

**From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal
journeys of three South African survivors.**

by

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**A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree**

MA (Counselling Psychology)

in the Department of Psychology at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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December 2017

Abstract

South Africa is plagued by exceptionally high levels of inter-personal violence, namely rape. Whilst rape remains so pervasive, it is important to underpin potential mechanism of recovery for those left in its wake. In an effort to understand the mechanisms of recovery from rape through resilience and meaning-making, this study entitled “From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South Africa Survivors” explores lived experiences.

The study employed an interpretivist epistemological lens, whilst enacting hermeneutic phenomenology’s guiding principles for the research pathway. Participants were recruited through contact with a Gender-Based-Violence non-profit organisation, where a qualitative methodological design was employed. Data was gathered via semi-structured interviews within the hermeneutic tradition. Data was analysed using the principles of hermeneutic analysis, which gave rise to fusion of horizons providing a snapshot of six individual themes per participant, and four global themes. The experience of moving from victim to activist whilst experiencing recovery was negatively mediated by the impact of patriarchal culture, victim-blaming and gendered norms but was facilitated positively by reconstructing meaning through the telling of their own stories and the witnessing of other’s stories. The co-constructed understanding between researcher and participants gave rise to the importance of: recognising the undiscovered opportunities the trauma brings; undertaking altruistic activities; the manufacture of power through mastery in multiple life domains; as well as acknowledging the purpose in one’s life, in this instance motherhood – as a mechanism of redefining the relationship with the rape.

KEY TERMS: rape; rape victim; rape survivor; anti-rape activist; meaning-making; interpretivism; recovery from rape; resilience in rape recovery; altruism as mechanism of recovery; post traumatic growth; re-authoring; subjective experience; South African rape survivors; hermeneutic inquiry.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to deeply thank the incredible ladies who allowed me to share in their lives so openly and so generously. Lomé, Cami, and Julia – thank you for the difference you make in so many people’s lives and the difference you have made in mine.

I would also like thank my boyfriend Adam, who has put up with years of thesis writing and non-writing, many tears and lots of tantrums.

To my beautiful friend Fatima, none of this would be anything without you in the trenches with me. Thank you.

To my family and friends who encouraged me to keep going when I didn’t feel I had anything left to give to the process, especially my mom for her unwavering support.

Finally, to my supervisor, Werner Human. I am not sure how you have hung in there with me and exhibited the patience you have, but I am eternally thankful for that last push when I really needed it most. I can’t believe it’s done. Thank you!

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Plagiarism Declaration

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DECLARATION

Full name : Kalliste Kuhn

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Title of thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation:

From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors

I declare that this thesis / dissertation / mini-dissertation is my own original work. Where secondary material is used, this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with university requirements.

I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of university policy and implications in this regard.



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Chapter one

1.1 Introduction

Being South African means living in a developing country, full of potential and hunger to realise its young democracy. Conversely, with the aforementioned characterisation comes a country emerging from a discriminative, oppressive and patriarchal past which has left the majority of our citizens in less than desirable, arguably poverty-stricken socio-economic positions (Demombynes & Ozler, 2005). It is understood that conditions such as these contribute to the perpetration of violent crime such as rape (Kiss, Schraiber, Heise, Zimmerman, Gouveia, & Watts, 2012) Rape will be the focus of this study.

The cumulative statistics suggest that someone is raped every 35 seconds yet according to the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation, only one in twenty cases is reported with even this figure considered to be conservative (Robertson, 2011). The aforementioned suggests that prevalence estimates are grossly underestimated (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002; Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, & Rose-Junius, 2005). Taking this into account, the 62 649 sexual assault cases reported to the South African Police Service (SAPS) in the 2013-2014 period (South African Police Service, 2015) would hypothetically be in excess of 1.2 million if all twenty cases were reported. This is the context that victims, as well as activists fighting the scourge of rape, find themselves in.

Importantly, the numbers stated above are not simply numbers, but people who have had personal experiences of rape and the psychological, emotional and physiological impact it can have. According to Hathaway (1995), quantitative research risks overlooking critical features of human phenomena or experiences. Thus within the numbers, the voice of the participant can be lost. Although quantitative approaches are valuable, qualitative approaches allow for richness and depth of the experiences to be gained, allowing the participants voices to be heard (Creswell, 2013).

The voices this study will hear and explore, are those of anti-rape activists who themselves have personally experienced rape, and the subsequent journey from victim to activist within the South African context. Due to the dynamic nature of this journey, it would be valuable to unpack what the participants feel facilitated this movement, and how this movement is understood in terms of personal healing and resilience. Therefore, this study aims to create an opportunity for participants to feel heard through “telling” and directing the research through their lived experiences of resilience and recovery.

1.2 Research Question

This study is concerned with understanding the lived experience of rape survivors who are now working as anti-rape activists. It seeks to explore the experience of moving from victim to activist; the features of resilience at play (if any), and the mediating effect of altruism on recovery from the perspective of the participants.

The key questions that will navigate this research endeavour are as follows:

Primary research question:

1. How have the participants experienced their journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist?

Secondary research questions:

2. How do the participants understand the relationship between their activism and their healing, if at all?
3. In the description of the journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist, what resilience factors, if any, are identified by the participants?

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

In a country ravaged by interpersonal violence, particularly by sexual assault, having a deep and nuanced perspective of the factors that contribute to recovery and resilience in individual participants, sets up a discussion that can have far reaching benefits by uncovering possibilities for increased resilience and recovery. This becomes even more ardent as clinical interventions are lacking and social support is eroded due to the stigma attached to rape, with particular reference to the victim-blaming culture pervasive in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2005).

This study therefore aims to uncover the mechanisms that facilitated recovery (if at all) for individual participants whilst respecting participants as the experts of their own lives. This study aims to move away from the potential statistical marginalisation of quantitative approaches, whilst co-authoring a rich understanding of the phenomenon of moving from rape victim to anti-rape activist, with particular interest in the mediating effect of altruism on recovery, if at all. The objective thereby is having an informed basis by which to leapfrog potential further enquiry in order to positively benefit those affected by rape in South Africa whilst honouring the individuals participating in this study.

1.4 Structure of the study

The following chapter contextualises this study within existing and relevant literature that speaks to the phenomenon of rape and the subsequent transition to anti-rape activism. It provides a definition of rape for the purposes of this study, provides an overview of rape research as it is situated globally and then locally. It then discusses the convergence of rape victimology and anti-rape activism, focusing on the function of altruism as a method of recovery with specific reference to psychological resilience and meaning making. This section is then concluded by elucidating gaps in literature and the contribution that this study will make to the field of rape research

Chapter three will discuss the paradigmatic and methodological positioning of the study. It will discuss and argue for the selection of the interpretive paradigm, how it will be operationalised within the study and consequently will argue for the selection of a qualitative research strategy. This chapter will appoint hermeneutic phenomenology as the chosen method of inquiry and unpack hermeneutic research principals. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with an overview of the research design, and how this is translated into a tangible research pathway.

Chapter four will build on the theoretical foundation laid in chapter three by discussing the methodological processes inherent to the discipline of hermeneutic enquiry, whilst describing the research context of this study. Furthermore, this chapter will focus on the participants: sampling method, criteria, recruitment and characteristics. The chapter will then go on to outline the methods of data collection,

and analysis and interpretation, as well as a discussion on the quality of the study and ethical concerns.

Finally, chapter five will present the analysis of the participant's accounts, the researcher's reflections and concluding comments. Alongside this discussion, the strengths and limitations of the study are put forward as well as suggestions for future research. Lastly, chapter five concludes with closing salient comments on findings as they relate to the research questions guiding this study.

Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided the aims of the study and an overview of the research. This chapter focusses on contextualising the study within existing and relevant literature that speaks to the phenomenon of rape and the subsequent transition to anti-rape activism. In order to do so, the literature is reviewed within five main sections. The first section defines rape for the purposes of this study. The second section provides an overview of rape research globally and in South Africa (SA). The third section discusses the convergence of rape victimology and anti-rape activism; and the function of activism as altruism. The fourth section explores altruism as a mechanism of recovery with specific reference to psychological resilience theory and meaning making. The final section summarises the chapter by identifying literature gaps and positions this study as a contribution to the field of rape research.

2.2 Defining ‘rape’

In South African law, rape is categorised as sexual assault. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act of 2007, defines “sexual assault” as a term used to encompass a range of acts involving unlawful sexual penetration, or attempts at penetration, to any extent whatsoever by genital organs of one person into the anus, mouth or genital organs of another person, or by any object, including any part of the body of an animal, or the part of the body of a person, into the anus, mouth or genital organs of another person. Hence men and women of all ages may experience sexual assault involving penetration or attempts at penetration of a range of body orifices by a range of body parts or other objects

(Naidoo, 2013). In this study, 'rape' will refer to a completed sexual assault by penetration as defined in the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2007.

2.3 An overview: Rape research globally and in South Africa

Duma, Mekwa, and Denny (2007a/b) state that rape is one of the most devastating personal traumas to be experienced. Not only does it result in psychological, emotional and sometimes physical damage, but the remnants of the rape experience can take months, if not years to overcome. Rape is a violation of privacy, security, and dignity but also an agent of shame and guilt, stigmatising victims (Duma et al., 2007a). This affects not only the victim, but their interaction with their environment too (Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003; Robertson, 2011). In light of the sheer body of rape literature, it is clear that researchers have endeavoured to discover what the agents are that facilitate rape perpetration and the impacts it has.

One of the broader bodies of work centres on theories of gender inequality and patriarchy as inherited as social norms from centuries of masculine superiority or dominance as a colonial relic (Reyes, 2013). Rabinowitz (2011) gives a synopsis of the major feminist theories and contrasts them with the 'rape-culture' written about in ancient Greek tragedies establishing the lineage of domination. Other authors have unpacked the function of slavery, ownership, hierarchy, colonialism, maleness and control in sublimating ideas of hegemony so heavily entrenched in the multi-contextual human experience (Jemott & Maharaaj, 2013).

The above mentioned resembles the South African context. Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell, and Dunkle (2011) as well as others (Baloyi, 2010; Gordon & Collins, 2013; Graham, 2013; Moffett, 2006; Shannon et al., 2012) hold that gender,

culture, and post-apartheid/colonial legacies create opportunities for perpetrators to engage in dominant patriarchal ideologies. These are further compounded by cultural considerations such as age hierarchies, power and the manufacture of control. These contribute to a generation of entitlement to, and expectation of, men's control, ownership and punishment of women. Therefore rape is thought to be the dialogue with oneself (the perpetrator) about their masculinity and powerfulness, thus can also be extended to same sex rape perpetration where a large power differential occurs between perpetrator and victim (Jewkes et al., 2005; Jewkes et al., 2011; Vundule, Maforah, Jewkes, & Jordaan 2001; Wood, Lambert & Jewkes, 2007).

Further to this, gender ideologies, control and hierarchy can be seen in the use of rape as a weapon of warfare, another large body of research. The prolific perpetration of rape in central African countries embroiled in civil conflict often tells of victims feeling that sexual violence is not simply part of the war, but that it is the war itself (Hertzog & Yeilding, 2009).

A further large body of research focuses on factors that affect rape reporting. Some of these factors, which include ineffective police services, further facilitate perpetration of rape leading not only to resistance in reporting but also creating an environment where persecution is not considered as an immediate consequence for the perpetrator (Jewkes et al., 2011). Other factors which affect the reporting of rape include rape myths that attribute blame to the victim and not the assailant (Jewkes et al., 2005), as well as the secondary re-traumatisation of the victim by the unempathic or poorly trained responder (Duma, et al., 2007a/b). This has led to pleas for more resources to be allocated for better training and more 'man-power' (Duma et al., 2007a/b; Naidoo, 2013). Furthermore, there is also ambiguity regarding what it

means to be a rape victim if the rape was carried out by an intimate partner. This could be due to the entrenched patriarchal beliefs and worry of stigma in associating with the term 'rape victim' (Wood et al., 2007).

The pathology of rape is also extensively addressed in the literature and includes the development of clinical disorders, the course of treatment and recovery, and the long term psychological effects of childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse in general. This research is aimed at influencing trauma intervention and treatment strategies that try to establish the most effective means of intervention to facilitate fuller recovery in a medical-model (Duma et al., 2007a/b; Sikweyiya, Jewkes, & Dartnell, 2013).

Within rape research, positivistic formalised research is often used to establish generalizable norms that can be acted upon promptly for the sake of the victims or as identifiers for the prevention of rape (Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, & Shai, 2010; Maedl, 2011). However, in an effort to capture the lived experience, qualitative research studies have also been employed to explore the nuances and depth of rape phenomena. By employing this methodology, the survivor escapes statistical marginalisation and is enacted as a participant in the research process (Berg, Lune, & Lune, 2004).

In international literature, feminist researchers analyse the discourses that arises from survivor's personal accounts by utilising qualitative approaches with a predominant focus on the testimonies of war-crime victims in central Africa (Maedl, 2011; Rutherford, 2011; Seymour, 2012). Multiple studies in SA too have used qualitative approaches to investigate survivor's experiences of: recovery from and coping with sexual assault (Duma et al., 2007a/b; Kelland, 2012; Nduna & Jewkes, 2011); survivor's experiences of primary care services post-rape (Arend, Maw, de

Swardt, Denny, & Roland, 2013; Christofides, Muirhead, Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, & Conco, 2006), and survivors' understanding of sexual assault through cultural and gender constructions (Boonzaier & de La Rey, 2003; Gordon & Collins, 2013).

South African research that has focused on the lived experiences of participants can be seen in the work of Van Wijk, Duma, and Mayers (2014) who explored the experiences of male intimate partners of female rape victims in Cape Town, and Womersley and Maw (2009) who contextualised the experiences of SA woman in the immediate aftermath of rape.

