.

May 2, 2004

I finally talked to Karla on Friday night while I was walking her to the Metro Link. I told her that I've been going through crisis counseling twice a week because of Kyle, and that I'm having flashbacks, and remembering more about that night. I said that I thought more things might have happened than I originally thought. I said that I thought he might have raped me. She said, "I think he did, too. I thought that right away." I think she might have told me that. I don't know; but, I probably blocked it out like everything else I did.

If Karla was there that night, and knows everything...and was there in the morning...and she immediately thought he raped me, then I guess it must be time for me to get out of denial.

Did Kyle rape me? He told me we didn't have sex. Why do I need to believe him? Because if I don't believe him, then the other option repulses me. I was passed out, I think. I don't remember anything. My clothes were on when I fell asleep. I woke up with no underwear on. I can't get that flashback out of my head. I sit up from the couch, and look at the floor, and there they are.

Oh, my God! He raped me! That bastard! He did it while I was drugged because I refused him 20 times while I was awake. How am I supposed to move on from this? I can't stand to be touched anymore! I'm scared all the time.

For some people, rape is a reality immediately after or during the assault. For me, the reality did not occur until a year and over three months later. This does not make the rape any easier to recover from, believe me. When Karla agreed with me about Kyle raping me, I was able to find resolve in accepting the rape. According to Botta and

Pingree (1997), "Shared information between friends can help young women remember and recode what happened to them as rape" (p. 209). It has been exactly eleven months to the day today, of me accepting the fact that I was raped, and I am still traumatized. I still deal with the trust issues, and lack of affection I show, or am willing to accept from others. I still deal with many other things, as well. I believe my feelings or after effects may be stronger right now because I am reliving every moment of my healing process through my thesis.

The next entry is very angry towards Kyle.

May 3, 2004

I am so angry at Kyle! I have no anger for anyone, but him. Not myself, not Karla, just Kyle. I hate him so much!

He took away my innocence, my choice, and my right as a woman, and a human being. If I could legally castrate him, I would. For some reason, that is enough punishment for him. I would just take away his alcohol, and let him suffer for about six months, and then castrate him (you know, if it were legal). I know that his own demons and ghosts will come back to haunt him, and get the best of him. I would have mercy on him after he suffered as much as I have. But, it's not up to me. Thank God. Someday God will take care of him. I just pray that he hasn't punished any other woman like he has punished me; and that he doesn't kill anyone else while he kills himself with alcohol.

Coping

During this time, I was so nervous that I was jumping at every noise around me. I was scared to walk outside to get the mail. I parked my car in the garage, and I didn't put

the garage door up until I was in my car with the doors locked. I refused to get out of my car until the garage door was down; and then, and only then, would I unlock my car doors. I set the house alarm every time I was home, just in case. When I went anywhere, I looked at everyone around me first to make sure they were not Kyle before I could complete my task in that environment. I found it harder and harder to exist without constant fear everyday. My most fearful state was when I went out with my friends to bars. I knew that Kyle frequented bars, and I avoided the ones he went to, but it didn't matter. My eyes still raced around the room, and my heart pounded when one of my friends left my side.

When I was really a ball of nerves, and needed some form of control that I could no longer find, I would drive. I still do drive when I am stressed out or need time alone. For me, it's the only time when I feel like I am in complete control. I am driving the car; therefore, I can control the situation. I feel safe, and free. It is a coping mechanism that I use. I enjoy road trips by myself so I can just get lost in my music, roll the windows down, and let the wind blow through my hair. It feels very liberating.

I did actually leave on a trip to Florida on April 17-22, 2004. I missed my house, but I did not want to come home to reality. The "Long Term Process of Reorganization" of Rape Trauma Syndrome defines that victims may take a trip out of state, or out of the country (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974).

Rape is so hard to deal with, and no matter how much people tell you that they understand, or that they are there for you, the truth is that you really feel alone. I had support sometimes, but I felt alone all of the time. I was depressed, and although I would never commit suicide, I can understand why someone would consider it. I was ready to

go home at certain times of my recovery. "Going Home" to me meant going to Heaven to be with God. There were many times that I prayed for God to take me Home. I knew I would never take my own life, so I thought if I prayed hard enough and reasoned with God, maybe God would find a use for me in Heaven. I thought I would make a great Guardian Angel.

My Most Difficult Decision: Reporting The Rape

When I first thought about reporting my rape to the police, I was sitting in my therapist's office discussing a Lifetime movie I had watched the previous Sunday about a woman who was raped. This particular movie related to me because the woman was very young, and she was drugged at the time she was raped. The only reason I was talking about this is because I actually watched the movie. Usually, at that time in my recovery, I couldn't watch any sign of aggression from a man towards a woman whether sexual or not. I would normally freak out, hyperventilate, sometimes cry, and change the channel immediately. On this particular Sunday, I was able to watch the reenactment of the rape on this movie, and all of the details the actress described about it. It was hard to view, but I kept watching no matter how it challenged me. I found myself crying, sobbing actually, through most of the movie, but it was an amazing release for me.

So, as I was venting all of this information to my therapist, I started talking about how much of a chance I would have against Kyle if I reported him to the police. I knew right away that I could not prove that I was raped. It had been too long, and the physical evidence was no longer there. No more bruises and no hospital visit, pregnancy, or STDs equaled no physical evidence. I did realize though, that I had a good shot at proving that I was sexually assaulted, considering the fact that Kyle fondled Karla thinking it was me,

and that I had voiced my concerns to Karla at least twice that night. The phone calls to Kyle's cell phone could also be traced, and I did have witnesses to that. But, alas Karla retracted the statement she made to me, and went in the opposite direction with her police statement, for whatever reason. Then, her roommate said she did not remember anything. I guess I can't blame Karla if she was scared. I was terrified of Kyle for a long time. I can empathize with that feeling.

So, hence my unforeseen decision to report my rape all started in my therapist's office blabbing away absent-mindedly about how I may actually have a case against Kyle, and why wouldn't I press charges, and save other women from his predatory grasps if I had the opportunity. As soon as I opened my mouth and said the words, "I have to press charges. It's the right thing to do," I started freaking out full force. My heart started pounding. My mind started racing, thinking, "What if Kyle comes after me? What if he comes after my family? Do I have to tell them about the rape now? Oh, my God! I have to come out about my rape to my family and friends, so that they are safe! I have to press charges because it's the right thing to do!"

I knew deep down that I would have children someday, and this subject would come up. I would want to tell them. I would want to keep them safe from sexual predators like Kyle, and let them know that it doesn't just happen to other people. It can happen to them, too. Then they would ask that question. "What did you do mom? Did you press charges?" How could I look into their honest eyes that I would preach to everyday about standing up for what is right and just in the world, and fighting for what you believe in, and not do the same thing for myself? I would be a hypocrite. That is why I reported Kyle. I did it for myself, and I did it for my future children. So, that someday

when they were old enough to learn about my experience, they knew that their mom fought for what was right, and that she was a survivor.

Here is a journal entry from the night I decided to report Kyle. I call my legal advocate by her first initial, J.

May 18, 2004

I can't breathe. I feel like I'm dying. I just want to curl up in a ball and sleep, or drive far away and never come back.

I went to therapy today and somehow decided that I needed to press charges against Kyle for rape, or at least sexual assault. My therapist talked to J, one of the county's legal advocates. I just need to call her now. Then, she'll go with me to file a report. I tried to call Karla about five times in the last two days to ask her if she'll make a statement, but she won't return my calls.

I need to find out if she and her roommate will tell the truth about what they remember (make a statement). Her roommate might. I doubt if Karla will, because Kyle's mom is her manager at work.

I drove for two hours last night. I had half a mind to keep driving and go to Montana, and never come back. I freaked out. I called C and M (two of my friend's first initials). No answer. My sister was busy, so I called Ji (another friend, first two initials). He was really there for me, and rebuilt some trust.

I'm scared, no, I'm terrified. When Kyle finds out, he'll come after me, and I won't be safe anymore. He's so crazy and violent when he drinks. I won't be safe, and no one can protect me. Where will I go?

I am so on edge. Every muscle is tense. I can't stop crying, or thinking about the rape. It affects everything. I have a job interview tomorrow, and Thursday. I did not do well on the phone with one of them because I am so out of it, and unsure of everything. My life is a mess! It's in chaos! I hate Kyle! He deserves to go to jail for what he did, so he can detoxify, and get all of the alcohol out of his system. Let him live with the ghosts and me.

As you can see, I was very scared of reporting my rape. I mentioned that "I was unsure of everything," but yet I also said, "He deserves to go to jail for what he did...". I was conflicted only because of my fear. I was so afraid of telling everyone, but mostly afraid of him. I also didn't want to be treated like I did anything wrong. I saw how they portrayed this situation in movies, and I was warned about the detectives asking very intimate and detailed questions by my advocate.

Alone (May 23, 2004)

I'm so tired of being alone. I am so scared to let anyone in.

I'm afraid they'll hurt me again. I always get hurt. It's just a matter of time.

All of these feelings from one night, one crime.

The only witness refuses to stand-up and fight with me.

All she is doing is protecting that creep.

I can't imagine how my life so quickly fell to pieces, but then I get a flashback, and remember all too fast the reasons. Everything hurts. My life is in chaos.

All I am left with is this feeling of loss I lost everything on January 24, 2003.

I try to get it back, but there is nothing left in me. I runaway almost every night, but I have to come back to this nightmare and return to fight.

This battle is inside of me with how to move on.

Do I press charges? Is he really ever gone?

Will he come after me if I file a report? With no one to protect me, should I abort?

These are all thoughts I live with everyday,

and there are so many others that frighten me I haven't even mentioned today.

So, with pain in my heart, and a tear in my eye,

I say to the love and comfort of the world I once knew...goodbye.

So, with the "pain in my heart, tear in my eye and goodbye," I was actually saying that I was finally ready to walk into the police station and make my statement. I knew life would never be the same after I reported my rape. I would be even more paranoid after Kyle found out that I reported him. I just wanted to get it over with, and move on with what was left of my life. I needed to pick up the pieces, and now seemed as good of a time as any.

I did eventually talk to Karla. She was very surprised at the fact that I was reporting Kyle, and voiced that she did not want to have anything to do with it. She was somewhat supportive, though. She wanted me to give her an overview of what happened at the police station.

On May 27, 2004 I got into my car and took a deep breath. I was so scared, but I knew that my advocate would be waiting for me by the front door of the police station. It helped just knowing that someone was going to be there with me. No one knew out of my family, except my sister, that I was going to the police station that day. My parents went to work on that particular morning with no idea of the stance their daughter was about to

make, and the life-changing event that was destined to take place. They were not aware I was even raped yet.

As I was driving to the police station, my mind was racing. I kept pondering what type of questions they were going to ask me, and if were they going to believe me or not. I was so nervous when I arrived at the station that it took me about three minutes to park my car. I found a place on the street, but decided that it was not a good place. I then made a U-turn in front of the station, real smart, to park on the opposite side of the street, but couldn't quite get the car positioned where I wanted. I probably looked ridiculous. When I finally got out of the car, my advocate was waiting for me. I breathed a sigh of relief.

She asked me if I was ready to go in, and I remember saying that I was as ready as I'll ever be, or that I just wanted to get it over with. Anyway, we walked in, and the lady behind the desk said, "May I help you?" I just froze. It's a simple enough question, but I couldn't think of an answer for it. My advocate took over, and said that we wanted to report an assault. The lady said, "What kind of assault?" I then chimed in, "Sexual assault." At that point, I was able to talk. I was asked the specifics on the location and time of the rape, and if I knew my attacker. I was ready to shout his name from the roof of the police station. Yes, I know his name. Can I scream it? Do I get brownie points for that? Of course, this is all standard protocol, but it was all new to me. Eventually, the questions stopped, and she said that she would call an officer in to talk to me, and that we could just have a seat. The waiting room was extremely small with only a few chairs available.

As we were waiting for the officer, my advocate dropped a bomb on me. She said that she could not go into the actual interview room with me, but she would be here if I

needed her. I understood this, but it was still a shock. Due to the victim,s need to focus on talking to police, there should be as few people as possible in the interview room.

As I was contemplating this, a male officer (detective?) called my name. I took one final look at my advocate for strength, and followed him to an office. He was holding a clipboard, and asked me a few questions about the assault. In Illinois, rape is called sexual assault. It is sexual assault with penetration.

I was just going to tell them everything I knew that happened during the course of that night, and let him make his own conclusions. So, the officer was very nice and not offensive at all. He said that he was still learning about the procedures of reporting sexual assault, so there would be another officer that would be interviewing me. Are you kidding me? But, I already feel comfortable with you, and this is not a comfortable subject to talk about. Don't jet on me now, buddy! But, he did.

The next person that came in was a detective, a young woman. She had a very professional demeanor, as well, and was also very nice. She asked for my driver's license, so that she could copy it. Guess what she realized? It was my birthday. "Happy birthday," she says. I forgot all about my birthday. I was so consumed in reporting Kyle that I forgot I turned 27 that day. I told her that this was the last thing I ever thought I would be doing on my birthday.

Then, she asked me to tell her what happened. After I was finished, she asked me some questions. She asked if I had ever had sex before that night, if I woke up in a different position than when I fell asleep, if I was pregnant or had an STD afterwards, if I went to any doctors or counselors and shared this information, if I shared this information

with anyone else after the attack and who, the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of Karla, Kyle, and Paul, among other questions.

I filled out a release of medical records form for the doctors I shared information with; this would be my gynecologist to get tested for STD's, and my counselors (I went to one before Call For Help, Inc., which was part of my pain management plan for Fibromyalgia, but we talked about this ,too.).

Next, she left the room for awhile to talk to someone, I assume. When she came back she said, "Okay. I would like you to tell me what happened again, but this time, we are going to go into a room, and we can either video record you, or tape record you. Do you feel comfortable with this?" I thought, oh, great, I have to do this again? It was hard enough the first time. But, I knew that it was necessary, and I wanted them to have all of the information that they needed, so told her it was fine. She also made the process easier by being so professional, even though it was a non-evasive interview. That is just how sexual assault interviews are, though. The detectives have to know everything.

She then chimed in with, "Which do you prefer?" This meant if I preferred video or audio recording. I have a broadcasting background, so I really did not care which one it was. I decided video would be best, so that they could review the tape, and see my body language, as well as hear my pitch, etc. When I was in that room, I still wondered whether or not they believed me, and any tool I had to prove my case was good enough for me. I knew I had the truth on my side, and if they saw the video, they would see that. Most rape victims feel that no one will believe they were raped. I was no exception to that. I was afraid that my family and friends would not believe me.

While they were preparing the video room, I was able to talk with my advocate (J), who was patiently waiting for me. J asked how everything was going, and I mentioned my not-so-distant future with the video room. After a brief conversation with J about the previous events, the officer came back to walk me down to the basement where they kept the video room. There was another officer, detective, or other, monitoring the video in another room. When we sat down, he signaled that he was ready. The detective asked me the same questions, and I told the same account of the night I was raped, only on camera. I have to admit that it was a little weird. I didn't want to look at the camera, but I couldn't help but notice the fact that it was there.

After this, the detective brought me upstairs, and I asked her what happened next. She said that they start an investigation. It could take a couple of weeks to interview the witnesses (Karla and Paul), and Kyle. Then, they would present their evidence to the District Attorney's office, and they would decide if they had enough evidence to prosecute Kyle, and bring him up on charges. At that point, the case would either be dropped, or Kyle would be charged with sexual assault, and arrested. She gave me the case number, and her work phone number.

My cousin was also a police officer at this particular station, so the detective assigned to the case said that she would e-mail him, and tell him not to say anything to my family. When I came in to the station, I was on a sign-in sheet of some sort, so he would know I was there. He would probably investigate to find out the reason. I knew that he was a professional, but what if something slipped when my parents were around?

The detective also told me that before she contacted Kyle, she would call me, and give me a heads up. I voiced concerns about him, his friends, or his family coming after

me, once he found out that I pressed charges. I feared for my life for a while. She told me to call 911 if he got violent with me, and give them the case number, etc. If he harassed me, I should call my advocate, and we should go to the State's Attorney's office, and file for an order of protection. This was all so scary to me, but I thanked her for her time, and help, and joined my advocate in the waiting room. I told her that they started an investigation. She was surprised at this fact. She was pleased that they would start one immediately, but did not expect it. I did not expect that, either, and I too, was very pleased.

I felt very lucky to have officers who did not make me feel like the rape was my fault, or that I was lying. I am not sure if that still happens, but I did not know what to expect.

My advocate and I then walked out of the police station together. She asked if I was okay, and I remember thinking, "Okay? Well, I did the right thing, but I am now scanning the parking lot for Kyle's car. I don't remember being quite this paranoid before. I was asked the most intimate questions you could possibly be asked about your personal life, videotaped while answering them, and yet, I am still standing before you."

"Yes", I replied. "I think so." I remember saying something about knowing that I did the right thing, and I was glad that I did it, but I was now terrified of the after effects. What is going to happen now?

Living With The Right Choice

Well, the first thing I did was take a deep breath. After that, I drove home from the police station. The first thing I have to do is tell my mother what just happened. She had no clue that I was raped. I, somewhat still adrenaline pumped and freaked out,

walked into the living room and said, "Mom, I need to tell you something." She said, "Okay," noticing the panicked look on my face. I said, "You know how I haven't been acting myself for the past year, and I don't want to be touched or hugged, and I've been very private." She immediately said yes, and that they (she and my father) noticed right away something was wrong, but they didn't know what to do about it.

They didn't know if they should talk to me, or if I needed help because I wouldn't talk to anyone about anything anymore. I would just get mad at them if they did ask me, get emotional, or just leave the room.

So, I said, "I went to the police station today, and reported a rape. I was raped last year by a guy I used to date. We weren't dating at the time, but that is why I haven't been myself, and I wanted you to know for your own safety. It is possible he could come after me, or you, my family." My mom didn't react like I expected. She wasn't as much upset, as she was asking questions, and I think in shock. I guess I expected tears, or something. She was very strong. She didn't break down at all. Instead she asked me questions that I was not ready to answer. She wanted to know who, when, where, was anyone there, why didn't I tell them, and what happens next, among other questions. I answered what I was up to answering at the time, and explained that I had been going to counseling twice a week (that's where I had been disappearing to) for a while now, and I just decided it was time to report the rape. I told her that I didn't have flashbacks until just recently, etc.

I think it is the hardest thing for a mother to hear that her daughter confided in a multitude of people about something so serious, and none of them was her. I had to explain that even my sister did not know until recently. I told my sister, and then let her read my journal entry of the account of what happened on the night I was raped. I wanted

her to know what I went through, and I did not want to leave her out anymore. She also knew something was going on.

I did not want anyone to know. I was ashamed and embarrassed. So between my mom and my sister, I felt like they had watched enough Lifetime movies to know how I felt, but it's different when it's your own daughter or sister. I know my mom was hurt to be told so late, but I could not tell her this. I did not want my parents to know that I did something so stupid. I still felt like part of it was my fault back then, and I just knew in my heart that my parents would blame me. Of course, they didn't, but I didn't know any better. I never revealed anything like this to them before, and I was 27 years old.

So, after I told my mom, we agreed not to tell my dad until the next day due to all of his stress at work, and he had a big day the next day. I had no problem with this because I had waited this long, so why not wait longer? But, part of me felt that I was being pushed back on the agenda. Isn't this important? I mean, this affected every aspect of my life, and will forever, and now it will affect theirs, as well. But, I too, was concerned about my dad's health, and one more day wouldn't hurt.

Next on the agenda, was calling Karla to tell her what happened. I called her, and told her what happened, and that I gave the detective her home phone number because they wanted to ask her questions. I apologized for this, but they needed to talk to her due to the investigation. She was not too thrilled about the home phone number thing, but she dealt with it. She asked for the detective's number, and said she wanted to get the statement over with. She sounded like she was actually going to talk to them, which is a change of heart from before, so I said thank you so much a few times, and gave her the number. I told her they were going to give me a heads up before they contacted Kyle, so I

would do that for her, as well, since his mom was her manager. We then said our goodbyes.

It was not a friendly conversation like we used to have, but that was normal for us at that point. Karla and I drifted apart over the months prior to this while coaching cheerleading together. We were really close friends, and then trying to coach together where you have to spend a lot of time together making decisions, while being in an authoritarian position was not susceptible to our friendship. We got on each other's nerves, and what was left of us, was ripped away by the investigation. Losing a friend like Karla at a crucial time in my healing process was really hard for me. It affected my trust in disclosing my rape to other friends, and my trust with friends in general.

Karla never called me back to tell me she talked to the police. Actually, she never called at all. I called her once, and at that point she said that she was playing phone tag with the detective, but that she was going to call Monday. This was on a weekend that I talked to her, and that Monday was a holiday, I think. Anyhow, Karla eventually talked to the police, as I found out from the detective. I believe her exact words were, Karla "doesn't think that anything happened." That's rich. I'm being sarcastic, of course. Karla doesn't think that anything happened? Hmm...Is that why she told me on the way to the Metro link May 2 she thought he raped me right away referring to the next morning? Did she have a brain timeout at the police station when she neglected to remember me telling her that he already tried to rip my pants off repeatedly after I told him no, and that he was creeping me out, and to keep him away from me, etc. Need I mention more? Well, we can't disregard Karla altogether, maybe she just forgot. After all, it's not like we talked about the rape recently or anything, is it? Oh yeah! We did.

Here's the thing about my anger towards Karla. I have to remember her situation. It is very possible she was terrified like me. Knowing what Kyle did to me, and working with his over-protective mother in her second job, may have scared her even more. I am not sure if that was her reason, but it may be one of them.

So, post-phone call to Karla, I am still numb from reporting the rape, and telling my mother. At this point, some of my friends knew because they were trying their best to help me cope (even though I cut them off from my feelings about the rape). The police department, my sister, my mom, and of course, Kyle and possibly John knew about the rape, as well.

The rest of that day, guess what I did? It was my 27th birthday. I reported my rape on my 27th birthday, and then had to get ready to go out with my friends. You know what, though? I had a great time! Reporting the rape is not what I remember about my birthday. I remember a day where all of my close friends were there, and we went to a Cajun Oyster Bar where there was live Blues music, and I had a great time. I have the pictures to prove it! I told two of my other friends about the rape that night. They were surprised, but one of them was not surprised it was Kyle. Isn't that interesting? She said her brother had mentioned how badly he treats women. Kyle can't fool everyone, now can he?