2.4 The convergence of rape victimology and anti-rape activism

Other rape accounts are more commonly found in personal retellings of trauma through books, blogs, public speaking, media and awareness campaigns. An example of this is Alison Botha, who was raped, disembowelled, had her throat slit and was left for dead (Thamm, 2012), Charlene Smith, a journalist, who blogged about her rape and her struggle to receive Anti-Retroviral treatment for the prevention of HIV transmission (Smith, 2009), or Charlene Lau, a child and gang-rape survivor who walked one thousand four hundred kilometres to raise awareness about rape perpetration (e-NCA, 2013). These formats appear to stem from an activist stance: a victim-turned-survivor empowered through the retelling of his/her story.

In SA, the literature regarding activism largely addressed political activism, logically following the over-turn of the apartheid regime (Gibson, 2006). Another major theme in activism research is that of HIV/AIDS as a result of South Africa having the highest HIV infection rate in the world (UNAIDS, 2013). In terms of sexual violence, the research on activism generally discusses theoretical underpinnings that

focus on gender equality, legislation reformation, the formation of activism agencies, activism campaign effectiveness, resolutions and memoranda drafted at summits and conferences, and the form and function of the women's movement since SA's democratic transition (Gouws, 2014).

Activism, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is the "policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change" (Stevensen & Waite, 2011, p.13). The campaigning for social change can be understood as participating in an activity for the good of the cause, and by extension, the other. In this capacity, activism identifies itself as a form of altruism or as a helping behaviour (Draucker, 2003).

2.5 Activism as altruism: a mechanism for recovery

Staub and Vollhardt (2008) discuss that survivors of violence sometimes engage in helping behaviours which facilitate a process of healing and recovery. This is also discussed within psychological resilience theory which hypothesises that altruism may be used to make meaning of the experience and thus contribute to 'bouncing back' from adversity, particularly trauma (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005).

2.5.1 Psychological Resilience in recovery

The study of psychological resilience concerns itself with understanding why some individuals are able to not only withstand - but even thrive on- the pressure or adversity they experience (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Early studies in psychological resilience sought to understand individual protective factors which enabled the individual not to yield to the demands of the pressure experienced in their lives. In the 1990's however, this focus shifted away from understanding protective factors to

instead understanding the process an individual navigates in order to overcome personal adversity (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013).

The specific nature of the definition of psychological resilience (to be referenced as resilience henceforth) is influenced by the context, sample, methodology and historicity of researchers. Regardless of how the definition is operationalised, the majority of definitions concern themselves with two key concepts, those being: adversity and positive adaptation (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Thus for the purposes of this study resilience is defined as: An individual's stability, recovery, or ability to 'bounce back' in response to experiencing traumatic or victimising events (Leipold & Greve, 2009; Meichenbaum, 2017).

Traumatic events can be due to intentional human actions (maltreatment of others, war, or violence), natural causes (illness and disaster), or accidents and lost resources (Meichenbaum, 2017). Therefore, rape is understood as a traumatic event.

The ability of the survivor to navigate their post-trauma landscape has been identified as largely dependent on the meaning-making process, by the stories that survivors tell themselves about their experiences (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Prati & Pretrantoni, 2009; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

2.5.2 Meaning making in recovery

Joseph (2012); Kiser, Baumgardner and Dorado (2010); and Vollmer (2005), discuss the development of PTSD and related disorders (or avoidance thereof) being attributed to autobiographical memories, where a victimising experience has occurred and stories are used to provide a framework for understanding, organising and contextualising the complexities of the lived experience.

Within the constructivist paradigm, it is widely held that individuals construct schemas, metaphors and mind-sets, and engage in reconstructions of the past via meaning making activities to create narratives they live by (Meichenbaum, 2017). A number of researchers have highlighted the importance of these meaning-making narratives and activities in the aftermath of traumatic experiences for preventing the development of PTSD and related disorders (Courtois, 1999; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Davis, Wortman, Lehman & Silver, 2000; Herman, 1992; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Of survivors who demonstrate resilience, the following cognitive and meaning making features have been identified in Meichenbaum's (2017) meta-analysis and discussion of resilience algorithms:

- Psychological flexibility which allows the survivor to discuss the aftermath of the event as interpreted both by themselves and others
- The ability to reframe and redefine trauma narratives with the inclusion of survival and coping stories
- The ability to share strategies in regulating intense negative emotions
- Retaining a sense of agency by describing subsequent control and grit in the aftermath of the traumatic event.
- Inclusion of accomplishments and activities post the traumatic event - an "in spite of" outlook
- Stories which make reference to positive emotions, such as having the view that the bad traumatic event catalysed positive outcomes thus indicating benefit-finding approaches.

Importantly, the combination of the benefit-finding approach coupled with emotional regulation is a very strong indicator of resilience and thus recovery. A

tangible example of these factors in action is altruism, where altruism is defined as making a gift of one's own experiences to assist in the helping of others (Allen, Fonagy & Bateman, 2008; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Fredrickson, 2011; Helgeson, Reynolds & Tomich, 2006; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). This in turn, creates agency for the survivor, putting them back in the "driver's" seat after being a passive recipient of a traumatic event (Prati & Pietrantonio, 2009)

For the context of this study, the aforementioned is particularly pertinent to the rape survivor who ultimately becomes an anti-rape activist and advocates for others. In this way, the activist has recovered a sense of agency (independent capability) which is often experienced as loss of ownership or control with rape trauma (Ataria, 2015).

2.6 Bridging the gaps: this study's contribution to knowledge

The more that is understood about rape in relation to victims, perpetrators and society, the greater the wealth of knowledge that exists. This contributes to addressing rape prevention and response as it is a hugely devastating personal trauma that affects not only the victim, but their social environment too (Robertson, 2011).

In order to move from being a victim to being able to engage in activist activities that addresses the realities of rape every day, a certain level of processing, healing and agency development has taken place (Stidman et al., 2012). Further to this, the factors that positively influence the recovery process and agency development post-trauma are inextricably linked to resiliency. South Africa is faced with the startling reality that rape perpetration is not subsiding (Sikweyiya et al., 2013). Therefore, factors for recovery should be explored (Campbell et al., 2007; Naidoo, 2013).

However, the explorations should not be limited to pathological categorisations, but should expand focus to interpersonal humanistic ways that allows victims to make meaning of their experience (Stidman et al., 2012).

This chapter has guided the reader through the broad landscape of rape research from a global to SA scale. It has highlighted the pervasive nature of quantitative rape research, whilst bringing attention to the smaller body of qualitative work aimed at understanding the lived experience of rape survivors both internationally and in SA. Furthermore, this chapter discussed the notion of anecdotal or personal survivor accounts, the owners of which informally assuming the role of activist, an area of formalised research largely lacking in South Africa. Activism as a form of altruism was then discussed as a factor of resilience and meaning making.

Even though many works, even from ancient times, explore positive change following trauma, there is limited research of the specific ways in which the survivors of sexual violence, use helping others as a means of growth (Stidman, Draucker, Martsof, & Mullen, 2012). This remains true of the SA context too.

Thus this qualitative, hermeneutic study entitled “From rape victim to anti-rape activist: the stories of three South African survivors” contributes novel research to existing literature.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter contextualised the study within existing and relevant literature speaking to the phenomenon of rape and the subsequent transition to anti-rape activism. Rape was defined for the purpose of this study, and an overview of global and SA rape

research was provided. The convergence and function of anti-rape activism and altruism was discussed with specific reference to resilience and meaning making. Finally, this studies contribution to existing literature was put forward and sets the pathway for the rest of this paper to unfold. The next chapter will define the research design and methodological framework which will guide the study.

Chapter 3

Research design: paradigmatic and methodological framework

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 positioned this study within the field of rape research that currently exists, and highlighted the way in which it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The current chapter discusses the paradigmatic and methodological positioning of the study, which in turn guides how the study is conducted. The chapter comprises of four main sections. The first section addresses the selection of the interpretive paradigm. This section includes a discussion on the operationalisation of Interpretivism in research, as well as its application to the study. The second section discusses the selection of a qualitative research strategy. The third section addresses the theoretical methodological and philosophical underpinnings of this study. Specifically, it discusses the history of phenomenology and the development of hermeneutic phenomenology, the chosen method of inquiry. Furthermore, it describes the key aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology that are pertinent to this study. The final section outlines guiding hermeneutic research principals. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research design and how this is translated into a tangible research pathway.

3.2 Paradigm: Research perspective and philosophy

Before the research process can commence, it is important for the researcher to state their knowledge claim (Creswell, 2003). A knowledge claim refers to the assumptions that a researcher holds about what will be learnt and how it will be learnt within the research inquiry. This can also be referred to as a paradigm. A

paradigm is understood as a broad approach that guides research and is formulated upon philosophical claims regarding **ontology**, what reality is; **epistemology**, how reality can be studied (how we come to know it); and **methodology**, the processes of studying it (Scotland, 2012). Once the knowledge claim has been declared, this fundamentally guides both research design and research methodology.

As discussed in previous chapters, the aim of the research is to understand the lived experiences of the participants and to co-create meaning within the research process. Therefore, this study assumes that knowledge is not independent but created as a result of multiple, complex social interactions across history and context (Scotland, 2012). In order to unpack this phenomenon, the study will be guided by the interpretivist research paradigm, utilising hermeneutic phenomenology as the methodology, and a qualitative research strategy.

In this section I will unpack the interpretive research paradigm. This will include ontological and epistemological points of departure as well as the defining characteristics of interpretive research. I will then discuss the application of Interpretivism to this study where I will explain why the paradigm was selected. This will lead to the following section which addresses the selection of a qualitative research strategy.

3.2.1 The interpretivist paradigm

As referenced earlier, each paradigm or knowledge claim consists of the following components: ontology, epistemology and methodology. In turn, the paradigm chosen directs the research inquiry as it holds implicit assumptions about what reality, or knowledge, is and the way it is attained.

Ontological relativism

The interpretive paradigm occupies the ontological position of relativism. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the idea that reality is subjective, and differs from person to person is the defining feature of relativism. This is to say that our realities are mediated by our senses, by the way we interact with the world. Relativism argues that without consciousness the world is meaningless, therefore reality only emerges when we consciously engage with aspects of an independent world (Crotty, 1998). Furthermore, reality is individually constructed and language plays an active role in shaping and moulding these realities (Frowe, 2001).

Epistemological idealism

The interpretive epistemology is one of idealism. This implies that we learn about the world subjectively through real world phenomena in that the world does not exist separately from our knowledge of it (Scotland, 2012). Crotty (1998, p.43, 44) uses this example to illustrate subjectivism:

We need to remind ourselves here that it is human beings who have constructed it as a tree, given it the name, and attributed to it the associations we make with trees. A tree is not a tree without someone to call it a tree. Meaning is not discovered; it is constructed through the interaction between consciousness and the world. Consciousness is always conscious of something.

Thus, to create experiences in the world, we must participate in it. This gives rise to a reciprocal effect whereby simply encountering the world moulds it, and we are simultaneously being moulded by the encounter (Heron & Reason, 1997). Therefore, this is how the 'knower' comes to 'know'. Because reality is individually constructed, the same phenomenon can be experienced in divergent ways therefore

the 'truth' of the world is a consensus that is formed by co-constructions (Crotty, 1998). For this reason, knowledge is characterised by being culturally or socially derived and historically situated. It is constructed by real-world human interactions and is transmitted within a social context.

3.2.2 Operationalising the interpretive research paradigm

The interpretive research paradigm aims to interpret the social world, and to bring hidden social structures and forces into consciousness. Therefore, the methodology is directed at understanding a phenomenon from an individual's perspective. Dilthey (1833-1911) and Weber (1864-1920) focused on interpretive understanding, referred to as *Verstehen*. *Verstehen* sought to access the meanings of participant's experiences rather than explaining or predicting behaviour which is the goal of quantitative research within the scientific paradigm (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). In Interpretivism, the researcher investigates the interaction between individuals as well as considers the historical and cultural contexts that the participants inhabit in order to access the meanings (Creswell, 2009). As will be discussed in the methodological section, hermeneutic phenomenology will be employed to understand the participant's individual meaning of the phenomenon.

In the interpretive research paradigm, findings emerge from the interactions between the participants and the researcher as the study progresses (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Therefore, Interpretivism uses the interaction to extricate and understand individual constructs of the phenomenon. Here, the participant is considered the expert of their own life and so is relied upon as much as possible (Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). By engaging the participant, meaningful events are not interpreted simplistically, but instead new layers of understanding

continue to be uncovered as the phenomena become characterised by thick description. This creates space for broad research questions, as Interpretivism generates from the data rather than precedes it (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). For this reason, the interpretivist paradigm utilizes a qualitative research strategy that is idiographic (characterised by an emphasis on an individual's experience), and recognises that 'value-free' or objective knowledge is not possible (Creswell, 2009). Simply by selecting the research topic and how they wish to study it, researchers already have preconceived assumptions based on their own enculturation and history (Scotland, 2012).

The qualitative methods associated with Interpretivism ensure that the participant is not required to describe their experience or behaviour in a rigid or linear way, as is often the case with quantitative research strategies (a difference that will be expanded upon later in this section). Instead, the methods are more naturalistic and encourage the participant to elaborate and describe specific phenomena as they understand it, promoting digressions or additional information as it gives rise to a thick description (Scotland, 2012).

3.2.3 Application of Interpretivism to the study

As discussed in Chapter 2, rape is a devastating trauma that is inflicted for various reasons. These range from sexual entitlement fostered by patriarchal belief systems, to weapons of warfare, to manufacture of control due to socio-economic context, or previous exposure to violence (Jemott & Maharaaj, 2013). Rape prevalence in South Africa specifically, is at an all-time high (Roberston, 2011). In the face of these ongoing violations, researchers have generated enormous data in order to better understand and address the phenomenon of rape. This has mainly

been done utilising quantitative research strategies, as any knowledge gained seeks to be generalizable to broader populations, thus having greater impact in the lives of those perpetrating and being perpetrated against (Jewkes et al., 2010; Maedl, 2011).