May 28, 2004

Yesterday, I felt so alone reporting the sexual assault. But before I went out, I was able to tell K and K about the investigation. K even offered to stay with me when mom and dad leave town for a week. This process is tough, but I know what I'm in for, and I know I'm ready. My mom told my dad this morning. He was really upset. I wish I could have taken his pain away. I can see that this was

killing my dad. I never wanted to upset anyone. Me being upset is enough for the world to carry. No one else needs to suffer. I had to tell them for their own protection, though. If Kyle comes after me they live here, too. I don't want him to hurt my family. I love them all, and it kills me to see them upset. I wish I didn't have to tell them. Then, they wouldn't be so sad. I love them all, and all my friends. I know it must be draining, not knowing what to say or do all of the time. Everything must seem trivial. But, it's even the little things that keep you going. My nephew saying hi on the phone means the world to me. He is my rock. No one else in the world can make me smile, or fill me up like he can. He is my angel of light. I had the best 27th birthday because I'm alive, and I feel that I did the right thing. I know that I am loved. No one, not even Kyle, can take that away! Happy 27th birthday to me!

My birthday wish: I wish I have a feeling at the end of every day that I made a positive difference in someone's life that day; and actually do it!

I also wrote 27 happy thoughts to remind me of all of the simple things in life. I believe that when you are going through a traumatic experience, it's the simple things that sometime pull you through the day, and make it brighter. So, I wanted to remember the things I had to look forward to that summer.

Well, the next morning I realized that my mom decided to tell my dad about the rape a little earlier than planned. I guess I can't blame her. She was probably upset, and who does she talk to about these things? My dad, of course. He came in my room and collapsed on me at about 6 or 6:30 a.m. on the day after I told my mom. I woke up to my father sobbing, and saying he was so sorry, and he didn't know. He knew now why I was

so upset after my ex-boyfriend had pushed me, and why I had been acting so differently. He said if he could just take a baseball bat to him, he would. My heart sank in my chest, and all of the sudden, for what was only the second time in my life of seeing my father sob (the first being at his father's funeral), there was a role reversal. I started consoling my father. I told him that it wasn't his fault, and that he couldn't have possibly known, and that everything will work out the way it is supposed to. I told him that the police will take care of everything now, and that he shouldn't worry. I just remember hugging him and patting him on the back, and saying, "It's okay, dad." If I could have erased all of his pain, and taken it on myself, I would have. My heart was breaking watching him cry. I did not know he cared so much. I mean, he's my dad, and I knew he loved me, and did not want me hurt, but I did not expect this. My eyes fill up with tears even now just thinking about it. They say (I'm not sure who) that hard times bring a family together. Well they sure made our family realize how much we meant to each other. I now know how much they care.

That weekend I escaped. I went away on a camping weekend with my friend, her family, and her co-workers. It was good to get away. I didn't want to go home. I actually could have stayed on that campground forever at that point. I just didn't know what I would be returning to. That was the scary part.

May 31, 2004

Time to find something else to occupy my thoughts. I'll focus on a job search. I wish I could have just joined the military. I used to think everyone had a purpose in life. I'm starting to wonder. I don't know what mine would be. I haven't done anything significant, unless I touched a child's life, or I was meant

to press charges against Kyle, and get some kind of rape law passed. I don't think I have that much fight left in me.

I look in the mirror now, which I don't really enjoy, and all I see most of the time is a plain Jane. I guess it's true; that you have to love yourself before anyone else can love you. I don't have much love left for myself. I still just want to run away from everything and everyone.

Soon after this, I confessed to another one of my close friends about the rape. She was very supportive, and I felt very liberated.

June 4, 2004

I told JE about everything tonight. She was very supportive. It felt good to get all of it off of my chest because she is the last person I had planned on telling. Everyone who needs to know now knows. It's kind of liberating. I don't know feel like I have anything to hide anymore. I never had anything to hide in the first place because I didn't do anything wrong. I just blamed myself for awhile for taking the sleeping pill, and then I was so ashamed of it. Not anymore. It wasn't my fault.

I could lead a march on Washington for victim's rights called "It Wasn't Our Fault". What a thought. Maybe I should speak out about this. Maybe it's my purpose. I'm finally starting to accept my life and everything that has happened to me. I am starting to be happy despite all of it, if that's the right term. Life goes on. Life happens; you deal with it, and life goes on. You find happiness again. There will be another rainbow, another sunset, another smile. Life goes on in spite of all

the bad things that happen along the journey through it. Good will eventually overcome evil, and all will be well and safe again, or so they say.

I just want to walk with my head held high, and my shoulders back, and know that I am a good person because I did the right thing.

Now, I think I would rename the march on Washington to "Healing Survivors."

This brings us to July 6th, 2004. The day I found out the case was dropped against Kyle. Well, I already told you why, so we don't need to go over that. Boy, did my world fall apart. When I asked the officer if Kyle was angry when he left the police station, I don't think she understood at first that I was terrified he was coming after me. For a moment, I wondered if she thought I made the whole thing up to make Kyle mad or something. What a waste of energy that would be! Anyhow, when she sensed my fear, she reminded me that if he gives me any problems to call the police immediately.

I also asked if this will be on his record, so that if a sexual assault report is filed against Kyle again, this one will pop up. "No," she says. "He is protected by privacy laws." We all know my feelings on this subject. Well, if that didn't change my outlook on how the law works, then nothing would. I can say with certainty that this is a bunch of bull with a few letters after it. Do you honestly think privacy laws were designed to hinder us from catching sexual predators? Do you think that when they were created, this specific instance was in mind?

I was also wondering if part of the reason the case was dropped is because I did not fit into the social construction of a drug-facilitated acquaintance rape victim. I, admittedly, took my own sleeping pill, therefore drugging myself. Kyle sexually assaulted me, and I did not kick him out of the house. I did not report my rape right away

because I repressed the memory of it. I am not blaming myself, but just looking at my situation from the detective's viewpoint. Although, some of these situations are probably not rare, all occurrences together may be uncommon.

After the case was dropped, I had to move on. This was not easy because I knew that I could run into Kyle at any time. He was not in jail, and I did not have a restraining order against him. I was without protection.

August 8, 2004

One month and two days later, one of my worst fears came true.

I ran into Kyle tonight. It's been one and a half years since I've seen him, and there he was at the Homecoming. All the lights were off because they were trying to kick everybody out. I was talking to Tim and J, some other people were there too, when all of the sudden out of a crowd of people walks Kyle. He beckons me to him, and sits down on the picnic table next to ours. I shook my head no after my eyes stretched wide open, and my jaw must have hit the floor with the realization of who was trying to speak to me. He looked at me with raised eyebrows, and shook his head a little, as if to say, "no?" I shook my head again firmly, and he gave me a look and a gesture, which meant okay.

He sat there for awhile just waiting, and probably hoping I would change my mind and go talk to him. When I sat down so he couldn't see me, I mouthed to J, "That's Kyle," She said, "What?" I mouthed it again. She turned around and looked about, then mouthed "Where?" She, of course was in obvious plain view of Kyle the entire time. Then, she pointed to him, and said, "Him?" I shook my head yes. She said he was leaving. Well, gee, I wonder why? Normally, I would

never want to make it obvious that I was talking about someone, but this time it came in handy. J said she didn't point until his back was turned, but I don't care. It worked. He left. I had Tim and his date walk us to J's car.

Kyle was at least smart this time. He backed off when I said no.

The Homecoming is our hometown festival. There is a parade, food, a band, and of course, a multitude of draft beer. We are in the Midwest, after all.

Seeing Kyle again after approximately a year and seven months had elapsed, and considering it was the first time I had seen him since he raped me, was extremely traumatic. I started having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptoms again, which included being paranoid of bumping into him another time. This is along with the nightmares, flashbacks, and constant fear and scenarios I had playing in my mind all of the time. Let's just say it wasn't easy.

Although...I have to say even with all of the bad came some really great benefits. I was able to stand up to Kyle, and finally say "NO" to him in public, and have him listen to me. I was not afraid to say "NO," or get help if I needed it. I also was not afraid to stay away from him no matter what he or anyone else thought of me. The night of my rape, I did not want to kick him out because I was afraid of what everyone would think in the apartment. I was ashamed and embarrassed enough as it was, I certainly did not want to make a scene. According to Krolokke (1998), two of the reasons that women professors' facing sexual harassment use non-assertive communication when dealing with their harassers is because it did not threaten their relationships with others, or their physical safety. As far as my physical safety was concerned, I knew if I told Kyle in a one-on-one setting what he was doing, and how he was making me feel, it would just make him

angry; therefore, threaten my physical safety. I was not that stupid, though. If I would have told him to leave, I would have communicated that in front of Karla and Paul, too. I am not saying that would have protected me, but at least I would have felt safer with witnesses. I did not do this because I was afraid of hurting my relationships with those in the apartment if I disclosed how Kyle was treating me.

After experiencing a sexual assault and a rape, I will not sit idly by anymore and let a man sexually assault me because I am too afraid to speak out against that man to those who are supposed to support me (my friends). I will yell, "Kick-Him-Out!" if that is necessary to keep me safe.

I gained freedom the night of the Homecoming. I may have had PTSD symptoms after the Kyle encounter, but I don't think my healing process would be complete without running into him. I needed that. I needed to look him in the eye and say "NO"! I also wanted to tell him that I wasn't afraid of him anymore, and that I forgive him, but that could wait. I was just lucky I had the chance to stand up to him. Nothing is ever easy, and the things worth fighting for in life (yourself) never are, that is why they are so wonderful when you actually get them. When you work so hard for something for so long, and you finally have it, it seems like heaven. This is what the end of my healing journey will feel like to me when I am done. I am very excited, but I can wait. It is well worth the wait! In some ways, I guess you could say that I am still experiencing (as of 5-20-05) part of those PTSD symptoms, but they are definitely much better.

Now, things are going pretty well. I check out a room when I enter. I scope out all of the people, and look for the exits in case I need an emergency door. This is something my therapist taught me, and also something that not enough people do in order to stay

safe. I think if more individuals were aware of their surroundings, we would be able to prevent more crimes from occurring. After all, this is what the Neighborhood Watch Program is based on.

For some reason, *Living With The Right Choice* was probably the hardest section of my thesis to write. I do not fully understand why. I think it might be because I am still healing, and living with my decision. Basically, I feel like “living with the right choice” should sometimes be entitled “Living With The Ghost,” meaning the ghost of Kyle. He may not physically be here anymore, but I am still angry sometimes. I have so many “ghosts” that I live with every day. Kyle is just one of them. One ghost is the trust I used to have in people in general. Another is the ghost of the friends that were in my life at that time (Karla, and others). Some ghosts I live with are the individuals at the police department, and my victims’ rights advocate. These are all ghosts that are in the instant replays in my head all day long of what took place during and after the rape. Basically, my ghosts just perform “cameos” in my memories.

The biggest ghost I live with is the ghost of who I used to be. You see, I was this carefree, spontaneous girl who feared nothing, and had fun no matter what I did, or where I went. I was in my own eyes, and a few others “Crazy Sarah;” not in the mental way, but the wild way. I don’t even know who that person is anymore. I left her so far behind in the dust that I can’t even see her anymore when I look in the mirror. She’s gone. Everything I ever felt I feel differently about now; men, relationships, family, and work. Everything has changed. I am so different, and I can’t even comprehend the metamorphosis. I know that I am wiser now, but sometimes it makes me sad. Sometimes, it is a burden to know how truly evil this world can be. Sometimes, I just

want to cry because not many people realize how many Kyles there are in the world. Then, sometimes I want to cry because I *know* how many people like me have been scarred by the Kyles of the world. These people may be walking through life in a state of shock, terror, sadness, loss, or just be unforgettably more aware of evil.