However, the very quantification of rape as a phenomenon often does not address the research sample as participants, but rather as subjects (Campbell & Wasco, 2005). In attempting to produce knowledge that could positively contribute to cessation and treatment of rape, the victims themselves may become lost in the statistics and often do not have control of the research process. The positivist (or quantitative) approach is exceptionally important for informing policy and directing funding, however the voices of the participants, as individuals, become lost. By utilising the interpretivist research paradigm, this study aims to hand control to the participants whereby knowledge generation is participant-lead. To enable a retelling of their personal experiences in their own voices.

The movement from rape victim to anti-rape activist, specifically with regard to recovery and resilience, is characterised by complex inter-personal processes. These processes are specific to the individual and have been informed by the participant's interactions with their own realities. Thus, the constructions of themselves are inextricably bound to their own culture and history. As an example, although a commonality exists in being a rape victim (having been raped), the understanding of that rape will differ from person to person as cultural, social, and historical experiences have influenced the meaning attributed to the rape. For instance, a wife who resides within an extremely traditional, patriarchal household might not understand intimate partner violence as rape, but may instead understand it as marital entitlement, or even, a marital right. This contrasted with someone from

a white-conservative background in middle-class suburbia who is raped during a house invasion, understanding the rape as racially motivated.

In each of these examples, there is not a generalizable construct to account for the individual meaning making process. Therefore it can be seen that the focus of this research, specifically the experience of moving from rape-victim to anti-rape activist is a complex phenomenon involving multiple meanings, interpretations and experiences. Furthermore, the phenomenon is culturally bound in that what is meaningful and relevant *depends* on the situation that the participant's find themselves in along the journey from victim to activist. The processes that underlie the movement, and potential recovery and resilience, are implicit in nature, thus implementing *Verstehen* is appropriate to this study.

Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is viewed as the most suitable for generating new understandings of the implicit and complex multi-dimensional human phenomenon that is the focus of this study. In order to do this, a qualitative research strategy has been employed as well as a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, both of which will be discussed below.

3.3 Research Strategy: Qualitative Approach

This section addresses the qualitative approach as the selected research strategy. It discusses qualitative research by contrasting it with quantitative research approaches, defending its use as congruent with the chosen paradigm and methodology. This section is followed by a discussion on the methodological and philosophical underpinnings of this study.

3.3.1 Qualitative approach

As discussed, the interpretive paradigm gives rise to qualitative research in that this study aims to interpret and describe the context-specific experiences of the anti-rape activists (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, this study is idiographic in that it focuses on understanding the activists as unique and complex entities (Morrow, Castañeda-Sound, & Abrams, 2012). The qualitative focus is on unpacking the nuanced detail that is specific to each person's interpretation of their own experience rather than abstracting objective data that can be generalised to a population. This allows one to gain richness and depth of information and to explore potential similarities within and across individual accounts, perhaps informing areas for future study (Creswell, 2013).

Conversely, quantitative research is generated from the empirical-analytical (Hathaway, 1995) or positivist (Thomas and Brubaker, 2000) paradigm, which holds that there is an objective real world beyond the individual which can be described and known. For this reason, all conclusions about reality are based on empirical observations that are used to formulate generalisations (or laws) that govern human behaviour. Therefore, it is assumed that behaviour can be predicted and controlled (Creswell, 2013). Contrasted with the assumptions of interpretivist characteristics as described above, the researcher remains objective and the findings are generated independently of the researcher and generalised to large samples believed to represent the characteristics of certain populations (Gray, 2014).

The differences between qualitative and quantitative research approaches are displayed in the figure below.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of participants' experiences and life world • Understanding, generation of theory from data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for causal explanations • Testing, hypothesis, prediction, control
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad focus • Process orientated • Context-bound, mostly natural setting • Getting close to the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow focus • Product orientated • Context free, often artificial or laboratory setting
Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants, informants • Sampling units such as place, time and concepts • Purposive and theoretical sampling • Flexible sampling that develops during research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents, participants (the term "subjects" is now discouraged in social sciences) • Randomised sampling • Sample frame fixed before research starts
Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In depth non-standardised interviews • Participant observation/fieldwork • Documents, photographs, videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire, standardised interviews • Tightly structured observation • Documents • Randomised control trials
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic, constant comparative analysis • Grounded theory, ethnographic analysis etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical analysis
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A story, an ethnography, a theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable results
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct involvement of the researcher • Research relationship close 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited involvement of researcher • Research relationship distant

Rigour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness, authenticity • Typicality and transferability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal/external validity, reliability • Generalisability
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Table 3.1. The Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Approaches (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, p. 40).

As can be seen, the qualitative research approach applies all of the inherent characteristics of Interpretivism to the research enquiry. For this reason, qualitative methodology is explicitly indicated for this study as the assumption, approach and interpretations are not assumed to exist independently or objectively, but rather as a product of the participant's reality. Furthermore, this study emphasises the importance of developing a relationship between researcher and participant in order to create trust and generate sharing. This in turn contributes to the development of the thick description and shared understanding, key to both the qualitative approach, and to hermeneutic phenomenology as will be discussed below.

3.4 Methodological and philosophical underpinnings

As discussed above, the theoretical nature of the study has been established. However, it is the paradigmatic point of departure which informs how the phenomena is to be studied. By situating this research within the Interpretivist paradigm, this study utilises qualitative research strategies as guided by the chosen research method, hermeneutic phenomenology. In this section, phenomenology and the specific use of hermeneutic phenomenology, along with its key assumptions and approach to research inquiry, will be discussed. This will be followed by concluding remarks that lead the way to a tangible research pathway.

3.4.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology refers to both a philosophy, established in the early 20th century, and a range of subsequent research approaches (Kafle, 2011). It is “The study of things as they take on meaning from the perspective of a first person experience.” (De Kock, 2010, p74). Husserl (1895-1938), the founder of phenomenology, considered it to be the systematic study of consciousness. As our experience of the world is constituted within or by our consciousness, it (consciousness) is thought to be the only phenomenon that one can be sure of (Smith, 2008). The predominant philosophies of the time posited that reality exists outside of the mind, in an independent, objective state of being separate from our experience of it (Kafle, 2011). However, as different philosophical paradigms elucidated how concepts are formed, and how meaning is attached to these concepts, the central question became whether reality exists outside of the mind alone, or whether it exists inside of the mind (De Kock, 2010). In integrating both sides of the spectrum, Husserl wanted to study the meaning of subjective phenomena-consciousness without denying that a shared reality of the phenomena exists (Smith, 2008). Thus concluding that the meaning of a phenomena is dictated by how one is conscious of it in their first person, lived experience (Kafle, 2011).

Ontologically speaking, phenomenology’s understanding of reality is that within the lived experience, the person who experiences this reality cannot be removed or separated from it (Finlay, 2009). This diverges from the positivist stance in which reality remains outside the individual and therefore can be studied objectively (Kafle, 2011). However, although phenomenological traditions agree on what reality is (ontology), it is the disagreement on how reality is studied

(epistemology) that differentiates phenomenological philosophical traditions and subsequent research approaches (De Kock, 2010).

Husserl's focus was to uncover the essences of experience through conscious pursuit to illuminate a certain reality. This approach is referred to as transcendental phenomenology which describes a reality that exists independently from individual interpretations (De Kock, 2010). A researcher working from this tradition would use a technique referred to as bracketing, where one would aim to identify and declare their personal prejudices, or biases, and set these aside in order to study the essence of the phenomenon in its *pure* form (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Kafle, 2011).

Heidegger (1889-1976), a student of Husserl, rejected the notion that phenomena could be identified and described separately from interpretation (Kafle, 2011). Instead, he posited that all description, all human awareness, is inextricably already interpretive and therefore cannot be isolated from the context in which it is experienced (Malpas, 2008). This school of thought is referred to as hermeneutic phenomenology and has been further developed by the works of noted scholars such as Gadamer and Van Maanen (Kafle, 2011).

Hermeneutic phenomenology holds that the meaning an individual makes of an experience cannot be understood separately from past meanings, and therefore a researcher in this tradition aims to include all elements that contribute to the history and contextualisation of the interpretation, including one's own biases (De Kock, 2010; Kafle, 2011).

3.4.2 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The word “hermeneutics” is Greek in origin and derives from the Greek god, Hermes, who was thought to have made the unknowable knowable through inventing language and writing (Chang, 2010). The original Greek word, *hermeneuein*, means ‘to interpret’ (Hoad, 1986). In the 17th century, hermeneutics was utilised as an approach to study biblical texts (Gergen, Hepburn, & Fisher, 1986) but later in the 19th century, the hermeneutic domain was expanded to the study of human behaviour. Philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey held that understanding the human experience “was more like interpreting texts than like gaining empirical knowledge of nature” (Olson, 1986, p. 160).

Hermeneutics, therefore, can be regarded as the theory and practice of interpretation which is concerned with the nature of understanding, or *verstehen* as discussed within Interpretivism above (Van Maanen, 1997). However, the hermeneutic phenomenological school of thought focuses on existential ontology, on questions of experiencing *how* understanding takes place (Ingadottir, 2006).

Furthermore, it espouses that our socio-historical culture exposes us to a shared world of meaning, as it shapes our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives which is expressed through language (Crotty, 1998). Heidegger identified his movement with the term hermeneutic, as he viewed it as a methodology to uncover what it means to be human, what it means to “be in the world”, *Dasien*. However, *being* in a world full of meaning facilitates familiarity by simply living. This is thought to contribute to losing sight of true understanding, as living and its meaning become taken for granted (Ingadottir, 2006). Therefore, it is the hidden meanings of everyday life, as expressed through language, that are the focus of hermeneutic

phenomenology. Thus hermeneutics is congruent with the interpretivist paradigm as this study explores the activists' understanding of their 'being' in relation to their experiences.

The purpose of hermeneutic inquiry is to gain understanding as the emphasis is on the uniqueness of experience and phenomena. For this reason, the data (text derived from expression of language) serve as testimony of the lived experience of participants, and are "illuminations of experience" (Gadamer, 1994). The greater and more nuanced the experience, the thicker the description of it. Therefore, analysis is facilitated by increasingly deepening and layering reflections of text utilising the thick descriptions (Smith, 1997).

Thus hermeneutics holds that the phenomenon cannot be viewed as separate from the researcher, as any interactions ultimately inform the understanding of said phenomena by both researcher and participant. Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology recognises that analysing the data is the process where understanding occurs (Chang, 2010). It is only by the fusion of horizons of meaning by the participant (created by their experience of the phenomena) and the researcher (created by his/her preconceptions about the phenomenon) that understanding can truly be developed (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

Crotty (1998) states that hermeneutics utilises an interpretive element to reveal meanings and assumptions that the participants themselves may find difficult to articulate. Because the phenomena is contextually bound, hermeneutics allows for explorations of the participants experiences, but with further interpretation based on researcher's personal and theoretical knowledge (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). This in turn gives rise to co-creation of understanding, referred to as the hermeneutic circle.

3.4.3 The hermeneutic circle

Gadamer (1986, 1997) posits that the hermeneutic circle of understanding refers to a circular movement. This circular movement is an ever expanding circle of understanding and interpretation. We approach a topic with pre-conceptions, biases, or prejudices which are then examined and revised when faced with what phenomena themselves reveal to us. Once our pre-conceptions have been adjusted in light of what we have learnt, new understanding is generated. Thereafter, this new understanding too is examined and revised in the face of the phenomena, and of other contextual influences i.e. literature, history, society; and so the circular pattern of understanding and interpreting continues as we return to further exploration in light of this new understanding (Chang, 2010).

Furthermore, the topic is understood by viewing, or interpreting, “the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole” (Gadamer, 1997, p. 291). This means that parts are considered within a whole and the whole is only understandable in respect of its constituent parts (Bleicher, 1980). Thus the hermeneutic circle is constituted by the dynamic movement of understanding from bias, to the topic, to new bias; and from whole, to part, to whole (Wilcke, 2002).