I say unforgettably because I cannot for one second forget my lack of trust in people, or how I feel the need to protect everyone around me now from predators. For instance, I was at a local bar a couple of weekends ago, and a man approached one of my friends at the bar. We (me, my friend, and the man she was dating) were all sitting at the bar together having a nice conversation, when he walks up to her and puts his face right up to her ear, as to kiss her neck or something. She immediately cringed, and in shock, moved back. I pushed him back, and told him to back off. He started saying something that started with, "I was just..." when I said, "She doesn't like to be touched." I eventually just said "okay" to him, so that he would shut up, and told him he needed to go away. He was incredibly drunk and seemed very dirty. Literally dirty, like he just finished working a very dirty job, and this was at about 1:30 a.m. Sorry buddy, you have no excuse. What a jerk! This was right in front of the man she was dating! My friend is too nice to say anything mean, so she will just try to nicely move away and ignore him. I will practically beat him down just to get his hands off of her. My over protectiveness spans not just to my friends and family, but to everyone, which is why I feel it is so important now to speak out against sexual violence.

I feel the need to become a better person, and educate individuals on this subject, or any subject that I feel will make the world a better place. I am more grateful for every day that passes. Not that I wasn't before, I had health challenges, and I am very lucky to

be alive right now. Now, I am even more grateful, though. I feel more now than I ever did, which means that I cry more.

For awhile after the rape, I was stone cold. I did not react to anything or anyone. I was completely numb inside. I was in denial, and pushing down all of my feelings. When they finally came out, they burst so big that I am still feeling them a year later. I cry at Hallmark commercials, and sappy movies now. I certainly did not do that the few years prior. I cry when I am happy, too. Did you ever laugh so much that it made you cry? Well, it happens to me. This is kind of like that without the laughing. I will just be sitting with my family on a Sunday, and realize how lucky I am to have them in my life. Then, I start tearing up. It's ridiculous really, but I cannot control it. I don't want to anymore because I know if I push down any more emotions, than I may suppress something that I need to feel. So, I try to feel everything.

February 13, 2005

I realize that in my thesis, I don't really address how my sister is involved with my recovery, or much of how she reacted to my rape.

I think when my sister found out what really happened to me, part of her heart died inside right along with mine. I could see it in her face, in her tears, and hear it in her voice when we talked about it. Sometimes, I would avoid the subject because I didn't want to cause her anymore pain. The truth is, I would walk through fire to prevent the broken heart she received from seeing me so upset. The same goes for my mom and dad.

I wished so many times that it didn't happen, so I could take their pain away. My sister and my dad were so sad. My mom was so angry at Kyle. My

dad was, too, but my mom seemed to voice it more. But, that is how my mom sometimes shows that she is upset. She gets angry. I was, too. Could you blame us?

The truth is, I think my mom didn't want me to know how upset she was because she knew it would upset me. We are a lot alike in that way.

I hid my feelings, so I didn't upset them, and my mom hid some of hers, so she didn't upset me. For a communication instructor, I sure could learn a few things.

The point of this is not how much we talked about the rape, or cried together, but that we love each other. No matter what happens, we love each other, unconditionally. I did not realize how much I was loved at the time. I just knew I felt alone, and like no one understood me.

The things that I could learn would be how to be more of an empathetic communicator and when and how to disclose traumatic information with my family. That is, of course, a learning process I will probably have to work on my entire life. Rawlins (1983) states that one becomes susceptible to hurt feelings when disclosing confidential information. I was afraid to tell my family because of how I thought they would blame me for the rape. I felt the need to protect myself from them, even though they were part of my support system. Once I finally told them, I realized that they did not blame me for the rape (at least not directly). My mother still made comments on how she never liked Kyle from the first moment she laid eyes on him, and why did I like him? Why did I do this, and why did I do that? She never realized that she was blaming me for the rape until I blurted it out one day, and told her to stop blaming me because it-was-not-my-fault! I think she finally realized what she was doing at that point. She loves me

very much, but she did not know the language she was using was placing blame on me instead of Kyle.

After realizing how much my family loved me, and the conclusion of the harassment at work, I became very positive for awhile on my rollercoaster recovery ride. I realized that if I could make it through a rape, I could do anything. So, I decided to try for a career change. This is when I started teaching at a community college. It's amazing what you can achieve when you believe in yourself, and, of course, the credentials don't hurt, either.

I am also now looking forward to hiking up a mountain in Montana. There is a bit of parallelism there, I believe. Hiking up a mountain and overcoming what I consider to be a mountain of pain and violation are parallel in my mind. I have always loved road trips, and I think that monotony is very comforting and relaxing. Needless to say, I plan on road tripping to Montana sometime soon to go hiking, and get lost somewhere along the way for fun. There is no way I would have done this earlier in my recovery. I don't even know if I would have gone on a trip alone for an extended period of time before the "rape realization." I feel much stronger now; like I can face anything. Besides the fear that I could be raped again, which gets better everyday, there isn't much that scares me anymore.

I also started respecting myself again after I reported the rape. With time and some healing, I even started loving myself again. I gained the understanding that it was because I did the right thing, and I could live with myself now. I was raised to know right from wrong, to never lie, and to always do the right thing. Me sticking to that without compromise is my stubborn nature, which my mother reminds me I get from my Aunt

Becky, but I know I get it from all sides. Regardless of where I received the trait, my stubborn nature does come in handy for some things, and this is one of them: I am at peace with knowing that I did everything I could legally do to see that Kyle doesn't hurt anyone else.

So, you know that I forgave Kyle, but you do not know why I forgave Kyle. It might be hard to imagine how I could get from point A at the beginning of my journal entries, to point B, where I am now. Forgiveness is an amazing thing. This is the best way I know how to explain my forgiveness phase. Before my phase of forgiveness started, I could not understand how a wife could forgive the murderer sitting on death row who slayed her husband. I think I can understand some of that now. It is not about who the criminal was when they committed the crime. It is not about the fact that they committed the crime. The criminal is guilty, and you knowing that is enough. It's the fact that in order for you to move on with your life and find peace, you have to realize that the criminal did a horrible thing, and they have to live with that for the rest of *their* life. You do not have to live with that guilt or anger for the rest of *your* life because you did not do anything wrong. The criminal cannot change what they did. No matter how many times you relive the incident, you cannot change the outcome, either. There is a point where you have to let go of your anger, and realize that life is too precious to carry such a heavy burden on your shoulders. It is not *your* burden to carry. It is the murderer's burden, or the rapist's burden, or the thief's burden. Either way, you have to let it go. I get that now. I don't think most people can understand that until they go through a similar situation.

So, why did I procrastinate on writing this section? When I write a chapter or section of my thesis, I close that part of my healing process. I guess my mind was not

ready to close this chapter of my healing process (This is all wisdom from my therapist, by the way.). I'm ready now.

My First Protest April 5, 2005

I marched my first protest today! It was absolutely amazing! When I was sitting in my therapist's office, and she first told me about this sexual violence protest, I was bubbling over with anticipation to attend. "My first protest," I thought. I, being the woman who always analyzed rhetoric from famous civil rights activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Frederick Douglas, have always wanted to follow in their footsteps and start a movement, or participate in one, at the very least. Public speaking is my passion, and I feel so strongly about so many things, I just didn't know what else I would choose other than civil rights.

Well, now I found my movement. Today it was a movement to end sexual violence, and maybe eventually a victims' rights movement will emerge. Maybe it already has, and I just haven't been a part of it, or maybe it just needs to be bigger. Either way, I left Stacey's (therapist) office with a flyer in hand knowing that I needed to request that day off of work, and spread the word. So, spread the word, I did. I called my family and friends, and told them about the march. Unfortunately, the march was on a Tuesday afternoon, and everyone had to work. Well, it wasn't exactly their movement. They just don't realize that it is everyone's movement, and how important it is to participate and raise awareness.

Oh, well. I was just going to have to go by myself. After all, I wasn't going to be alone. I was with my brothers and sisters, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would say, who are fighting for the same cause.

So, when I woke up that day, I thought about what I would say if the leader asked if anyone wanted to say a few words. I pondered the rhetoric Douglas or King would use, and then I thought about what words I wanted to say to comfort people, and raise awareness about rape and sexual assault. So, for only about the millionth time in my life, I started presenting mini-speeches in my head. Over and over I used different words as I was getting ready for the event I was anticipating, but only three words stuck out in my mind: Freedom, Faith, and Strength. These are the three qualities that I thought would best exemplify the character needed at this protest.

The freedom stands for freedom from victims' or survivors' mental clouds that fill our minds with nightmares, flashbacks and memories of sexual violence; freedom from sexual predators walking amongst us in our everyday lives who should be in prison where they belong.

Faith represents faith of a better tomorrow. Faith that what we are doing here today (in the protest) will make a difference; that we will make a difference.

Strength signifies strength in numbers. We are stronger together, and we need strength to stand up and fight. Strength to report rape when it occurs, and not sit back in silence. Strength to move on with our lives, and not let our predator take everything we have left within us.

These are the three things I decided meant the most to me at our rally. I was hoping it would be large, but I had never been to one of these before, so I didn't know. I saw everyone waiting for more protesters as I was driving to the corner of Lincoln and Third where we were meeting. They were few in numbers, but strong in voice. They had signs, which were very vibrantly colored that said "Every Six Minutes A Woman Is

Raped,” and a second one, which pictured young women standing together in a line while one of the women was holding a cell phone towards the camera. The sign read, “Do you know where to call for help?” This was a very clever plug for Call For Help, Inc.

The other signs symbolized the additional organizations attending. The National Organization For Woman had a member in attendance holding a black and white sign with the acronym of NOW on it. “The Fellowship of Southern Illinois Laity (FOSIL) Shouts Out Against Sexual Violence” was a yellow sign held by one of its members. “RE-MAP AMERICA Re-thinking Ethics, Morality, and Priorities in America MORALITY INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE” was a black and white sign in the march.

The Sociology Club of McKendree College made an amazing teardrop display that was exhibited in the courthouse. After the protest, we were able to view the exhibit. The St. Clair County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) were also sponsors of the event.

The green balloons the group of protesters was holding really stood out against the bluish-grey and white sky. The counselors and some others had t-shirts on, which were white with green writing. They had a green picture of a crossed ribbon on the front, and advertised the month of April being sexual violence month on the back, but crossing out sexual violence. I knew there would be a color to signify sexual violence, but I did not know what it would be; so I wore a pink shirt, khaki pants, and tennis shoes for marching. I was really off. Oh, well. They were just glad I came, and gave me balloons to carry. There were others dressed in non-green attire, as well. Shortly, after I greeted Stacey, who was extremely glad I came, we turned to march. It was a beautiful day. I was so excited to be there!

In front of us was a police car with its lights on, but no siren. This way, people could hear our cry for injustice on the part of sexual violence! So, we left St. Elizabeth's Hospital, which was right next to where we were gathered, behind us as we marched forward. The women started chanting loudly "No Means No!" so I yelled right along with them. This was great! We had a police escort, we could yell, hold a protest in the middle of the street, and even end up in front of the courthouse, and it was all perfectly legal. I noticed another counselor from Call For Help snapping pictures of the protest as the events unfolded. It was a truly momentous occasion. I did wonder where the media was in all of this, though. I did not see one reporter.

As we were marching down the street crowded with businesses, traffic was being held back, and people were noticing us while they were slowing down. Consumers, business owners, and pedestrians were stopping in their tracks to listen to our cries, and read our signs. If we were not lead by a police car, I don't think this would have been nearly as effective with the small number (approximately 30) of people we had in attendance. People would stare, observe, and then go about their business. That is until two young boys, who must have been in their mid-late teens ran into the middle of us, and said they wanted to join our protest. "What are we protesting?" they said. Our marchers told them our cause, gave them signs, and they started yelling along with us. We were all moved by this, especially since they were young men. We only had a few men in our group, and one of them was a counselor. The boys may have been doing this for the excitement, or the attention, but either way, it definitely made an impression on their lives. While retelling this story to their friends, which I know they will, they will be spreading our cause without even realizing it. Well, our two faithful young lads only

lasted a few blocks before they had to go home, but their presence certainly left an impact.

While marching we tried different chants. First it was “No Means No,” then “Save our Children,” and lastly something about stopping the violence. I don’t think everyone felt comfortable yelling our slogans because our volume went up and down with our rate. There were periods of silence, as well, but us walking down the street behind a police car with picket signs was probably quite shocking. It is very interesting how a group of individuals gathered to raise awareness about sexual violence on the streets with our voices, signs, and a police car still have communication apprehension. Silence is an option some individuals choose, even when given the opportunity to speak because of a history of being misunderstood, ridiculed, or punished for true confessions they have made (Jenefsky, 1996). Some of the protestors were victims and survivors of sexual assault and/or rape, which may explain their apprehension in yelling, “No Means No!” If they had a past of unsupportive disclosure of their rape and/or assault, then they may be more hesitant to yell in opposition to sexual violence in public.

The best section of the march was on Main Street in Belleville because it was the most crowded, and had the most potential for observation, as shown in Appendix A, Figure 1. We were definitely observed. There is a fountain smack dab in the middle of Main Street by the court house, which cars have to drive around and pick one of four directions. Cars are supposed to take turns joining the flow of traffic around the fountain to get to the other side. If you have driven around one of these monstrosities you know what I am referring to when I say that traffic was confused enough with the fountain, let alone having us stop one lane of traffic.

So, we turned the corner to the courthouse, and watched the fountain traffic go by because we wouldn't be crazy enough to go in there. Now that's just suicide! We gathered on the sidewalk to wait for the last of our group (the stragglers, I like to call them), and talked amongst ourselves. At this point, I had only introduced myself to maybe two people, but I talked to whoever was around me because I am what you call a social butterfly at times. I am much less open now than I use to be, though. I felt united on this day with everyone around me, but yet I still felt hesitant to talk to strangers too much. Small talk was okay, but anything beyond that, I wasn't comfortable with yet.

Once everyone was in attendance, Pearl (one of the Call For Help [CFH] counselors) started talking to us. She thanked us for coming, and talked about CFH. She then introduced the other members of organizations that were there, so they had their chance to speak, as shown in Appendix B, Figure 2. The McKendree Sociology Club Representative was the last to speak.

After Pearl was finished with the groups, she asked the question I had been waiting for. "Would anyone else like to say a few words?" I waited for a moment, stepped forward, and said, "Yes, I would." Pearl gave me the floor with everyone staring at me waiting for me to speak. I immediately started tearing up, and said, "I, I hope I can get this out without crying." I told them that I was a little emotional, and then started to speak through my crying, as shown Appendix C, Figure 3. I said,

"MY NAME IS SARAH, AND I AM A RAPE SURVIVOR. It is not everyday I feel like a survivor, but today, here, with all of you walking in front of me, behind me, and beside me, but mostly beside me; I do.

I do not feel like a survivor everyday. There are days where the flashbacks and nightmares are so overwhelming that I still feel like a victim.”

I don't remember the rest of the speech word for word, but after the first part of my speech everyone applauded. It was the loudest our group had been yet that day. It was such a catharsis for me. I was able to compose myself and continue. I spoke of Faith, Strength, and Freedom. All of the things I had planned to say, and more. I did not have any notes, or any outline. It was just me talking to the people about what I felt so strongly about, and I realized that this is my passion. I even quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the end of my speech by saying, according to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “The time is now.” The time is now to stand up and fight like we were doing that day, and fight against sexual violence and the predators who are walking amongst us.

After my speech the group applauded, and I went to stand by Stacey. I could see her tearing up during my speech. She reached out to give me a half hug, which she knew I would have been comfortable with, and I gave her a hug. A real hug. She told me that I did such a good job, and that she was tearing up. I thanked her, and told her not to worry that I wouldn't be that emotional during my speech to the military. CFH was asked to speak about sexual assault awareness, and the military wanted a survivor to come and share their story. Stacey asked me if I would speak. I, of course, said yes immediately. I was so honored that she would ask me, and thought this would be a great part of my healing process. It is not a sure thing yet, but it's pretty definite.

Pearl concluded the protest, and announced it was time to release the balloons into the air. One of the women present was concerned about the environment and the birds that may get caught up in the balloons, so we decided to tie the balloons together. This

way, there were not so many of them floating aimlessly in different directions. I also thought it signified our unity on this momentous day, which another group member mentioned, as well. All of us joined and tied our green balloons with white ribbons together in one large group, just as we were a group, and stood ready to release them. Everyone congregated around the privileged person who was able to release the balloons. I think it was Pearl. Then, she let them go. We all watched them float gently into the atmosphere hoping they would clear the two leafless trees that were close to us. Luckily, and I believe with what resembled the end of a peaceful and moving protest, they did. Ralph snapped a picture as we all admired the balloons floating aimlessly above, as shown in Appendix D, Figure 4. As I was watching the balloons float away from us, I was uplifted by the support from the group of protesters. The balloons seemed to float to eternity, which I thought symbolized our potential of having no limit to what we can accomplish. Nothing can hold us back now that we have support, and are standing up for ourselves. Yes, I know the balloons would have popped eventually, but that's not the point. They symbolized so much more. It was not their material form that mattered, but what they stood for that made the difference that day.

Pearl then told us about the exhibit in the courthouse. As soon as she was done speaking, the woman from one of the organizations thanked me for speaking, and told me what a great job I did. She told me she was also a survivor of sexual assault, and that she was glad someone said something. We ended up hugging, too.

After I finished talking with the woman, I decided to view the exhibit in the courthouse. When I turned to walk up, another woman came to thank me for speaking, and said the same thing. She was also a survivor, but she was a survivor of incest. She

said that her brothers were sexually abused, as well, and they were planning on telling her mother soon. She was nervous on how her mother would react. I can certainly understand that. I don't remember if we hugged or not, but the bond we all formed was certainly strong.

It reminded me of the bond I formed with my friends who also have been sexually assaulted or raped. I watched, and still do, the aftermath of what the sexual predators left on my friends. I try to help them find the strength to seek counseling, and get out of denial, but that is something that they have to do for themselves.

I really can't think of a more supportive community than one created by loss, trauma, or addiction. Ours was created by trauma and loss. Our trauma will be relived forever in our minds. What we lost (the person we once were) will be left in our past eventually, but never forgotten.

For our group at the protest, which is fighting back against the sexual predators of society, maybe our trauma will not be relived every day, or even every week after some time has passed; but sometimes when we least expect it, when we are really happy... it will seep right in. That is the demon that we live with, and the one that haunts us while we sleep, and while we are awake. Only it was a real person one night, or multiple times, and that is what is really scary.

The teardrop exhibit I viewed was very powerful, and well put together. There were different colored teardrops hanging from two trees. Each tear drop represented a certain number of individuals who were assaulted by a demographic. For example, a grey teardrop would represent one-hundred individuals who were abused by a priest in the

year 2000. There were many different colors to represent the different predators of sexual assault, unfortunately.

After chatting with everyone around the teardrop display about my career, family, and sexual assault, I found Stacey again. I met a few other women on the way back to our cars, which was nice. We said goodbye to them, and Stacey and I talked about the speech I would possibly be delivering to the military personnel on Scott Air Force Base soon. I reminded her that I would be less emotional (not cry) during my speech that night because I would have practiced it many times. She told me that she thought I did a great job just the way it was. She made me feel really good.

It was a powerful day filled with emotion. I will remember that day forever, and treasure it always, as my first protest. I hope that there will be many others. I would like to lead a march to Washington for Victim's Rights. It is a high goal, but it's nice to have one. Technically, I could just pick up all my belongings and do it today. I could just drive there, and bring a tent, and some picket signs. I could try to get people to join me along the way, and once I'm there, recruit. Hmmm...I think I will get some experience first.

Lucky and Lonely

I was watching a television show about a woman who was so brutally raped that she was fighting for her life in a coma. During this hour, I realized how truly lucky I am to be alive. I am so lucky to not have gone through what that woman did. It may not have been a true event, but people experience this trauma everyday. The sign my group members were carrying at our protest said, "Every Six Minutes A Woman Is Raped." Oh, my gosh. I know the numbers are much higher. I am sitting here at my computer crying because I can literally feel their pain and suffering. I am haunted by it like I am

sitting there with them holding their hands at their hospital bed. Will this ever end? Will we ever be safe? It breaks my heart to see people beaten and broken in every sense of the word by another human hand. Sometimes by the hand that is supposed to love and protect us, our mothers or fathers. How can they ever trust another living thing in their lifetime if the person who gave birth to them molested them? It hurts to breathe.

In Retrospect April 4, 2005

Ever since my rape I may feel more, but I block out so much, too.

I still feel like I can't show any sort of emotion to anyone, though; only to myself. I have a few friends I call to vent, and even if I am really emotional, talk to, but that is rare. I refuse to date anyone because I know I am not ready. I have tried. I don't trust anyone, and I am not ready to try. I don't feel like I ever will be. That doesn't sound like a survivor talking, but it is how I feel, and I can't help it. This thesis is such an emotional burden that I know I can't form any new relationships until I finish it. I am growing and changing so much as I write it. I am sure that you see that, too. I miss something, though. Sometimes, I miss being held. It is not all the time, but some nights when I hold my pillow, I miss it. I say goodnight to my parents, but I rarely let them hug me. I am getting better, though. I need a hug, and want a hug, I just can't take one. Sometimes it just makes me cringe. Sometimes it just hurts too much to need one that I don't want one anymore. I can't explain it. So, I pray. I pray to God, and I hug my pillow. It is a poor substitute, but it is all I can handle most days. I know that when I hugged Justin, who I thought was my soul mate, he was the half I was missing, and it felt like I was hugging everything I ever wanted. There was such electricity, but such

a calm, and relaxed feeling, too. That is what I miss. I miss not him, but that feeling.

So, even though I was at a high point in my recovery, I still felt very lonely. I honestly still do feel very alone sometimes. It comes and goes. In my opinion, everyone goes through bouts of loneliness at certain times in their lives. Well, this was my lonely time. I can tell you that at this point, I was pushing everyone away who tried to get close to me, because I was so afraid of trusting someone, and getting hurt or violated again. So, to soothe myself, I continued my long drives. I would still drive for hours for comfort. Now, I choose to be alone when I am lonely. I do often feel like no one in my family or friend circle understands what I am going through, but that's consoled by a good therapy session.

I Am A Survivor

Lately, I have been having thoughts of dating again. This is a huge step for me, considering the fact that I haven't dated anyone in eight months. I am feeling so much better about myself now than I did after the rape realization. I am starting to feel pretty again, and I am not avoiding the mirror anymore. My self-esteem is better on the outside, but mostly better on the inside. I am stronger person now than I have ever been in my whole life. I am also a better person. I feel that this helps prepare me for an interpersonal relationship.