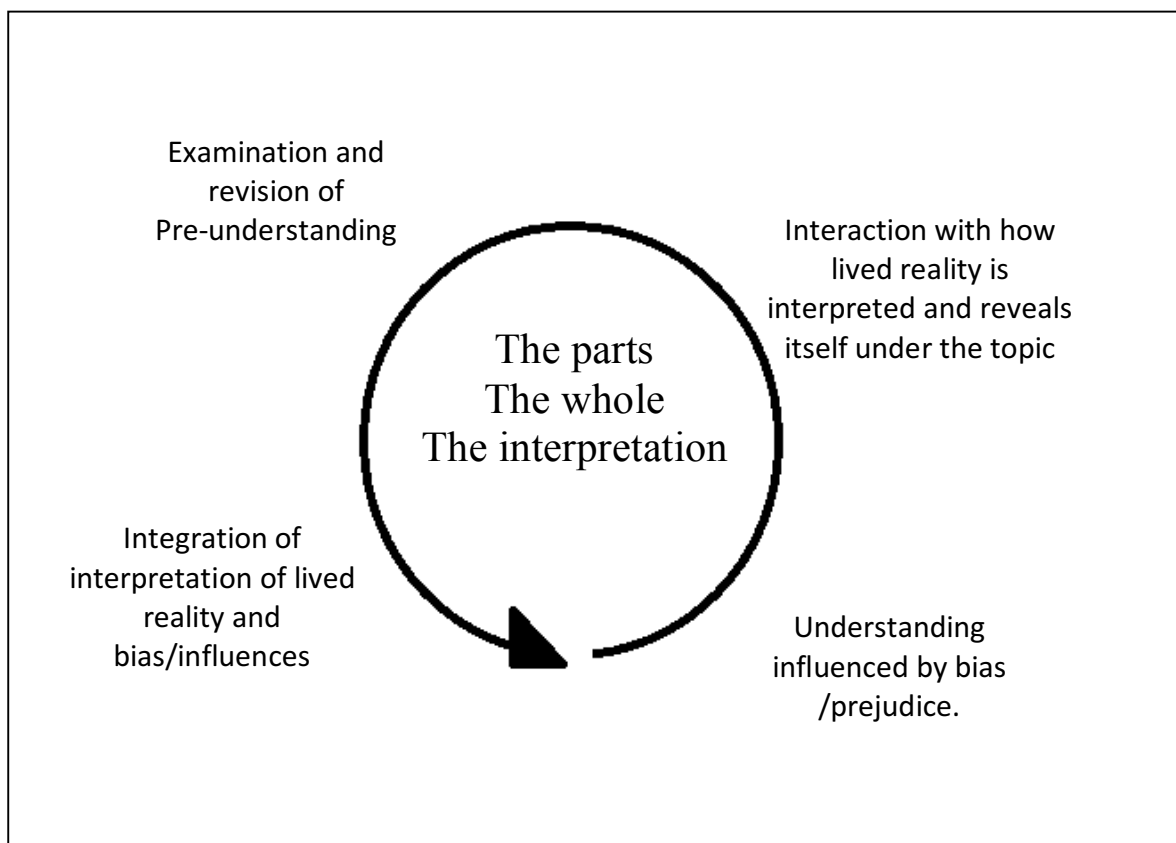


Figure 3.1. A Representation of the Hermeneutic Circle

Analysis via the hermeneutic circle is entered with separate horizons of meaning between researcher and participant, where interpretation arises through their fusion (Ingadóttir, 2006). Interpretation takes place throughout the entire research process. When the topic is presented to the participants, they interpret their experience. The researcher then re-interprets that interpretation as influenced by their own interpretation of the world (biases or prejudices). The researcher then analyses the text (transcripts, field notes, reflections) in a circular three-fold movement of whole, to parts, to whole (Ingadóttir, 2006). Firstly, the text is read to gain a sense of the overall themes of the experience. Secondly, the parts of the text are engaged with to identify and construct themes which are considered the structures of experience (Van Maanen, 1997). Lastly, the whole is then returned to, as through examining its parts it has gained new meaning (Ingadóttir, 2006). This

interpretive process of analysis, as applied to the study, will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

3.4.4 The hermeneutic research spiral

The hermeneutic circle is a recursive activity, whereby the interaction with a phenomenon is based on pre-understandings, new successive interpretations are negotiated, new understandings are taken and merged with what already known, and the interpretive process is re-entered (Chang, 2010). As can be seen, this is a constantly recursive activity. Ellis (1998) conceptualizes the hermeneutic circle as a spiral. Here the spiral is seen to consist of multiple loops (circles). These loops are seen to represent multiple instances of engagement across various expressions of the phenomena being studied, whether this be multiple engagements with the same texts (transcripts), or engagement with different sets of data, i.e. field notes, reflexive notes, literature etc. (Chang, 2010). Due to this, each loop is informed by the understanding derived from the previous loop, and in the same way informs the latter. The loops of interpretation therefore, guide and facilitate the stages of the research process (Chang, 2010). How they are undertaken in this study is discussed in the following chapter on methodology.

This section has discussed the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology and the development of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology. In addition to this, the use of hermeneutic phenomenology for this study has been justified and a key concept, the hermeneutic circle, has been described as a tool for engagement and analysis via interpretation. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the hermeneutic circle as a research spiral has been described. However, in order to effectively conduct research within a hermeneutic framework, key principles should

be implemented to guide the research process. These are set out in the following section.

3.5 Hermeneutic phenomenology research principles

Within any research framework, it is exceptionally important to stay true to the methodology indicated by the chosen paradigm and to honour the research traditions of the selected methodology (Creswell, 2009). In keeping with maintaining congruency with hermeneutic phenomenology (HP) traditions, this section sets out key research principles applied within this study

Articulation of the HP principles for this study was inspired by De Kock (2010), who adapted the principals from Annells (2006), Conroy (2003), and Lavery (2004). De Kock (2010), succinctly categorises the HP principals into different stages of the research process and argues for their use to guide research whilst honouring hermeneutic phenomenological traditions. The HP principles have further been amended with reference to Kafle (2011) and Chang (2010), and are set out in the table below.

Research stage: Orientation to participant's accounts	
HP principle 1	Make explicit what is implicit in the participant accounts based on their backgrounds.
HP P2	Self-reflective practice is to be promoted for participants through participation, and for the researcher by offering an account of understanding and interpretations.
HP P3	Every account to be viewed as an interpretation of a person's background.
HP P4	Any statements made by participants should be viewed as meaningful to him/her in some way, whether the participant is conscious of the meaning or not.

HP P5	Identify, and reword the account to state the full meaning of participant's understandings within their own orientation.
HP P6	Regard HP as an interpretation of an interpretation made by the participants
HP P7	Look beyond the account to broader background context and its relationship to events discussed.
HP P8	Stay close to the account, constantly working within it rather than separately from it.
Research stage: Sensitivity to own interpretive influences	
HP P9	The researcher is to ensure that they remain aware of biases, prejudices or projections.
HP P10	The researcher should remain conscious of the coping tools used throughout the process of interpretation.
HP P11	Researcher's background knowledge should be allowed to influence the interpretation. This includes personal history, literature, and biases.
Research stage: Methodological aim	
HP P12	A constantly questioning attitude should be maintained where misunderstandings, incomplete understandings, contradictory understandings, and deeper understandings are sought.
Research stage: Practical Application	
HP P13	The shared world of understanding between the researcher and participant should be explicitly shown.
HP P14	One should be absorbed in the hermeneutic circle throughout the research spiral, and this immersion should be demonstrated.
HP P15	The researcher must progress in a circular manner between the parts and the whole, what is disclosed and what is hidden, and the world of the participant with that of the researcher.
HP P16	Hermeneutic interpretation should be engaged in along with the participants.
HP P17	A researcher should remain conscious of movements in understanding. These should be reflected by exemplars.
HP P18	A researcher should use the appropriate rhetoric, where the writing up of the findings uses rich descriptive language that is idiosyncratic and

utilises metaphors to make the implicit explicit thus communicating the intended meaning of the participant.

Table 3.2. Hermeneutic phenomenology (HP) principles relevant to each stage of the research process that honour HP traditions. (Chang, 2010; De Kock, 2010; Kalfe, 2011).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the interpretive research paradigm and qualitative research strategy was addressed, followed by an account of phenomenology and the evolution of hermeneutic phenomenology as the overarching research design. It was argued that the guiding theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of these sections are appropriate and applicable to studying the lived experiences of rape victims who are now anti-rape activists. Hermeneutic phenomenology was unpacked further as the chosen methodological tradition for the study, where key concepts were discussed and research principles that guided the practical implementation of hermeneutic phenomenological research were listed. The next chapter offers a detailed discussion of the practical implementation of hermeneutic phenomenology to this study.

Chapter 4

Methodology: enacting the hermeneutic phenomenological research process

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three focused on unpacking paradigmatic and methodological theoretical constructs as they apply to this study. As discussed, these constructs guide the manner in which the research inquiry is carried out. In discussing appropriate methodologies for hermeneutic phenomenological research, Chang (2010), Kafle (2011), and van Maanen (1997) argue that no prescription exists for unanimous methodological sets. If anything, it is argued that the circular explorative nature of hermeneutic research cannot be bound by sequential methodological steps. By engaging in the hermeneutic research spiral, understandings and interpretations are constantly revised and revisited at different stages of the process (Chang, 2010). However, in an effort to organise what Chang (2010, p. 9) refers to as a “messy” process, this chapter provides an outline of the hermeneutic phenomenological research process undertaken in this study.

This chapter consists of eight main sections. The first section refers to the hermeneutic research spiral, whereby loops of the spiral that embody relevant methodological processes are elaborated upon. The second section speaks to the research context, where the third section addresses the research questions. The fourth section focuses on the participants: sampling method, criteria, recruitment and characteristics. The fifth section outlines the methods of data collection which includes a description of the data sources for the study. The sixth section expands

upon methods of analysis and interpretation, while the seventh section is a reflection on methodology. This section includes discussions on quality and ethical concerns of the research. The chapter concludes with an overview of the hermeneutic research pathway undertaken in this study and how it has facilitated the research findings addressed in the following chapter.

4.2 The hermeneutic research spiral and this study

As discussed in Chapter three, the research spiral (Ellis, 1998) comprises of multiple loops (hermeneutic circles) where the understandings derived in the former loops, influence the development of the latter (Chang, 2010). In this study, the first loop was formed when I was captivated by the topic. Gadamer (1989), refers to this as being “addressed” by the experience of an issue, which in this case was my experience of working at Tears Foundation and interacting with resilient anti-rape activists who themselves are survivors of rape. This engagement, combined with the academic context requiring the completion of a research module, informed the initial loop. Once acknowledged, it became clear that the area of focus needed to be explored and refined by referring to existing literature and by creating a conceptual framework. The literature review and conceptual framework contributed to an evolving understanding of the topic which subsequently resulted in a second interpretive loop.

This lead to the third and fourth interpretive loops, where the conceptualisation of the topic required deeper understanding, thus moving to the interview process. Here interviews were held and field notes were made, as were personal reflections on the process. Interviews were then amended and adapted to the uniqueness of the participant as the interviews progressed from one participant

to the next. Further exploration was prompted via follow up written accounts by the participants in response to questions emerging from the text. This process illuminated new understanding thus informing the interpretive loops.

The fifth interpretive loop was entered into when I immersed myself in the transcripts, field notes and self-reflections thus adding another layer of interpretation to the process. This in turn informed the sixth loop, where writing up the understanding of the phenomenon further illuminated the convergence of meaning between myself and the participants. This in essence is the crystallisation of my current interpretive position, a “snapshot” in time (Chang, 2010). By reflecting on the entire research process, a completely new understanding of the topic was attained and so informed ideas about future engagement with it, such as the direction of future research.

Figure 4.1 is illustrated below, where the bold writing indicates the relevant hermeneutic loops as discussed above. As can be seen below each loop, the operations contained within it can be linked to corresponding methodological steps. However, due to the constant movement between loops, visiting and revisiting previous understandings through interaction with texts; transcripts; literature; and personal reflections, the process is not linear as displayed below. Rather, a true representation would look like loops within loops, folded in on itself backwards and forwards (Chang, 2010). Therefore it is important to note that Figure 4.1 is a graphical approximation of the hermeneutic research process that corresponds with qualitative structure, yet aims to represent the constant dialogue with all elements of the research throughout the entirety of the process (Chang, 2010).

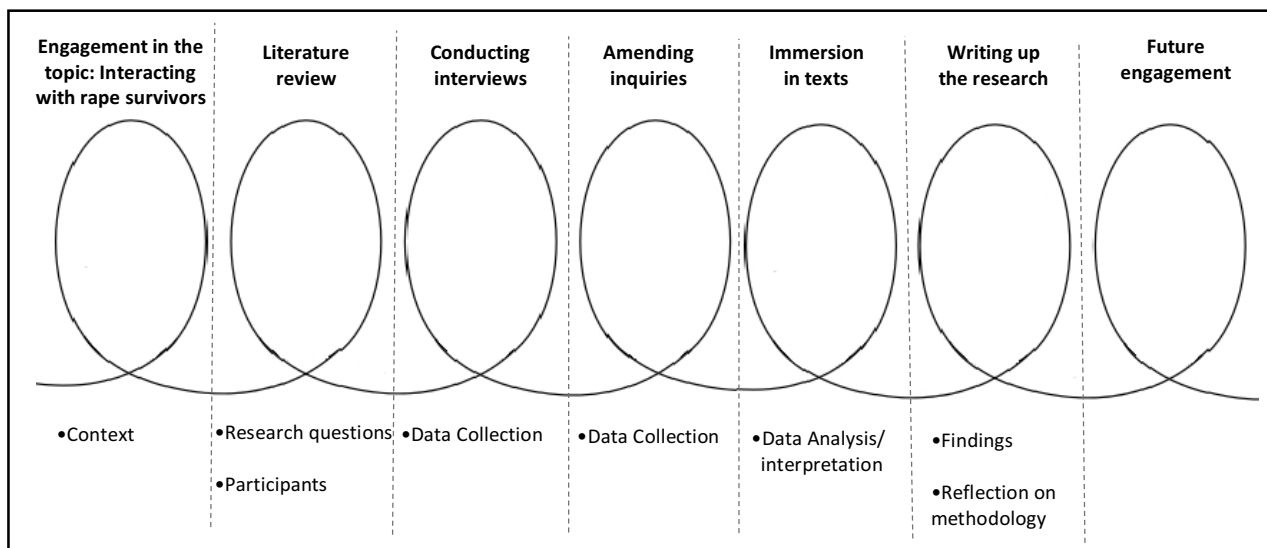


Figure 4.1. Hermeneutic research spiral and associated methodological steps

(Chang, 2010)

Where this section has addressed the research spiral, the following sections attempt to unpack the relevant methodological research processes inherent to each loop in a formalised manner, whilst adhering to overarching hermeneutic phenomenology research principles. Just as engagement with the topic at hand has led to the application of hermeneutic phenomenology, the acknowledgment that social historicity is inextricable from interpretive research leads to an important overview on the role of context in this study. This is provided in the following section.