Well, I am not letting Kyle ruin my outlook on men. My friend Tim that I have known all of my life has been extremely supportive in my healing process with men, and helpful with my interpersonal disclosure issues, as well. I had a very difficult time talking to my friends about the rape, and with Tim, I was able to speak more freely about my

feelings. He is very positive, and he gets so excited when I have made a new step in my recovery process with relationships, or with myself. Mostly, he gets excited if he helped me in the process, but he takes an interest nonetheless, which is more than I can say for most men.

It takes an extreme amount of patience to do what Tim is doing for me. Tim and I had to redefine all of our conversation boundaries, since we were friends before the rape, and I am a different person now. Some of the things he used to say are not appropriate anymore. It was very hard for him at first, and still is challenging, but he deals with it. He resides in Arizona, while I live in Illinois, so we rely on the phone for our discussions. One night, I asked Tim what he gets out of helping me. I was trying to push him away due to my trust issues. He replied, "What I get out of it is what I give you, I think. Even when I act disinterested about something you're talking about, it's not out of selfishness" (Tim R. Friedrich, personal communication, April, 2005). Tim and I exercise blunt honesty in our friendship.

My other friends and I planned my birthday this year. I wanted to supersede the memory of reporting my rape last year. I may not think of my 27th birthday celebration (Broadway Oyster Bar) as reporting a rape, but I can not forget that I reported it on that day. So, we went to a concert and to some bars in St. Louis. One of my friends was trying to set me up with a man, so I met him that night, as well. He was very nice.

At the dance club, it started getting interesting. My friends and I love to dance, even though the ritual of dance in such a place lacks chivalry, to say the least. This whole concept is women dancing in a circle, and men standing on the outside waiting to pounce on the one that strays from the group. You also have the men who try to "grind" (dancing

way to close for comfort) on you when they didn't formally ask you to dance in the first place. They just assume because you are a woman, and they are a man, of course you would want to dance with them. They are a "stud," why wouldn't you? I am here to tell you that I do not want to dance with these men, nor do I find them to fit in the "stud" category. I especially do not want to be fondled by them.

So, I was dancing with my friends, and the first wolf approaches me and my friend Charlotte. Really, he was more of a dog, but we are not name-calling here. So, wolf-not-so-charming tries to grind on both Charlotte and I. When neither of us reacted the way that he had hoped for, he tried to grab Charlotte from the middle of the circle, that I so conveniently maneuvered her to, and pull her to him. Not in my town buddy! I grabbed him right back, wedged myself in between Charlotte and him, and pushed him away. I told him, "NO." I have no problem telling the whole world that phrase. He eventually had a relapse of behavior later in the evening, but came to his senses quickly after I shot him a look.

The best wolf, I like to call him the werewolf of the evening, was the one that I actually let dance with me for a minute (if even that long). He came up to me to dance with me, and I not having my wits about me due to the alcohol, let him. First, of course the werewolf had to overcome two obstacles. My two devoted friends who know me very well, and how I view this behavior (probably wanting to avoid a confrontation), in one movement moved him on the other side of them, me to the middle of our circle, and asked me if I wanted to dance with him. I, extremely appreciative of their support, said, "I don't care," dismissively.

So, my two friends turned and release the werewolf on me. I have to say that I felt his “manliness” on me before the friend switch. That was how close he was dancing. After the switch, he waited five seconds, and grabbed my breast. Yes, I said my breast. I should also interject here that we had an audience, which was a bachelor party who took a picture with us earlier in the evening. They had watched the whole scene go down. I was infuriated! I grabbed his hand that grabbed my bosom, put it behind his back, turned him around, and pushed his away. I said, “Don’t you ever grab my breast, or touch me again! Go! Get out of here!” At this point the bachelor party applauded and made approving comments. I explained what happened to my friends because they missed the whole thing. We dance the night away after that (me by myself; I wasn’t taking anymore chances), and went home by 2ish a.m.

As you read this section, you may be wondering what I think about myself and where I am right now. Am I a survivor yet, or am I still a victim? If you don’t know by now, I will shout it for you. I AM A SURVIVOR! Yes, I am smiling from ear to ear as I am writing this. I am wearing a green rubber band bracelet that says, “STOP RAPE.” I openly and freely admit to anyone that I was raped now. Don’t get me wrong, it doesn’t usually just come up in conversation; but if it does, I have no problem admitting it. The very first time I “came out” about my rape was the hardest. After that, each time gets easier and easier, until finally it became a part of me. It is a part of my past, and I live with it every day, but it doesn’t rule my life anymore. I do. I call the shots. My fear takes a back seat, even on the days when I don’t feel like a survivor. Of course there are days when I feel like a victim again, but they always pass. There is always a new day; a survivor day.

I wrote a poem on one of my “victim days” in my survivor era.

Fear March 24, 2005

I wake up some mornings and I think you've gone; but later in the day you drift in on me when I have a break in thought.

I memorized every face you ever took in my life. The majority of the space you filled within me has been replaced by other emotions.

I must admit that as much as I got use to having you around, dining with you, sleeping with you, and just plain breathing with you, I can't say that I miss you at all.

For when you were here, no one else seemed to want to hang around, nor did I want them near.

Everything was chaotic, depression was your ally, and nightmares and flashbacks your best friends.

So, even though I don't want you in my life, and I know it is healthier for me to let you go, I realize that it is not an easy task.

I have tried so many times to end our relationship, but you always come back.

I am fighting with all I have in me to ward you off.

Although, you are still here FEAR, I warn you to not get comfortable because you will not remain for long.

There is a bright light at the end of my journey, and it will banish you into a dark oblivion where you belong.

Fear is wild, which can make you do and say crazy things. I will be glad to be rid of the majority of it someday. I think people have the ability to be fearful for a reason.

We have heightened senses when we are fearful. This is not necessarily a bad thing at an appropriate time. So, I will be glad when my daily fear is gone. Right now, I have hardly any fear compared to what I did right after the rape, or the rape realization. I still have a distance to go, though.

I can tell you one thing No matter what, I will not give up. No matter how hard my day is, whether I see Kyle, or have a nightmare, and am blamed for my rape by everyone around me... I will not give up. I hold onto something I wrote on a tiny piece of white scrap paper on June 7, 2004 at 12:34am. "I am a fighter, that's what I am. I will fight till' the day I die. I will not forget, but I will survive. That is my battle cry!"

Discussion

Bochner and Ellis (1996) state that ethnography aids in the understanding of words like truth, knowledge, and reality. In this aspect, we can be more at ease with human experience and the contingencies of language. Ethnography "expresses the way the world can be perceived, felt, and lived" (Ellis, & Bochner, 1996, p. 18). They are narratives written from personal experience within a culture to be shared with an academic or public audience (Goodall, 2000). Basically, one can relate their own life to another person's experience (Ellis, & Bochner, 1996).

Journaling of personal experience and hindsight analysis of the rape recovery process provides insight to how labels are formed, and the identity changes that take place. Levels of trust and losing trust in relationships with individuals who were raped is very tricky. An in depth analysis would take researching someone's thoughts, feelings, and what they go through on an emotionally changing basis. Ethnography supplies the needed avenue.

A researcher cannot be with a participant all of the time to monitor their behavior changes, and this question would take time to analyze. I believe by being the researcher, and the participant, I can track my own behavior changes more subjectively in retrospect by reading and investigating my own journal entries.

In order to know how a victim and survivor of rape constructs a reality, one must know how they feel, and see what they see. It is extremely difficult if you are not a victim or survivor of rape. I know for a fact this is how my participant feels because I am her.

The first research question asks, How are the labels of “victim” and “survivor” important to the rape recovery process? Both are vital to the recovery process of rape because both identities are crucial to the healing process. I do also agree with French (2003) when she stated, “Perhaps the socially constructed views of sexual violence prevent other terminology from being used that could more closely capture the experiences of these women” (p. 50). Not everyday did I definitively feel like a victim or a survivor. Some days I was in between the two stages, in sort of a purgatory of my survivor phase. This is what I called one of my “victim days” even though I was a survivor at that time. If I felt more at ease to label another phase in between the victim and survivor phases, than I would not have felt so trapped in one phase. I thought once I was a survivor, I could not have anymore bad days. I had to all of the sudden become healed. It does not work this way. Life and healing are not so cut and dry, or black and white. I voiced this at the protest.

***“MY NAME IS SARAH, AND I AM A RAPE SURVIVOR.** It is not everyday I feel like a survivor, but today, here, with all of you walking in front of me, behind me, and beside me, but mostly beside me; I do.*

I do not feel like a survivor everyday. There are days where the flashbacks and nightmares are so overwhelming that I still feel like a victim.”

I was defining my survivor status, but also stating that I still felt like a victim because of my bad days. I was torn between the two labels of identification and what they represented. I experienced the characteristics of a survivor, but also still some of a victim. First, I needed to accept the fact that I was raped before I could claim myself as a victim. *“Oh, my God! He raped me! That bastard! He did it while I was drugged because I refused him 20 times while I was awake.”* At this point, I accepted that I was a victim.

I wasn't quite sure when I could move to survivor status. Eventually, I figured that out. A commonality I share with Olsen (2004) was that I also received help from my counselor to realize that I was not to blame for the rape (Olsen was not to blame for abuse), and I could become a survivor. That word meant that I accepted the fact that Kyle had raped me, and I was not to blame. None of the rape was my fault, and I was okay with not being able to go back in time and change the outcome of that night. It happened. I was raped. I accepted it, and I moved on with my life. I survived that night; and because of that, I could face anything. I guess you could say, I am in a Mending Phase. I am putting my life back together. A survivor is who I am. I survived the rape, but it is not a phase of the healing process in my mind. It defines a part of who I am, not where I am in life.

Research question two asks, how is the decision to disclose the rape a trust issue (trusting the person/persons you are disclosing to not to share the information, or abandon the relationship)? I could not find very much literature on trust and rape at all. In fact, I only found one reference to trust and rape, and one source on trust and disclosure by

Rawlins (1983), which I stated in my literature review. Rawlins (1983) mentioned that if one decides to disclose information that is confidential in a relationship, there is a possibility of feeling more at ease and receiving more trust, but the risks may outweigh the benefits. The risks for me were my friends, or a person I was going to date leaving the relationship. I was afraid that once they found out I was raped, they would think of me as damaged goods, or blame me for the rape. I felt that once my family found out, this would ruin our relationship. "I didn't want my parents to know that I did something so stupid. I still felt like part of it was my fault back then, and I just knew in my heart that my parents would blame me."

I lost trust in everyone, even my family. I did not trust that anyone would support me at the most difficult time in my life; so instead of being afraid that they would abandon me, I abandoned them. I shut down emotionally for awhile. "For awhile after the rape, I was "stone cold." I didn't react to anything or anyone. I was completely numb inside. I was in denial, and pushing down all of my feelings." I did not trust that anyone would be able to handle the trauma that I went through because I could not handle it myself. I did not disclose anything to my parents until the day I reported my rape. That was over a year (almost a year and a half) after I was raped. That was twenty-five days after I accepted that I was raped, and months after I thought I was raped. I carried around that secret from the people who love me most in the world because I did not trust that they would support me.

Some rape victims feel that their friends will not believe them (French, 2003), and I was no exception. I did not trust that they would trust me. Some of my friends I have been close to for fifteens years, but that did not make a difference. I felt if they did not

believe me they would think I was just trying to get attention, and I would lose them as friends. Botta and Pingree (1997) stated "getting information from trustworthy sources helps women acknowledge they have been assaulted. When this information comes from friends, it seems to be important in helping young women acknowledge"(p. 209). Some of my friends helped me cope with the rape after some trust was rebuilt.