4.3 Research Context

As described above, the initial research loop required engagement in the topic. In Chapter 1, I provide a background to this study and discuss my motivations for selecting this topic. Having worked at a non-profit organisation that assists those affected by GBV, I came into contact with many survivors who are now doing work in the activism space. When engaging with these activists, I was struck by their spirit and ambition to move forward and effect change in others' lives. This intersected

with my observation that the activists presented themselves as quite far along on their healing journey. In turn, this led me to wonder what the experience of moving from rape victim to anti-rape activist looks like for them, with specific reference to elements of resilience and recovery. However, in order to gain understanding that was truly representative of the participant's lived experience, it was of primary concern to remain cognisant of the context in which the research was being carried out, and in which it was initiated. Although multiple contexts exist which influence interpretation (discussed in Chapter 5), this section outlines the two primary contexts that can be considered the genesis of the study. Namely, the academic context and Tears Foundation.

4.3.1 The academic context

I am currently completing my Masters degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria where successful completion of the degree requires course-work and research modules. By merging the academic requirement with my exposure to the GBV field, this research project was initiated. In this way, the academic context remained a significant factor that initiated and mediated the research process. Furthermore, it governed ethical and methodological considerations. In addition to this, the academic context was felt when engaged in supervision as it brought a formalised aspect to the discovery of the lived experience of the participants, and influenced my interaction with the research process. Academic supervision created a space to evaluate and question my interpretations which manifested itself in the writing and development of emerging findings, whilst informing the quality of the research.

Furthermore, as part of my training, I conducted therapy with a multitude of rape survivors. Engaging in a therapeutic process with survivors, and in many ways walking their journeys alongside them, has greatly impacted my personal understanding of rape and thus has greatly impacted this research. The interaction gained from the academic/training context subsequently informed the way I interviewed and interacted with the participants, thus playing an important contextualising role.

4.3.2. The Tears Foundation context

Having worked with Tears Foundation, I was very thoroughly immersed in the activist sector, as well as in the GBV education sector. I grew exceptionally passionate about GBV and worked hard to create impact within my community. My time at Tears Foundation meant that my opinions on social activism and on agency were fundamentally shaped. At Tears Foundation I met many survivors and activists, which as discussed above, spawned the engagement with the research topic. It was there that I initially met the participants and starting developing rapport, finding myself struck by their personal stories, even before the research process began. In this way, Tears Foundation played an inextricable role in formulating and guiding this study.

Importantly, both of these contexts do not occur in isolation from the South African landscape detailed within the literature review. Instead these, and all study-related contexts, are informed by the South African context that paints a picture of rape, resilience, and recovery as influenced by culture, gender, socio-economic standing, and the manufacture of control across history.

As can be seen, the consideration and impact of the context is vital when engaging in the hermeneutic research spiral, moving between the whole and the parts, for both researcher and participant, informing biases and interpretations throughout the process (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007), but especially for primary engagement in the research topic. Where this section spoke to the contextual considerations, the following section addresses the research questions that arose from engaging with the topic and literature in the second hermeneutic spiral.

4.4 Research Questions

Once I had engaged in the topic as was informed by my immediate context, I sought to broaden my understanding of rape research within the literature. This process started when putting together my research proposal, which conceptualised the research process. After being “addressed” by the topic, and broadening my current understanding by critically engaging with the literature on rape research in South Africa, I further defined my area of interest. This narrower definition of rape research now included concepts of resilience, recovery, and activism. By discussing and refining this area of interest with my supervisor, the following questions emerged that have lead this research inquiry:

Primary research question:

1. How have the participants experienced their journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist?

Secondary research questions:

2. How do the participants understand the relationship between their activism and their healing, if at all?
3. In the description of the journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist, what resilience factors, if any, are identified by the participants?

In order to best answer the questions above, the research conceptualisation indicated the appropriateness of hermeneutic phenomenology to do so. However, in order to carry out the study, willing participants were required to co-create understanding of the topic which in turn would subsequently inform the third hermeneutic loop. This will be unpacked in the following section.

4.5 Participants

This section provides an overview of the how the participants were selected, how they were recruited, what requirements were in place for their participation, and a brief overview of participant characteristics. Participant selection and participation were crucial to the study, as this lead to the interview process (discussed in the next section) and subsequently the third and fourth hermeneutic loops.

4.5.1 Sampling Method

As discussed above, the goal of hermeneutic phenomenological research is to create rich descriptions of phenomena being investigated in a specific context (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). In order to select information-rich cases to be studied in depth, purposive sampling was utilised in this study as is consistent with a qualitative research approach (Morse, 1991; Patton, 1980). Therefore, participants were chosen who could better illuminate the phenomenon of having been both a rape victim and an anti-rape activist.

4.5.2 Recruitment

In order to purposively select the sample, I made contact with Ms Mara Glennie, founder of Tears Foundation. As previously discussed, I volunteered at Tears Foundation and thus made contact with many anti-rape activists through the

organisation's network. Initially, I asked Ms Glennie if she could provide me with the contact details of potential participants she felt matched the criteria for the study. Upon receiving feedback from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, it was stated that permission was required from the participants to share their contact details first before Ms Glennie could distribute them to me. This was to ensure that no participant felt that they were coerced into participating or had their contact information shared involuntarily. Therefore, Ms Glennie agreed to request permission from six openly active anti-rape activists who work closely with Tears Foundation (via e-mail), in order to attain their consent for their details to be shared (see Appendices A & B). Upon receipt of consent, the details of the potential participants were provided to me. In addition to the participants' details, only once I had received the research clearance certificate from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee at UP (Appendix C), I initiated contact to fully inform the participants of their role in the study should they wish to participate.

Telephonic contact was made with three of the activists informing them of the nature of the study and what would be required of their participation. Once the activists had confirmed their interest in participating, an e-mail providing an overview of the study (Appendix D) including an informed consent form was sent. The consent form was signed and submitted at the interview (Appendix E), and in accordance with ethical requirements as discussed below. A larger sample size of six was initially requested should there be any participant withdrawals, however a final sample of three was procured.

4.5.3 Participant sample

This study focuses on the journeys of three participants. According to Smith (2007), when conducting qualitative research within a phenomenological framework,

three participants allows for in-depth engagement with the nuances of each individualised account. Furthermore, it allows for a detailed examination of similarities and differences, and of convergence and divergence, in identified themes. Combined with in-depth data collection via various strategies i.e. research interviews, written accounts, field notes and analytical notes; the sample size of three provided for *saturation* which is understood as the point where no new ideas arise during data collection or analysis (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

The selection criteria for inclusion in the study stipulated that that the participants must:

- Currently be involved in anti-rape activism activities (this includes but is not limited to campaigning, running awareness initiatives, public speaking, writing, or active involvement in appropriate non-profit organisations).
- Be South African or have been living in South Africa for an extended period that supersedes any other length of stay in another country.
- Personally have experienced rape perpetration (as defined in Chapter 2).
- Willingly and wilfully participate in the study.
- Be proficient in English although it does not have to be their primary spoken language.

4.5.4 Participant characteristics

The participants come from diverse backgrounds regarding race, age and culture. Each participant occupies different activities within the anti-rape activism sector to varying degrees of involvement. All of the participants are South African women residing in Gauteng who have had vastly different rape experiences and are at varying stages in their own recovery processes. The advantage of these divergences

lies in the richness and depth of data gained via the exploration of multiple perspectives of the phenomena. The participants' differing experiences, expectations, values, goals and motivations allows for diversity, which is a valued aspect of the interpretive research paradigm (Smith, 2007).

Once the participants had agreed to partake, essentially the diverse experiences and thoughts that they chose to share became the predominant data source for this study (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The methods of collecting data are described in the section below.

4.6 Data Collection

Once the research was conceptualised, and the participants were identified, it became important to revise current interpretations by gaining access to the life world of the participants, who in turn would provide rich descriptions of their experience of the phenomena under study thus developing the third and fourth hermeneutic loops. Therefore, this section addresses how the data was collected which included semi-structured interviews, field notes and written accounts. These strategies were chosen because they are congruent with the qualitative research approach as positioned within the chosen paradigm and hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Kafle, 2011).

4.6.1 Interviews

After the participants expressed interest in partaking in the study a time, date, and place was confirmed for each interview. The participants were notified that offices at Tears Foundation would be available, and that transportation costs to the office would be remunerated if necessary. However, due to reasons of convenience and timing, all of the participants selected meeting places that were convenient to

them and provided a level of comfort and security that they felt appropriate. I interviewed two of the participants in their homes and one of the participants in a private office at her place of work.

The interviews were semi-structured and in-depth. This interviewing strategy is widely used within qualitative methodologies as it allows for expression from the participant's own frame of reference but within an overarching pre-determined theme or question (Gray, 2014). Furthermore, the interview serves very specific purposes within hermeneutic phenomenology: a) It is used to explore and gather stories of lived experiences; and b) It is used to develop a conversational relationship with the participant about the meaning they attribute to the experience. These two purposes are achieved through reflection with the participant about the topic at hand, and allows the sharing of stories in the participant's own words (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

Semi structured interviews thus focus the research by allowing for more depth and clarification in a certain area, but do not inhibit the expression of the participant or potentially eliminate important data that may otherwise be omitted if utilising structured interviews. This allows for nuanced depth of detail (Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2007). A further advantage over unstructured interviews is that the interviews are able to be reviewed across participants because some of the questions are standard (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007).

In this study, an interview schedule was utilised as a guideline (Appendix F) which outlined the overarching open-ended questions with relevant probes to deepen understanding and encourage elaboration. I entered each interview in a position of "not knowing" and adapted my questions to the positions of the participants. In the context of hermeneutic inquiry, "not knowing" does not mean that

I held no knowledge of the topic, but rather that I entered the dialogue with an awareness of my pre-understandings yet permitted the participants' accounts to emerge, thus allowing for fusion of horizons (Anderson, 1996; Chang, 2010). In so doing, this approach illicit self-reflective practice, and allowed me to stay close to the participants' interpretations of their experiences.

As DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) indicate is often the case, questions other than those scheduled emerged from the dialogue between myself and the participants. My training as a counselling psychologist often prompted empathic responses which created space for further elaboration by the participants. Due to the organic nature of the process and an effort to respect the individual reality of each participant, thoughts and themes were explored, even if not directly relevant to the interview schedule. This is because the context and meaning of the individual are paramount to hermeneutic phenomenology, as is the establishment of deepened rapport, allowing one greater access to the inner life world of the participant (Chang, 2010).

Upon completion, I personally transcribed the recordings of each interview. I repeatedly returned to the audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions, and to make note of the tone, pauses, silences and emotive moments contained within the voice recordings. According to Creswell (2013), written formats help to clarify links between data, interpretation and conclusions which assist with engaging in the hermeneutic spiral and establishing research quality.

The fifth research spiral loop speaks to becoming *immersed* in the data. Thus personally transcribing the participant's accounts of their experiences allowed for immersion which facilitated more thorough and trustworthy research (Gray, 2014). The primary source of data was the transcripts of the activists' experiences which

were constantly consulted throughout the process of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing up of the findings. The transcripts recorded the 'voices' of the participants and therefore became a validated source of their personal accounts (Woods, 2006).

4.6.2 Field Notes

The transcribed interviews formed part of the raw data. This received its own file under the "field notes" umbrella referred to as the transcript file. The second batch of field notes contained detailed accounts of the demographic information of the participants, the context and environment that the interview took place in, and my personal reflections and thoughts before and after the interviews. Furthermore, the personal file also held reflective notes on the research experience and methodological issues which enabled reconstruction of conversations in context rather than simply relying on independent verbal recordings (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Lastly, the analytical file contained an examination of the ideas that emerged as a result of the interview, and in relation to the research questions as the study progressed. It also housed insights that affected the direction of the research (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). Thus, the personal and analytical files prompted reflexivity which in turn supported the research quality.

4.6.3 Follow-up written accounts

As can be seen above, field notes played an important role in ensuring the phenomena studied was being done so adequately. An example of this could be seen after I had completed the interviews and transcriptions, and felt that key issues based on the research questions had not been adequately addressed. It was here that the participants were contacted via e-mail and asked to answer four additional

questions (Appendix G) in writing and return the answers via e-mail. These answers were then added to the transcript file and informed further entries into the analytical file.

As previously established, Interpretivism holds that meaning cannot be understood independently of context, and that experiences are modified by every interaction. For this reason, the data collected does not only reflect the participants' experiences, but also the context in which the communication unfolded, and the experience of its unfolding as understood by the researcher. This in turn guided the research and allowed for multiple sources of data to be compiled. In order to answer the research questions set out in this study, the data was then analysed and interpreted as described in the section below.

4.7 Analysis and Interpretation

Due to the circular nature of hermeneutic inquiry, many of the traditionally accepted "phases" of data collection and analysis overlap (Chang, 2010). As has been noted above, the process of conducting the interviews, and becoming immersed in the data often occurred simultaneously and participated in an interpretive dance that began with the inception of the research topic and continued throughout the process. This section outlines the key activities, guided by hermeneutic phenomenology, which contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the study as informed by De Kock (2011); Chang (2010), and Ingadottir (2012).

The table below outlines the approach taken within this study and the relevant hermeneutic research principle enacted at that stage.

Activity	Relevant description of activity
Painting a “word picture”	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice recordings for each interview were transcribed verbatim. <li>• The transcripts were printed and viewed as stories, where I moved between the transcripts and the recordings to gain a sense of the participant’s experience. <li>• I listened to the recordings often to gain a better feeling of how things were said, with pauses, inflections and tone. <li>• I immersed myself in the transcripts attentively and inquiringly, whilst simultaneously referring to the field notes and noting my personal reflections. <li>• I wrote a descriptive paragraph which Chang (2010) refers to as a “word picture” aimed to capture the spirit of each particular participant’s story.
Identifying meaning units	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I supplemented the transcripts with the additional written accounts, as well as the “word pictures” and identified units of meaning. <li>• According to Ratner (2001), a meaning unit should be a coherent and distinct meaning extracted from the data sources. In order to qualify as a unit of meaning, its psychological integrity must be conserved by not being reduced to meaningless segments, or by combining it with separate ideas. Meaning units should have relevance to the research questions. <li>• I looked for significant phrases that represented a distinct thought relevant to the lived experience of a rape survivor anti-rape activist and the concepts of resilience and recovery.