Botta and Pingree (1997) also state that young women are less comfortable speaking about something which happened to them, especially if it will make them remember something they would rather forget. This became easier in my survivor stage. It was never easy, but it was easier. How to vocalize my thoughts and feelings to my therapist, and others, especially at the protest, was also a major obstacle.

According to French (2003), by a crisis center supplying a judgment-free place of acceptance, they can help a victim recognize their assault, assist in the healing process, and help the victim deal with negative interactions with others. Disclosing the rape to a therapist was mostly about building trust. I knew that she could not tell anyone else about the rape because of the confidentiality agreement between the patient and therapist. Of course, I was the one who eventually broke our silence because of reporting my rape, and releasing my records.

With my friends, I was not too worried that they would tell anyone else, but I told them that they could talk to each other about it because I knew it was a heavy disclosure burden to carry. My family, on the other hand, I was a little concerned about. I was not really afraid that they would tell other people so much, as what they were saying behind my back. They would not talk to me, so I had no idea how they really felt. That bothered me, and reduced my trust for them even more.

I had a great difficulty with the police station because my cousin was an officer at that station, and I was worried that he would find out that I was raped, and pass the word to the rest of my family. The likelihood of him doing this is slim to none considering the fact that he is a professional, but I did not trust anyone. I also knew that once I disclosed my rape to the police, the witnesses were questioned, and Kyle was interrogated, the word may spread from the witnesses or Kyle himself. I did not like having that lack of control over the flow of information, and who is passing it around. It made me feel used again.

I felt that once anyone and everyone would have found out I was raped they would either, A. Not believe me, B. Blame me, C. Not want to have anything to do with me, or D. Feel sorry for me. I did not like any of these options. I lost all faith and trust in everyone.

Disclosure to the public was not an issue because, by that time, I was a survivor of rape. I was not afraid of anyone knowing I was raped because I knew it did not make me look like I did anything wrong, and I did not care what anyone thought of me who did not like what I was saying. Basically, the only time I felt the trust and abandonment issues were with my victim identity.

The third research question asks, What drives the phases of disclosure development at different communication levels (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public communication)? As an example of my intrapersonal disclosure process, consider my reaction to Corey and Nakayama's (1997) *Sextext*. The authors mention while referring to homoeroticism, that resisting the repressed is rooted in psychoanalytic theory. I realize now that I resisted what I repressed about the rape without realizing it. Every

time the word “rape” was mentioned in the headlines or by anyone, I would cringe. I could not watch any rape scenes in movies or on television, either without turning away, and almost vomiting. I realize these scenes are not pleasant for most people to watch, but I did not always have such an extreme reaction to them. Post-rape, I understood why I reacted this way. Even now, as a survivor, I cringe, and feel myself getting sick as I read *Sextext*. It is not because of the homoerotic nature of the piece, but because of the erotic nature of the piece. The details are extremely hard for me to stomach because they are so graphic, even though the work is extremely well written and I feel glued its critical nature.

Intrapersonal disclosure deals with possible repression, denial, and acceptance. In my case, all three applied. Once my memory was not repressed anymore, and I was able to get out of denial from my horrid flashbacks, I finally accepted the rape. This was my intrapersonal disclosure process. What drove that process was a little more complicated.

Every healing process is different because every rape is different, and every person is unique; therefore no healing process will be the same. The commonalities we can find are what is important. When Kyle and Ted sexually assaulted me, I was confused afterwards as to what had just happened. I did not know what to accept or believe because I did not understand the situation myself. French (2003) interviewed a woman named Erin who was acquaintance-raped. She said, “The whole thing just didn’t make sense (French, 2003, 306).” The morning after the rape, I was more confused than ever. I woke up in a state that I was not in when I fell asleep, and I knew that some very scary things had happened that night. Even then, I refused to accept rape as an option. I was blocking my intrapersonal disclosure.

I was scared of the word and the act of rape, and the healing process it requires. I even chose to heal from a sexual assault first because I knew it would be less traumatic, and then I would not have to accept what Kyle really did to me.

My dreams and nightmares also aided in my intrapersonal disclosure. Whatever issue I was repressing at the moment, I usually dreamt about. Then, when I woke up, I was forced to deal with that issue. For example, I was constantly having nightmares about not being able to scream or call for help. That was a big issue for me considering the fact that I did not call for help the night of the rape before I was drugged. When I was drugged, I could not cry for help.

Botta and Pingree (1997) were right when they stated that acknowledging the assault or rape committed against a person, can help with their recovery process. If I did not accept the rape, I would still be blaming myself for what happened that night, and be in healing purgatory. Without naming what happened, I would have defaulted blame to myself for the occurrence.

As far as driving interpersonal disclosure, I believe that happened for a few reasons. First of all, sometimes I just needed to talk, and I could not hold my feelings in anymore. Other times, my friends had built up their trust, or I felt we may be in a situation where we would run into Kyle, so I told them about the rape. I told my family for their safety, and I told my therapist because I knew that she could help me deal with my pain. One of the reasons I held back in disclosing to some of my friends longer is because of the experience I had with Karla. Part of me felt so betrayed and abandoned by her. Although, I knew that she did not stop being my friend because of the rape, it did not help matters much when she stopped all forms of communication after I reported the

rape. That was like a knife to the heart. I felt that if I disclosed something so personal and serious that involved her, the least she could do was check in on me occasionally. Feezel and Shepherd (1987) stated that when coping with relationship loss, one of two groups would respond by “turning inward and relating less to others” (p. 324). This was how I responded after losing Karla.

When I did tell my friends, I told them before my family because my family does not talk about traumatic events. My parents and I do not talk about our emotions at all. My sister and I talk about our emotions occasionally, but only usually on special occasions (birthdays, births) or when necessary (rape, for instance). Telling some of my friends before my sister (maybe just one, I do not remember), may be because verbal reinforcement is more important to relationships with friends than siblings because siblings are more permanent (Floyd, & Parks, 1995).

The group communication I encountered was disclosing my rape to two of my friends at the same time. We discussed it together as a group. I told them the day I reported Kyle on our way out to celebrate my birthday. I wanted them to know just in case we ran into him. I was afraid I would get scared, or he would react badly towards me.

Disclosing to the public was driven by the need to help others, speak out, and feel empowered. I would only have done this with my survivor identity because it takes courage, conviction, and no self-blame. This was exemplified in the protest, in my thesis, and hopefully in many other mediums I have not used yet. “I pondered the rhetoric Douglas or King would use, and then I thought about what words I wanted to say to comfort people, and raise awareness about rape and sexual assault.” Montalbano-Phelps

(2003) stated by survivors sharing their experiences with others, they become further empowered. At the protest, I came out as a rape survivor and victim. That was the empowering part of my public disclosure because it meant that I was not afraid of Kyle anymore, and what he would do to me if I stood up for myself.

Research question four asks, Once a person has accepted that they were raped and a healing process is well under way, what communication behaviors signal identity changes? As far as identity is concerned, just like Tillmann-Healy's ethnography on *Men Kissing* (2002), I am also from the rural Midwest, and developed conventional ideas about identity. I did not believe that someone could be transformed into a new, more redefined individual. "People don't change," or so I thought. I retract that belief now. Traumatic events *can* change someone's identity. This transformation is possible, but it is not something that happens to them, it is something they make happen. Identities are complex, and most of us do not know what our identity is, until we are forced to take a closer look at who we really are, and who we want to be. This is why so many people go on journeys to "find themselves."

My journey was through ethnography, which led to me "finding myself," and distinguishing my old identity. I had no idea I had transformed until I read the literature, read my work, and my therapist brought it to my attention.

Assertiveness and aggression were the communication behaviors I developed. The assertiveness was developed with the survivor identity change. A survivor asserts that they "will survive." Along with Montelbano-Phelps (2003), I found that the expression or re-expression of surviving articulates a positive future, and creates change. For example, the piece of paper I keep to read over and over, "I am a fighter, that's what I

am. I will fight till' the day I die. I will not forget, but I will survive. That is my battle cry!"

I was also assertive when I saw Kyle at the Mascoutah Homecoming, "I shook my head again firmly, and he gave me a look and a gesture, which meant okay." "Kyle was at least smart this time. He backed off when I said no." My assertiveness showed at the protest speaking out, yelling at the march, and marching in general. Being able to report a rape shows assertiveness. I knew that the odds were not in my favor that Kyle was going to go to prison, or even be brought up on charges, but I reported him anyway. Finally standing up to my harasser at work took a great amount of assertiveness. I was faced with a sexual harasser, but I still stood up to him because I knew it needed to be done for my safety. The desire to take a road trip by myself to Montana takes a great deal of assertiveness because most people do not like to go on long trips alone.

Most prominent in this ethnography, I feel is my voice. Just reading the text, I noticed a transformation in the journal entries and writing from earlier to later in the ethnography. I started out with a very hurt voice of someone who has been raped, and who is in the healing process of such a horrible crime. I transition to a very strong-willed woman who has concrete beliefs, writes to politicians, marches in protests, vocalizes how she feels and why, and if you don't like it, then too bad. This is me. This is the woman I was always meant to be, and always wanted to be, but never fully developed to the extreme. Well, here I am.

Aggression was a communication behavior that developed post-rape partially during my victim identity, but mostly during my survivor identity. My bar analysis did not show aggression towards the man at the bar, just abruptness or rudeness, but the

immediate analysis afterwards showed my aggressive feelings towards him. If he would have touched me, I am pretty sure I could have put him in an excruciating arm bar (two years of competitive Judo). The man who hit on my friend at the bar and practically kissed her neck, I showed aggression towards. I pushed him back, and told him to “back off.” Another time I showed aggression towards a male was when I went out for my 28th birthday, and the guy at the bar grabbed my breast on the dance floor. I twisted him around by his arm so quick, he never knew what hit him.

I know that I am more hostile towards males because that is the gender of the person who raped me (Simpson, & Senn, 2003). I have had anger towards males ever since Ted attacked me. Once I was a survivor, I felt the need to be more assertive, and do everything on my own. My independence was my freedom, but sometimes my disability. With independence and the survivor identity, I did not want to ask for help when I needed to talk or vent about how my day was tough. I dealt with it on my own, similar to Shaffer’s (2004) backpacking identity. She felt while backpacking in Europe, when she wore her backpack, she needed to get to her destination on her own, take more responsibility, and pretend like she knew what she was doing when she did not. This can be very lonely and tough sometimes, speaking from experience.

I did notice that during my survivor identity, I was more compassionate when writing about Kyle. Even after he raped me, I still wanted him to go to rehabilitation for being a sexual predator, and would have helped him in the process. This would not just be for him, but to protect others. It is interesting how women are often the caretakers in relationships, even when they have been hurt by the other party. Men do not usually show such compassion to someone who has wronged them. According to Veenendall

(1982) discussing Nichols research on cultural socialization of men, men may have dysfunctional relationships because of their inability to express their feelings due to the cultural constraints placed on men. Boys are told at a young age not to cry, or to shake it off when they injure themselves; when girls, on the other hand, may be permitted to cry for a small period of time. Even when my father first found out I was raped, I felt the need to console him as he cried. My role as a woman superseded that of a victim (I was in my victim identity at that time) of rape. I wanted to take care of my dad, so that he would feel comforted. I stopped thinking about my pain for that moment.