Paraphrased summary	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once identified, I developed a paraphrased summary of the concept conveyed in each identified meaning unit. This involved making the implicit meaning explicit by elaborating on the unit meaning in order to express notions implied by the phrase. • A precis (paraphrased summary) should be interpretive but remain true to the context it refers to and should relate the full meaning expressed (De Kock, 2012). For instance, if a participant said “I engage in activism every chance I get”, although technically it would be correct to summarise this statement as “regularly active activist” or “internally motivated to perform activism activities”, it does not accurately capture the ardent passion expressed by this participant to be a part of the activism space.
Interpretation to generate themes	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The precis that had been developed were reviewed to identify themes within them. • These interpretations were supplemented with my reflections and the descriptions or explanations that I attributed to the development of these themes.
Grouping and ordering of themes	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I then grouped the themes from the precis together to find the essential structure of the phenomenon for each participant. • These themes were organised into a hierarchy in accordance with the research questions.
Theme development	Description

across individual accounts	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes that emerged across the individual accounts were compared, and similarities and differences were sought. • The hermeneutic circle was fundamental in navigating between the parts and whole in order to fuse horizons of meaning between individual accounts, my interpretations, and the combined accounts in capturing the essence of the phenomena under exploration. • I consistently moved between my interpretations, field notes, analytic notes, “word stories”, and earlier themes to generate new understanding and in this way develop thick descriptions. • Once saturation had been reached and no new themes emerged from the data, the decided themes were explored and refined during supervision.
Sourcing evidence for findings	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I compared my findings with the transcripts to find phrases that supported and provided evidence for the identified overarching themes. • I contrasted this with the literature and the position of knowledge in the field.
Crystallising findings	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wrote up the findings with aim of telling the participant stories using their own words to capture their lived experience in that moment in time, and simultaneously take the reader on a personal journey of questioning the applicability of the findings to their understanding of the topic (Chapter 5) – a mark of good hermeneutic research.

Table 4.1 A record of the relevant activities utilised in the analysis and interpretation of the data adapted from De Kock (2011); Chang (2010), and Ingadottir (2012).

The process of analysis and interpretation could aptly be described as a dance that twists and turns in on itself while constantly making reference to the parts, the whole and the interaction between the parts and whole. Thus the complexities of the research spiral play themselves out, as understanding continues to evolve with each new layer of interpretation (Gadamer, 1997). This section outlined the analytic and interpretive approach adopted in this study while emphasising the role of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology and the resultant dance within gaining an understanding of the topic. The following section discusses important considerations, and implications of the chosen methodology.

4.8 Reflection on the methodology

The previous section outlined the methodological operations of analysis and interpretation. The deepened layers of understanding catalysed a new loop in which the findings are restructured and re-interpreted in the process of writing the research report. However, when doing so, it becomes important to reflect on the methodology utilised, as this too plays a mediating role in the development of understanding. This reflection includes a discussion on the quality, and the ethics of the study.

4.8.1 Quality of research

Within the scientific world, terms such as validity (the extent to which the methodology succeeds in studying the proposed topic), and reliability (the extent to which the study can be replicated and the same results achieved by another researcher) are traditionally used to judge the quality, or rigour, of research (Creswell, 2013). However, the quality of a study should be judged in accordance

with the requirements of its own paradigm (Rolfe, 2006). Therefore, traditional methods of establishing research quality (rigour) must be redefined within a hermeneutic phenomenological context.

Just as there is no set methodology indicated for a hermeneutic research inquiry (Chang, 2010; Kaffle, 2011), there too are divergent opinions on what constitutes rigour within this framework. By reviewing and contrasting the opinions of multiple scholars within the hermeneutic field, the following criteria were formalised and applied to this study:

4.8.1.1 Orientation

Van Maanen (1997), defines hermeneutic phenomenological research as the practice of considering texts in explicating the life world stories of the participants. Therefore, he lists orientation as a major quality concern. Orientation is understood as the involvement of the researcher in the world of research participants and their stories. This study addressed this concern by building upon established rapport when conducting the interview in an open, empathic, and inquiring way from a position of “not knowing”. This was also done by exploring all aspects of participant accounts, and fully immersing myself in the data for an extended period of time.

4.8.1.2 Credibility

Credibility, also referred to as ‘truth value’ by Guba and Lincoln (1981), and ‘strength’ by van Maanen (1997), refers to how closely the interpretation depicts the understanding of the inherent meanings of the participants’ experience. In this way Credibility can be established by member checking for review and verification of the accuracy of themes.

In this study, triangulation from different data sources has been used to build coherent justification for the themes, and member checking has been used to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking descriptions or themes back to the participants to determine accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

The discussion about Interpretivism in Chapter 3 suggests that the strategies used to ensure research quality contradict the fundamental assumptions of the paradigm. It is suggested that by attempting to reach shared consensus, the researcher is requesting shared consensus on a phenomenon as though it has been objectively defined. However, the use of triangulation and member checking requires the participant to provide insights on whether the findings truly represent a shared interpretation, or whether the findings have misinterpreted their experiences. For this reason, the strategies inherently seek to validate the co-construction of a shared reality rather than confirm consensus of an independent reality.

4.8.1.3 Applicability

Guba and Lincoln (1981) define applicability as 'fittingness' which refers to how useful the research is considered to be by its readers. Langdrige (2007) refers to this as 'persuasive account', where the quality of the research rests with the research's appeal to make readers think about their personal experiences in light of what they read, and how this can contribute to a specific body of knowledge. This study identified gaps in the literature and built the persuasive account around a topic that makes a useful contribution to psychology, rape research and research methodology.

4.8.1.4 Dependability

Dependability, also referred to as 'consistency' by Guba and Lincoln (1981), and 'depth' by van Maanen (1997); refers to the attitude displayed by the researcher to treat the data equally across all participants. This is done by maintaining an audit trail which not only preserves transcripts and field notes, but puts forward a semi-structured analysis procedure. As described in the previous section, this study structurally laid out the activities and related research principles that unfolded throughout the analysis and interpretation process, as well as referenced appropriate supporting documentation, thus ensuring consistency and dependability.

4.8.1.5 Authenticity

Authenticity, also referred to as 'analytical rigour' by Langdrige (2007), refers to reporting of the participant's experiences as it respects the context of the data, and presents all perspectives equally, whether cases confirm or disconfirm themes, in order for the reader to arrive at an impartial decision. Within the hermeneutic framework it is understood that the reader will enter into the interpretive circle with their own understandings, and thus cannot be considered entirely impartial (De Kock, 2010). However, this study has provided a description of the interpretive process to illuminate a clear decision trail.

4.8.1.6 Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art of speaking and writing effectively and refers to how language is employed (Kafle, 2011). Firestone (1987), and van Maanen (1997) emphasise the importance of the reporting style of hermeneutic research in establishing the quality. Since hermeneutic phenomenology aims at explicating the experiences of participants, everyday language cannot do justice to the depth and

nuance expressed. Therefore, hermeneutic research demands the use of idiographic expressions, informal tone, metaphors, idioms and colourful rhetoric to best elicit the true intention of the research participants (Firestone, 1987).

In this study, I refer to myself in the first person as I am inextricably bound to the research process and not an objective observer which speaks to a less formal writing tone. Furthermore, Chapter 5 outlines the research findings and makes use of metaphors, and idiomatic expressions, to communicate the themes uncovered throughout the analysis and interpretation.

4.8.1.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is inherently vital to assuring the quality of hermeneutic research (Creswell, 2013; De Kock, 2010). Fundamentally, as discussed in Chapter 3, the researcher cannot bracket their biases, but instead must actively acknowledge their pre-understandings and utilise these when engaging in the hermeneutic circle to generate understanding that is co-constructed by researcher and participant (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007)

As has been indicated throughout the chapter, reflexivity has been utilised as fundamental tool in the initiation, development, analysis and interpretation of this study. It remained important to understand my role as the researcher and the resultant implications.

4.8.2 My role in the research

As discussed above, I chose this research topic as a result of the interactions I have had with rape survivors and anti-rape activists. Having completed my internship in Counselling psychology, I was exposed to much rape related trauma, and was involved in the healing journeys of many of the clients who utilised my services as a

psychology intern. Further to this, I held a role as a community project coordinator when I volunteered at Tears Foundation, and dealt largely with educational outreach programs targeted at youth to inform them of their rights, roles and responsibilities regarding rape and abuse. On this platform I was introduced to the stories of many survivors currently involved in activist activities, and so was immersed in the world of rape and subsequent anti-rape activism. For this reason, my role in this study is characterised by more than just researcher, as this study is an extension of my field of interest and experience. Thus, being an *insider* provided several advantages.

Firstly, my involvement in the field helped to establish rapport which facilitated trust and confidence in the researcher-participant relationship therefore providing access to the participant's worlds and thoughts. Secondly, being trained as a Counselling psychologist has encouraged the use of empathy in hearing or responding to a participant's narrative (Chang, 2010). This was an advantage in that the empathy created safety and allowed for open and contained sharing of vulnerable experiences whilst utilising empathic reflections to open up further exploration. Lastly, the anti-rape activism world often explains sexual violence via specific constructs or terminology especially around culture, gender and power; for example, GBV. Having been a part of the activism activities, I have attained an inherent working understanding of said terminology which may take on different meanings for *outsiders* therefore providing greater access to the participant's world without constantly having to clarify these contextually bound and commonly accepted terms.

However, according to Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) the potential disadvantage of occupying multiple roles is that the researcher may assume to understand something; whether it be terminology, wording, or decisions, that actually contain

differing meaning for the participants. In order to account for this, reflexivity was viewed as paramount throughout designing, implementing and reporting the study. At every point in the research, rather than accepting my pre-conceptions at face-value, it became important to step back and reflect on the meanings of the situations encountered as co-constructed in the researcher-participant relationship. This is referred to by van Maanen (1997) as *hermeneutic alertness* and was important to maintain in response to the potential disadvantages arising from over-familiarisation. This was done by ensuring reflective spaces were implemented throughout the research with regards to my thoughts on the research experience, the relationship with the participants, and the structure of the research. As referred to above, these mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the study were documented in the personal and analytical files of the field notes, forming part of the data collection. Therefore, reflexive experiences and comments that were thought to influence the analysis are detailed in Chapter 5 where the findings are reported and discussed.

4.8.3 Ethical considerations

4.8.3.1 Ethical Approval

Before the research inquiry could commence, ethical approval was first attained from the Humanities Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. Upon receipt of the ethical clearance certificate (Appendix C), the participants were contacted and the data collection process unfolded as described above.

4.8.3.2 Informed Consent

Acquiring consent

At the commencement of the research process, I sought to attain informed consent. This meant that the participants were be made fully aware of what the study entailed and what their roles would be. It discussed terms of confidentiality and disclosure, as set out below, and also emphasised the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, with no consequences, should they so wish. Participants were asked to consent to being voice recorded whereby written consent confirming voluntary participation was obtained (Thomas & Hersen, 2011).

When making decisions around consent in interview-based research, it is exceptionally important to recognise and address potential ethical dilemmas that may arise. In this study, the participants were provided with information sheets (Appendix D), as well as with informed consent forms to be signed (Appendix E). During the research process, informed consent was not treated as a blanket approach, but was continually attained throughout different stages of the research. Allmark et al. (2009) hold that the fluid movement of the interview process may take the discussion to deeper, more sensitive places than perhaps outlined when initially discussing what the study would entail. In order to ensure that participants do not feel coerced or obligated to continue the discussion, it is vital to continue checking in. This is especially true for vulnerable samples groups who may have been exposed to inequitable power dynamics or violations previously.

As can be noted in the transcripts for these interviews, I would often precede a question with "If you feel comfortable enough to, please could you tell me about...". This type of dialogue sought consent throughout the process rather than demanding answers within a pre-agreed interview.

At each stage, information about the study was discussed verbally and in detail. This verbal exchange also opened up space for any questions or clarifications that may have been required. All verbal consent regarding the interview and audio recording of the interview was recorded in writing too as per the consent form.

Outlining the benefits of participation

Within the discussion regarding informed consent, I made it clear that the purpose of the research was two-fold. Firstly, that it formed part of my course-requirements and would help me to attain my masters degree, and secondly, that this study could potentially inform future research and highlight emerging information about recovery from rape. According to Allmark et al. (2009) it is important for the researcher to be honest and congruent about the benefits of the study to both parties. This seeks to address potentially exploitative relationships and also clarifies the role of the researcher.

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that anonymity could not be guaranteed as they were purposively sampled, and therefore other actors, such as Ms Glennie, are aware of their involvement in the study. Furthermore, the participants were informed that their public profiles as activists might allow a reader to link their identity to the account of their lived experiences. Each of the participants expressed openness to me using their real names for the study, however, in line with institutional ethical requirements pseudonyms were used and any identifying characteristics were omitted from the dissertation. Furthermore, the participant's were informed that if there were any pieces of information they wished to keep private, or did not want

shared, then their right to limiting disclosure would be respected (Thomas & Hersen, 2011).

Academic Supervision

Due to the nature of this study it remained extremely vital that I maintained awareness of my influence over the research process. In order to fully respect and truthfully represent the context and content that the participants divulged, I had to ensure that the standard of the research remained acceptable, and therefore I received supervision. The participants were informed that I would be disclosing their information in an academic context for the purposes of ensuring the quality of the study.

Data: Ownership, storage and future use

It was made clear to the participant's that all research data is kept in an electronic and hard-copy format. The electronic data is stored on a flash drive, and private laptop that remains password protected. The hard-copy of the transcripts, field notes, consent forms and all other relevant materials were kept in a locked cabinet at my residence for the duration of the study. Upon completion, all research material was subsequently stored at the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria, and will remain there for a period of 15 years upon which time it will be destroyed. Furthermore, it was made clear to the participants that the research data could potentially be used for further research purposes, and for future publication. Also, that the research report would be handed in to the university library in hard-copy and would be internationally accessible via the university's online library catalogue in an electronic format.