At the beginning of this ethnography, my outlook on life was grim, to say the least. I was struggling with who I was before the rape, who I became after the rape, and who I was during and after the rape realization. I had so many identities in one person that I was confused about why I was feeling the way that I did. Francis (1997) states in her study that one goes from a negative identity to a positive identity in the recovery process from bereavement or divorce. The same steps apply to trauma victims, as well. We go from our victim identity (negative) to our survivor identity (positive).

I survived so much in order to write this thesis. I am not the same person, therefore, I should not be characterized in the same manner. As far as my familial changes after the rape to now, I asked my mother what she thought. According to her, during my victim identity I was "hateful, like a rebellious teenager," and I did not want to be around them. When I asked her specifically about my communication style back then, she replied, "There was none." She says now that things are much better.

The fifth research question asks, How do victims and survivors of rape socially construct a recovery process? Socially constructing the rape recovery process is attributed by a class of trauma survivors. Just as women and men are speaking out about rape, and how it affected them, there are other voices, which construct a reality of pain and hurt, but no matter what, never give up. Goodall (2002) reflected on a symposium from Ron Pelias about the cyclic distance between Pelias and his son, and Pelias and his father. He wrote, "...to not forget what is most passionate and misunderstood about life itself, and that is our own power to endure it..." (Goodall, 2002, 378).

The rape recovery process is one which is constructed of flashbacks, nightmares, self-blame (in victim identity only), loss of trust, emotional ups and downs including depression, constant fear, loneliness, identity changes, and possible reporting of the rape, sharing your feelings with a therapist and eventually your friends and family somehow, being able to eventually openly talk about being a survivor of rape, forgiveness, being grateful for your life, becoming a better person, and the need to protect others from sexual predators. Most of the symptoms fall into the categories of Rape Trauma Syndrome or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (Burgess, & Holmstrom, 1974) (DSMIV-TR, 2000). In my survivor identity, I stated, "I feel the need to become a better person, and educate individuals on this subject, or any subject that I feel will make the world a better place. I am more grateful for every day that passes." This statement expresses how I socially constructed part of my survivor identity.

Every survivor and victim may be different, but most of them, generally speaking, go through the same process or steps to becoming a survivor. Olsen (2004) stated in her autoethnography of domestic abuse, "It took me a while to realize that the recovery

process was not linear—that I could not simply retrace the steps back to who I once was” (Olsen, 2004, *Where We Go From Here: Concluding Thoughts From a Survivor*, para. 2). I was also searching for the person I was before the rape...but that girl did not exist anymore. The woman that I am affirms my identity change.

Almost all of the social construction literature associated with rape I could find was related to society or culture’s construction of reality, and not from the victim or survivor’s perspective. Young and Maguire (2003) cover the social construction of word choice (sexual assault/rape, victim/survivor) from a victim and survivor’s perspective. Although, sexual assault covers the broad spectrum of sexual violence, it may downplay the crime. Rape may make a victim/survivor feel like the crime acted upon them could only be vaginal/penal penetration most commonly committed by a stranger. Victim may allow the person to talk freely about their feelings, but also defines the woman’s inability to control the situation or rape. Survivor makes the person feel empowered, but does not give them the ability to speak freely about the rape (Young, & Maguire, 2003).

I put many ghosts to rest by writing this thesis. I also closed many chapters in my healing process. There is this feeling of achievement that overwhelms me that I cannot quite explain. It also scares me because I am not sure where to go from here.

Further Research

A continuance of this ethnography, or a part II, could be written five or ten years from now, as an update to this ethnography. It could cover the male trusting phase of my recovery, whether or not I entered marriage or had children, the aftereffects of such life changing events, and how rape has affected my future life.

Further research could also focus on other types of categories of rapes committed (stranger rape, etc.), and the auto-ethnographies created. Another very interesting ethnography would be from a victim/survivor whose rapist was prosecuted and jailed for his offense, or at least charged with rape. An interesting ethnography could focus on the individuals who are fighting for victims' rights with sexual violence in the legal system currently to get a day to day account of the frustration and updates of the struggle. Also, another ethnography creation could be from a politician's standpoint who is actually trying to have his constituents vote for a positive political change in victims' rights with sexual violence. A study on communication and healing covering closure with rape victims after reporting (disclosure) a rape would follow this ethnography very well.

A limitation to the study is that my rape is not representative of most of the different types of rapes committed. Every rape is different, and although it is not possible to account for each different type of rape committed, one can focus on certain groupings; For example, stranger rape, gang rapes, stalker rape, child molestation, and incest, to name a few. My rape did include acquaintance rape and drug-facilitated rape (even though Kyle was not the one who drugged me with my sleeping pill), but there are many more accounts to uncover. I also covered my account with Ted, which was acquaintance sexual assault. My encounters with Rich, the Pizza Guy, were sexual harassment, and may border on stalking in certain instances. These accounts enriched the study by broadening the examples of sexual crime types.

Conclusion

I honestly think I started writing this thesis as a victim, and am now ending it as a survivor. It is my "blue ribbon" reward for fighting so hard to get my life back on track.

Unfortunately, I never know if the step I am taking is the last step in my recovery process until it is finished. Even if you are a survivor, it does not mean you are completely done with your healing process; at least that is how I feel. When I actually feel that sense of completeness and resolve, I know I will be healed. I know that will come someday, and I hope that it is soon. Being a survivor is not something that happened overnight. It was a gradual change that I did not even realize was occurring until I heard the words “victim” and “survivor”. That is when I really started to think about which one I was, and how I referred to myself. Even then, I could not have predicted the outcome of this ethnography because some of my days were so sporadically good and bad.

Maybe the next time a researcher reads this who was not raped, and does a study on a rape victim or survivor, they will be more informed on how to communicate with rape victims. Then, they will also be more understanding of their communications skills, and what drives them.

My culture, the one I cover in this autoethnography, is one of rape and sexual assault victims and survivors. They have many faces. I am but one of those faces that refuses to look away now when she looks in the mirror because of the shame she once felt.

Another survivor stated, “It’s really natural for me to put on survivor because it kind of gave me a gift. At one time I really thought I was a victim and I was a victim, but now I am a survivor” (Young & Maguire, 2003, p. 49). It is a gift; a gift that you work very hard for, and at the end of your journey, you give yourself. This is what all rape victims should someday be able to give themselves; the precious gift of being a survivor.

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Appendix A



Figure 1: Picture taken by a Call For Help, Inc. Therapist. Released by Pearl Campbell of Call For Help, Inc.

Appendix B

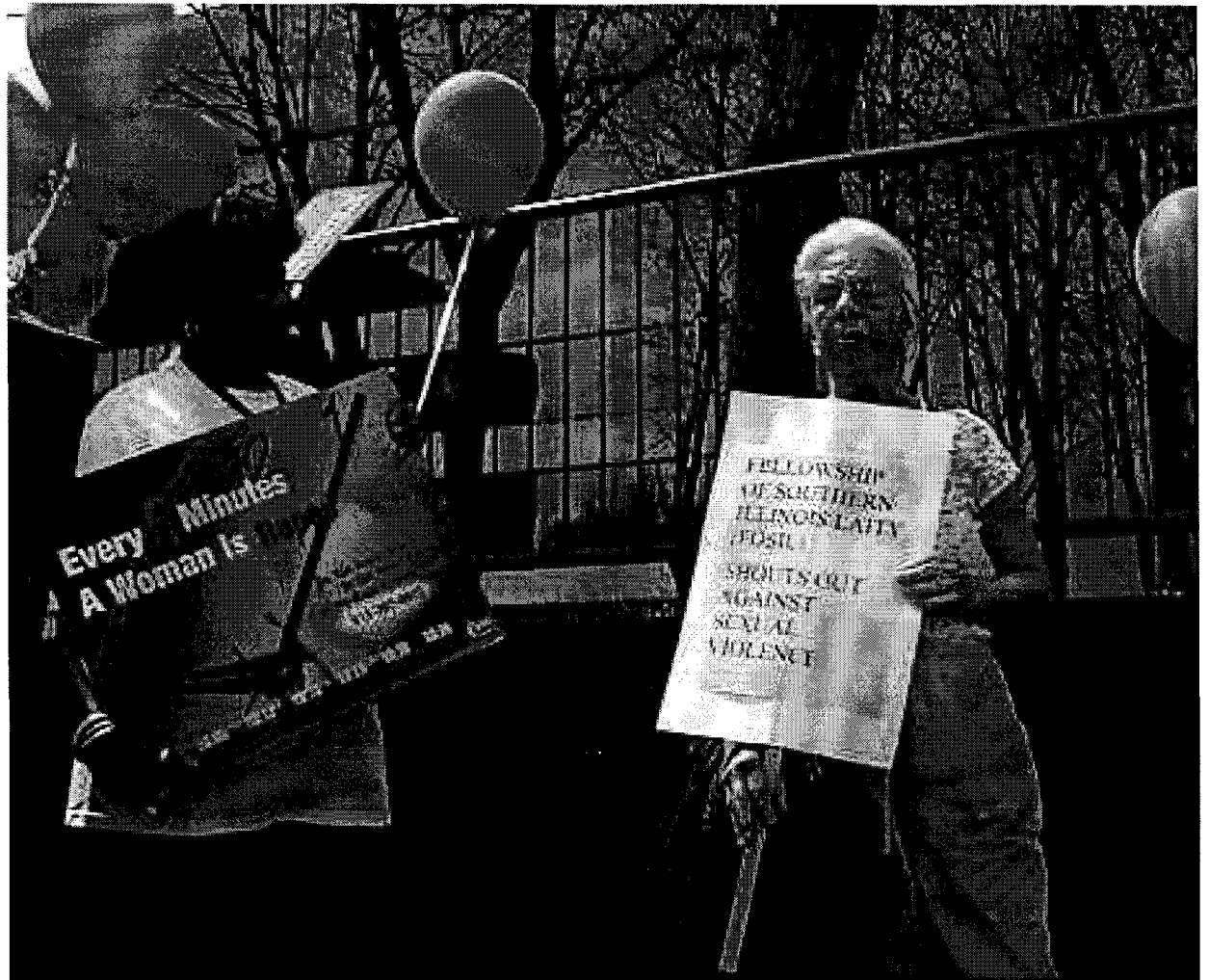


Figure 2: Picture taken by a Call For Help Inc. Therapist. Released by Pearl Campbell of Call For Help, Inc.

Appendix C



Figure 3: Picture taken by a Call For Help, Inc. Therapist. Released by Pearl Campbell of Call For Help, Inc.

Appendix D



Figure 4: Picture taken by a Call For Help Therapist. Released by Pearl Campbell from Call For Help, Inc.

Photo Consent Form

I allow Sarah R. Moll to use the photos titled (on the next page): "Me speaking", "balloon release", "FOSIL speaker", and "yelling on main" in her thesis, and in publications relating to the topic of her thesis that were taken on April 5, 2005 at the Sexual Violence March by myself.

Thesis Topic: Communication and rape victims versus survivors

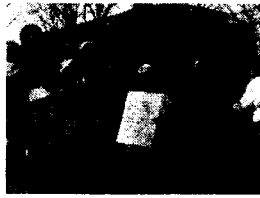
Signed Paul P. Campbell

Print Name PEARL P. CAMPBELL

Date June 16, 2005



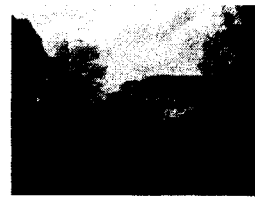
ballon release



FOSIL speaker



Me speaking



yelling on main