4.8.3.3 Access to psychological support services

Allmark et al. (2009) holds that although all research should be held to strict ethical standards, there are specific considerations that should be noted with interview based studies. By nature, interview based studies are more intimate as they require relationship building between the participant and researcher which places the participant at a potential exploitative disadvantage if power inequity exists. Furthermore, due to the in-depth nature of the research process, participants might mistake data collection as therapeutic intervention whilst this is not aligned with the intention of the research. In attempting to address this during the study, the participants were provided with the contact details and free services of a registered mental health professional should any vulnerabilities or emotional/psychological stress arise during any stage of the study (Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

As can be seen in this section, in order to paradigmatically honour the selected research methodology in this study it was important to reflect on issues of research quality and research ethics, as these considerations fortify the effectiveness and implementation of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter referred to the hermeneutic spiral and proceeded to unpack methodological sections contained within the various research loops that were illustrated. In an attempt to bring structure to the often “messy” hermeneutic approach, a clear research pathway was laid out within the chapter. This pathway addressed the research context and questions, which then focused on the participant’s involvement in the study. The research pathway then lead to a description of the data collection, followed by analysis and interpretation activities, all

the while emphasising the importance of honouring the hermeneutic tradition by embedding myself firmly within the hermeneutic research spiral. The chapter concluded with a thorough discussion on methodological reflection with specific reference to research quality and ethical concerns. Where this chapter outlined how the hermeneutic phenomenological research pathway was enacted, the following chapter presents the findings gained from the application of the research pathway.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Interpretation: Findings

5.1 Introduction

Where Chapter 4 set forth a clear hermeneutic research pathway, this chapter puts forward the themes and subsequent interpretations emerging from said pathway. This chapter is delineated into five main sections. The first three sections each review the individual participants' data and the emerging meaning units, themes and summaries. The fourth section explores shared themes across all three participants, ranked hierarchically in relation to the research questions. These themes are described via metaphors, with convergent and divergent findings being discussed alongside salient literature. The fifth section discusses the limitations of the study as well as the implications for future research in this area. The final section offers a summary of the findings and the study as a whole.

5.2 Uncovering individual participant themes

In chapter 4, the methodological process of the research enquiry was set out in Table 4.1 which recorded the relevant activities utilised in the analysis and interpretation of the data as adapted from De Kock (2011); Chang (2010), and Ingadottir (2012). This emphasised the importance of providing the context of each participant, with due recognition of their own experiences, but fused with the lens of the researcher's interpretation. In each of the participants' sections below, a snapshot is provided of the interview context based on field notes, participant background and reflexivity regarding my role. The word story offered is evidence of the hermeneutic circle enacted, a fusion of horizons if you will, by providing an

interpretation of the participants' interpretations, in order to gain the essence of the meaning applied to their lived experiences (De Kock, 2010). The circle is entered again through the use of paraphrased summaries in order to establish meaning units that are categorised into themes ordered hierarchically into the research questions (Chang, 2010). Finally, a discussion of the interpretations via rich descriptive language, my own assumptions, and the literature leaves the reader with a co-constructed understanding of the phenomenon across individual participant accounts. This sets the scene for analysis across accounts discussed in the subsequent section entitled "Establishing commonality: Global themes".

5.2.1 "Cami"

5.2.1.1 Interview context

Name	'Cami'
Race	Indian
Age	46
Language	English (First Language) Afrikaans (Second Language)

As per Cami's request, the interview was conducted at her home as this would be more convenient for her as her children are home-schooled and she would feel more comfortable there.

I have had some previous interactions with Cami through the Tears Foundation, where I worked during 2015. This allowed previous rapport to be established which aided with the comfortability and familiarity that was so important when discussing such sensitive issues.

Initially I was extremely excited about the interview as it represented the next step in an already complicated research process. It symbolised movement and

brought hope. Simultaneously, I felt nervous that I would not be able to honour the hermeneutic approach to interviewing as effectively due to my relative inexperience with the framework, I did however revise hermeneutic interviewing strategies based on HP principals (Table 3.2), which I tried to remain mindful of. Due to my training as a counselling psychologist, I often automatically provided Cami with empathic statements to either ask her to expand, or to check my understanding. I understand that this may have guided the interaction at times or limited the free flow of Cami's thought process. However, I feel that it contributed to creating shared understanding, a vital component of hermeneutic analysis.

At times, the interview was interrupted by her children or by other household distractions. This left me feeling frustrated at times, and hampered the flow and development of Cami's narrative. At times, I felt as though I was providing leading questions rather than probing for expansion of the answer, but tried to remain mindful of this and took a genuine interest in Cami's retelling of her own story, rather than pushing my agenda.

5.2.1.2 Word Picture

Cami grew up in a cultural background that predetermined her gender roles in deeply entrenched way. Her dad challenged these by encouraging her tomboyishness by engaging in activities reserved for boys, and displaying pride in her for this. She always questioned the unwritten, complicated rules of gender roles in her culture which lead her to rebel. The intellect she prides herself on became the thing that set her apart, allowed her to challenge the norm. But to do this she couldn't be a female living with independent thought and behaviours, for others to make sense of this she was a 'tomboy' or 'one of the guys'. She was raped in childhood in a family

that didn't talk about sex, she got raped as a young adult even though she had said no. She didn't know this was rape until she experienced consensual sex, this brought things up and she exerted control over the merging thoughts and feelings by wielding the same sexuality that rendered her powerless, as a tool to take power - to take control. She came to realise it was all a sham, the control she thought she had by sleeping with the 'hottest guy in the club' - was predetermined by society, it was no big thing it happened, because any woman throwing herself at a man was going to get it right, by design of males having elevation above all women in society, not by females being that 'special'. She then met her intellectual match and began defining herself in this new light, opened up about all of her experiences to date, found the space and the acceptance she needed in order to be herself. She struggled with the concept of being owned by monogamy, by the patriarchy woven through the concept of marriage, but becoming a mom liberated her from programmed views about sex and awakened her to her true power as a female - reframing her sexuality in a completely new and absolutely powerful way as life-giving. It created space for healing. What also created space for recovery was reframing what had happened, having an "ah-ha" moment at a march against rape. She wanted to do the same for others, offer them an "ah-ha" moment - liberated fully at last from believing it was their fault. She spent so much of her adult life wrestling with this notion of victim blaming, that it was her fault - activism became a way of neutralising this by safe-guarding more women against believing it was their fault too. This was another way for her to gain power over her situation, redefining her own experiences through helping women redefine theirs. She wants to use her activism to change not only individuals but society - but feels the burden of projecting a strong masculine image of someone healed, a stoic one, does not truly celebrate

where every woman is on their journey. She wants to be a voice of liberation, of saying things theirs cannot; not another voice of blame for not being where they need to be in their healing process. The weight of it is tough - the job feels very big.

5.2.1.3 Analysis

Meaning Units	Themes	Examples and summaries via paraphrasing
<p>“molested by a cousin”, “not really knowing about boundaries”, “he completely ignored me”, “it was in 1992, 1993, and at that time there was just no concept of date rape”, “victim blaming”, “judgmental”</p>	<p>Powerlessness</p>	<p>Cami starts by discussing how she has felt powerless from childhood as she was raped by her cousin from age 6 onwards. She states that she grew up not knowing about boundaries and without any personal space given her traumatic experiences during childhood and how she felt powerless starting from the first time she was raped. <i>“It’s a bit difficult to find a starting point because I was molested by a cousin as a child from when I was about six years old through to about 11 (years old). Every time we slept over at their house he would, well essentially, rape me. It really irritates me when we use all these euphemisms for it, what he did was rape. Every second or third weekend for many years. So I grew up not really knowing about boundaries, about having personal space and things like that so, it was a bit difficult to be firm about saying no when you are not really sure about what you are allowed to say no to and what you are not.”</i></p> <p>Then she continues discussing her experience in college when she was hanging out with boys rather than girls defying social perceptions which made me think that she felt empowered as an unconventional young woman. <i>“I wanted</i></p>

		<p><i>to go out to clubs and stuff like that but at that time it was mainly guys doing that sort of thing and very few girls, and so I partied with the guys a lot and - The guys that I grew up with knew me and knew that we were just buddies and they accepted me as one of the guys”</i> however she again mentions how she felt powerless when she was raped by one of those “buddies” she hung out with. <i>“I thought he just wanted to kiss and cuddle a little bit then he would take me home [inhales deeply], and then when he started taking my clothes off, I said “no”, and he wouldn’t listen to me and he said, um, “Stop playing hard to get. I know what you are” [frowns], and I said, “No I am not playing hard to get, I don’t want you to do this to me” [raises hands to chest, frowns], and he completely ignored me”</i>. The powerless theme again comes up when she talks about how she could not report it to the police because there was no such concept as date rape at the time. <i>““Wh-what difference does it make? I said no!” But you know it was in 1992, 1993, and at that time there was just no concept of date rape so I didn’t report it and I didn’t go to the police station because I just couldn’t bear the thought. I mean in those days it just - the new South Africa wasn’t even here yet, it was just old judgemental Indian men who were police officers, and the idea of trying to explain to them – ja, there would have been a lot of victim blaming you know?”</i>. She also mentions how she was unable to even define it as rape because she did not know how</p>
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		<p>to explain what happened to her, feeling powerless again. <i>“And in the process of trying to work through that idea that I had said no but he didn’t listen, but at the same time I was there so was I asking for it by putting myself into that situation? You know for a long time I didn’t even define it as rape.”</i></p>
<p>“good little Indian girls”, “learned how to cook and clean and be good housewives”, “indecent” “you are told to obey”</p>	<p>Gender roles assigned by the society and isolation of women</p>	<p>This theme is repeated throughout the interview a couple of times as Cami talks about how women in her community are assigned certain gender roles such as cooking and cleaning and that they were supposed to be good housewives. <i>“and in those days, “good little Indian girls” [air quotes] stayed at home and learned how to cook and clean and be good housewives, and I wasn’t one of those girls”.</i> She also says that there were certain social codes in the community and those women who violated those codes were accused of indecency. <i>“Well it was the kind of world where if I went out onto the balcony in long flannel pyjamas I got shouted at by my great aunt for being indecent.”</i> In fact, she states that being harassed by boys/young men on the street was being taken for granted and women had to protect themselves from all kinds of activities that did not comply with these social norms. <i>“there were very strict codes of conduct which I was never able to understand, you know? You had to stay indoors, when you went out in public you were always perfectly made up and dressed a certain way, and you didn’t talk to the boys</i></p>

		<p><i>that hung out on the street corners, and street harassment was just taken for granted. There were always boys who just stood on the street and chatted up girls, that was just what they did".</i> What is also important is Cami frequently states how she was never able to understand these social codes and gender roles assigned to her by her own family and community and therefore she says she struggled with the idea of rape and how it should be positioned in light of these social codes. <i>"And if you talk back to them then that means that you are loose¹ you see?"</i>. Cami also mentions how the society tells you to obey certain rules and these are mostly transferred to younger women by elderly members of the family such as grandmothers etc. and how they are not allowed to question anything but to obey. <i>"It wasn't ever spoken about, you just didn't talk about that sort of thing. Because there is no sex education at all. You don't talk about genitalia you don't say those kinds of words at all, ever. There is no frame of reference for speaking about it at all. Ever. There is this weird thing that you can't talk to the boys on the street corner because that's wrong, but it's just wrong because it's wrong, because your grandmother told you that you can't talk to boys, you know? But they don't tell you why. They don't tell you what's wrong with it. They just expect you to obey. That's what the whole "Good girl" thing is, that you follow the rules."</i></p>
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¹ "Loose" is a colloquial term used to describe someone who appears to have "loose morals or values". In this context, "loose" is used to indicate promiscuity.

		<p>She also mentions how there are so many gender roles assigned to women in the society and restrictions and rules that they have obey. <i>“It’s whether you can cook a curry by the time you are twelve years old, its whether you wear a swimming costume to the pool or shorts, it’s whether you scream obscenities at guys who are trying to pick you up”</i>. She also states that even the guys that she went out with had those social perceptions about women and saw her as one of the guys and not as a woman who has the right to do all those things. <i>“You know I was defined as the “not a girl” and I wasn’t approachable as a female or desirable as a woman. I was “one of the guys”</i>. But there is also another significant influence in her life about gender roles and that is her father and how she had been raised by being allowed to play with gender roles because her father always wanted a son and instead she was there to fulfil his dream. <i>“You know, so that also helped me to be more confident doing things that challenged gender roles. You know, he - If I was going to do athletics, he would take me up to the local sports field and he would time me and, um, things like that, where he encouraged my physicality, my “tom-boyishness” as everybody else called it. It was something he embraced and was proud of, and when that was just not the norm”</i></p>
<p>“euphemisms”, “victim</p>	<p>Social Perceptions</p>	<p>Cami states that she does not want to use labels and euphemisms for rape because she thinks</p>

<p>blaming,” judgmental old Indian men”, “incest”</p>	<p>about rape victims</p>	<p>those euphemisms cause people to underestimate the severity of the situation of rape victims. <i>“It really irritates me when we use all these euphemisms for it, what he did was rape.”</i> She also says she could not report what she had gone through when she was 18 to the police because at the time there was a lot of judgment within the community about women going out with other men who are not their relatives or going out to social clubs etc. because that was something frowned upon. Therefore, as she was raped when she was out with other men, she felt there would be a bias towards her and what she had gone through would be described as something that she deserve and not a crime. <i>“there was just no concept of date rape so I didn’t report it and I didn’t go to the police station because I just couldn’t bear the thought. I mean in those days it just - the new South Africa wasn’t even here yet, it was just old judgemental Indian men who were police officers, and the idea of trying to explain to them – ja, there would have been a lot of victim blaming you know? I wouldn’t even have known where to start explaining that I was in the backseat of this guy’s car to start off with, you know? And in the process of trying to work through that idea that I had said no but he didn’t listen, but at the same time I was there so was I asking for it by putting myself into that situation? You know for a long time I didn’t even define it as rape.”</i> In the same manner, Cami states that incest is actually something that is like an</p>
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		<p>elephant in the room but no one talks about it. So it is there but it is not discussed therefore it continues to be there. <i>"It wasn't ever spoken about, you just didn't talk about that sort of thing. Because there is no sex education at all. You don't talk about genitalia you don't say those kinds of words at all, ever. There is no frame of reference for speaking about it at all. Ever"</i>.</p>
<p>"suppressed", "pretended it did not happen",</p>	<p>Forgetting and Self-Protection</p>	<p>Cami mentions that she suppressed what she had gone through, tried to forget about it by pretending it did not happen and protected herself by going out only with those friends and relatives that she was sure they would ensure her safety. <i>"I very much just suppressed it, pretended it didn't happen. Stopped hanging out with that group of friends, started going out with a guy who I knew was friends with my cousin that I knew was definitely, definitely safe you know?"</i>. She also talks about how her memory suppressed the whole incident and she forgot about it as if it was completely wiped from her memory in the aftermath due to the trauma she has lived. The aftermath continued for a few weeks where she would only resume her daily activities but without thinking about what happened to her in a complete state of shock. This is also a way to cope with a traumatic experience that she has gone through. <i>"I don't remember going home, I don't remember my mom opening the door. I don't know whether I showered. I remember crying at some point before going to sleep but the next few weeks even [sic], is a complete blur. Up to now even</i></p>

		<p><i>[sic], I don't remember [frowns]. I must have gone to varsity, I must have carried on working on Rock Concert doing radio shows, all the stuff that I did on campus. I don't remember any of it, I was just going through the motions."</i> She also mentions that she did not confide in anyone for a long time because she was not even able to process what happened to her, herself. <i>"I wasn't processing it myself. It was just shut off into its own separate little compartment that stayed untouched, which I have done all my life."</i></p>
<p>"important it is to me", "inspiration", "family", "desired" "considerate"</p>	<p>Support and Realization</p>	<p>She mentions how she felt being herself and not being threatened that made her feel like she was actually being supported for who she was <i>"It was more like this would be a safe relationship to go into because I wouldn't be threatened physically or emotionally or sexually"</i>. She states how her first sexual experience made her realize that she had been raped and it was the beginning of her self-recognition. <i>"I could be desired without feeling dirty about it. And in that first intimate encounter with him when we made love for the first time, he was so considerate."</i> She had this point in her life where she had recognized what happened to her but she was unable to cope with her feelings for a long time. <i>"was in the worst space I had ever been at in my whole life. Just drinking, drugging, sleeping around. Trying to escape my life as far as possible"</i>. Cami talks about how her husband was a part of her healing process and his support made her more confident in understanding what she had gone</p>

		<p>through was not her fault at all. <i>“The fear of being rejected, um, having my self-blame confirmed. But he didn’t. He didn’t say “Why were you in the backseat of the car?”, he didn’t say, “Why were you drinking with the boys?”. He didn’t say any of that.”</i></p>
<p>“Slut Walk”, “rape protest march”, “I was questioning”</p>	<p>Self-empowerment and Activism</p>	<p>At various points during the interview, Cami gives hints of how she was always different from her peers and she tried to question the rules that were imposed on her by the society and gender roles assigned by the members of her family. She talks about various methods she has developed as a way of self-empowerment. <i>“when you are 14 years old and you can’t understand why it’s wrong to go swimming with a bunch of guys and actually wear a costume. And it’s difficult to find your own sense of identity, it’s difficult to, you know, read. I read a lot as a child, you know? Like things like [sic] Cry the Beloved Country² so, I was doing that sort of reading where I was questioning the way the world works for as long as I can remember”</i>. She also talks about this trend of defiance continuing during her college years as well when she would smoke which was definitely something associated with those women with low moral values according to the society at the time <i>“My cousin owned a fleet of taxis growing up and good girls didn’t smoke in public ever, but I went to varsity where there were feminists left right and centre who smoked in the cafeteria and didn’t give a shit about the rules. And when</i></p>

		<p><i>my cousin owned this fleet of taxis, the guys knew that I smoked and I couldn't smoke in the house in front of all the old ladies, so I would go outside to smoke with them, and I'd chat to them and they were real human beings".</i> However she also mentions that she believed how empowerment for her was taking control of her sexuality and this trend continued for a long period of her life where she felt she was both taking control of her sexual life but also going against the social codes and norms she had been brought up with and this is also evident from her relationship with her mother. <i>"I mean it felt incredibly empowering - it was like, "OK, I am taking control of my own sexuality. I'm doing this on my terms".</i> She also talks about how being a mother contributed to her empowerment because she started to view sex from a different light. <i>"when I got pregnant with Helena that redefined things for me again. Because now suddenly all of the things that had been conditioned into me about sex, were now starting to make sense but in a way that I could process".</i> She also mentions having a girl made her feel more responsible for speaking out about what happened to her and let her go of her anger turning it into something else. She realized that it was a problem that women faced and it was women's empowerment that would solve it. <i>"And when I had that realisation (of the meaning of the birth) I was able to let go of the anger that I felt about the rape, the violation, the fear having had a girl child, you know, the fear of</i></p>
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		<i>what she was going to be exposed to. The fear of that just fell away when I had that realisation.”</i>
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5.2.2 “Julia”

5.2.2.1 Context

Name	‘Julia’
Race	White
Age	52
Language	Afrikaans (First language) English (Second language)

This interview was conducted at Julia’s place of work. Due to her very busy schedule it was more convenient for her to meet there. Julia had booked a secluded and private board-room where the meeting took place, and expressed no concerns or fears about the location’s privacy when asked.

Whilst working at Tears Foundation, I had sporadic contact with Julia and this had allowed us to establish positive rapport that translated throughout the entire interview. We were both very comfortable with each other and this lent itself to creating a shared context and a safe environment to share. This was evidenced by Julia being able to constantly move between vulnerability and humour whilst drawing me into her narrative.

After my first interview, I had concerns that I was not adequately addressing the questions on the interview schedule, so I tried to ensure that those were introduced which at times I worry, distracted Julia from her train of thought or current explanation.

At times it was challenging trying to balance my role as researcher and caring acquaintance, and striking a balance between what I wanted to know personally versus what was relevant to the study. At times this deviation can be seen.

5.2.2.2 Word Picture

Julia is a woman who cares very much for others. She embodies empathy, a great strength which at times has also been her Achilles heel. Julia came from a very conservative and traditional Afrikaans household where she vilified her cold mother for being a passive recipient of patriarchy but revered her father for being her (Julia's) biggest support system. Her rebellious streak saw her wanting a different life than her mother's from a young age, and she dated outside of her culture to try and find something more liberal which better represented her personal views of partnership. She married young and fell in love and after a long while was blindsided by many things: her husband's drug-use, his bi-sexuality, his prostitution and ultimately his selling of her (to pay for his drug-use) which resulted in her rape. Julia carried her story with her for a long time, leaking only bits and pieces but not owning up to the truth of her rape, fearful of the shame it would mean for her and her children - her secret was eating her alive. It drove her to suicidal thoughts and finally to putting her gun in her mouth. Only the thought of her children redeemed her - saved her from the numb terrible edge - her turning point was characterised by her motherhood. After that, at a woman's event she heard a sentence: "whatever you are not telling, is controlling you" which irrevocably shook her out of her inaction and catalysed a momentous shift, the waves of which she still feels in her life today. She used the power of storytelling through writing to bring peace to herself at great sacrifice - the comfort of her children that she holds so dear. However, this created space for her to begin healing, she sought counselling she found purpose in action. Julia is a mother first beyond all things, caring deeply for her children as she sees them as her gifts. She embodies motherhood in all her activities, caring deeply for those lives she positively affects through her activism activities - not from a place of

taking control over what has happened - but from a deep-seated sense of empathy, wanting to make things better for a small moment that may otherwise seem unbearable. She accepted her fate (that of being a support to other rape victims) as it were, and equipped herself to be the best kind of helper she could be. She sees what happened to her as a gift that has filled her life with meaning and has moved her from being timid and shy to being fearless and powerful with an insatiable thirst to conquer new challenges. Julia is loving and selfless, truly embodying the essence of altruism.

5.2.2.3 Analysis

Keywords / Key phrases	Themes	Examples from the text
“conservative Afrikaans home”, “head of the house”, “equal partners”	Social roles	Julia explains how she grew up in a very conservative Afrikaans home and she means that it was actually very patriarchal where the man or the father is the head of the house and the woman or the mother stays at home, looks after the children and fulfils the gender roles assigned to her by the society. <i>“I grew up in a very, very conservative Afrikaans home. I mean extremely conservative. I mean, the sex talk was never even done because that word wasn’t used in the house. It was a case of my mom giving me a book and saying, “go to your room and read, and no questions asked”.</i> She also explains that despite this kind of upbringing, she did not envision the same life for herself and she wanted a relationship where she was equal to her partner and a life that did not follow patriarchal societal norms. <i>“Because it was a very Afrikaans family</i>

		<p><i>the man was the head of the house, and you know, the wife had to stay at home and look after the children. And I had a bit of a rebellious streak when I was small because I just decided that I don't want a household like my mom and dad had where she had to stay at home and look after the children and he went out to work, I wanted a relationship where you have equal partners and that's one of the reasons that when I started to date, I refused to date Afrikaans guys and I only dated English guys because I wanted that different life".</i> She also explains how this upbringing affected her characteristic traits before she was raped and how she would always be shy and reserved to try new things and rather kept to herself because she states that when she was growing up, women were considered to be in second place in the household as the man is the "leader of the house". <i>"And I think that's also part of growing up in a house where the wife is like – where the woman is like – takes second place almost. So you almost have this thing where you don't really want to go out there and try things and do this, and be adventurous. So I always had that reserved, how can I put it, that reserved way of doing things you know, and not just going into things and doing it, and taking up challenges and going crazy".</i> In spite of this, she also implies that she was always a bit rebellious, questioning social roles and the rules that the society imposed.</p>
"I honestly didn't	Powerlessness	Julia first starts out discussing her experience with her husband and how her life had turned

<p>understand what was happening and what was going on”, “I wasn’t aware of anything going wrong”, “things just didn’t feel right”, “drugged”, “I wasn’t even able to protect myself”, “numb inside”, “decided not to report”,</p>		<p>upside down when her husband came home and told her that they had to move out of their house. <i>“he’s whole personality was always irritated, miserable and often, often, very aggressive. And honestly at some point I felt like I was living with a stranger in the house. And I honestly didn’t understand what was happening and what was going on. Um, he had his own business, the business was doing quite well. I wasn’t aware of anything going wrong. And then the one day he came to me and said to me, “The business is in trouble. We have been liquidated and we have two weeks to get out of the house.” [Takes a deep breath] So I was devastated because I didn’t even expect anything. So we had to pack up, move back in with my mom and dad”</i>. Then she explains how her husband had been a drug addict and he confessed to her that he was bisexual and cheated on her for the majority of their marriage. She finds out afterwards that her husband had been working as a sex worker to finance his addiction and she was raped by one of his clients as a way to increase his fee. <i>“and then one of the clients found out he was married, and apparently this is a big thing in the gay community or bisexual (community), that if there is a married guy then the aim is to get to the wife. I did not know this. But this guy then offered him double if he could have me while my husband watched”</i>. She felt powerless first of all because she was raped but also it was her husband who drugged her and allowed the man to rape her so she felt betrayed by her husband and she felt even more</p>
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		<p>powerless because she could not protect herself or defend herself because of the drugging. <i>“he put something in my cool-drink that night. I was drugged. I wasn’t completely out of it, I was floating in and out but I knew exactly what was happening ... Because I wasn’t even able to protect myself. What if they went into the room next door? So I had that feeling inside. I was drifting in and out of it. The guy then came through to the bedroom and he proceeded to rape me while my husband was sitting in the corner”</i>. She also felt powerless because she did not know how to report this to the police as this was her husband of 15 years who had organized this and she did not know how to explain this, first of all to her children as this was their father, and also her family and her husband’s family. <i>“Only the next morning when I went and said “What did you do? Why did you do that to me?” and his attitude was that he organised a fun evening for me so I should be happy that I had good sex [pause]. So I was horrified you know, and with everything that happened, with the whole sequence of events and everything – I got to a point where I was just feeling so numb inside that all feeling I had just went away. I just knew that I needed to sort myself out. So I decided not to report. Partly because how do I tell people my husband organised it? I’ve been with him for the last 15 years. And then I was thinking about my children, if they find out someday their father did this, what effect would that have on them? So I made a decision not to report, and I do regret it today.”</i> I</p>
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		think it is implied here that she also felt like no one would believe her as this was her husband who orchestrated the whole event.
“remind me all of the time about it”, “wiped it out”, “a really difficult time”, “gun to my head”, constant reminder”	Forgetting + memory + Loss of security	<p>Julia explains how in the aftermath of rape, she lost all sense of security both physical and emotional. She explains how she wanted to suppress that she was raped, not to be reminded of it and therefore she kept going to the GP to get tested so that she did not have anything lasting that would remind her of that night. <i>“I just wanted to know that I wasn’t going to have anything lasting that was going to remind me all of the time about it. Because what if now I was HIV infected and I had to live with it? It would be the most constant reminder of what happened back then and that’s one thing as well, I didn’t want to have a reminder so I made a conscious effort not to remember what day of the week it was, what date it happened on, what month it was – It was like I wiped it out of my head because after it happened and I decided not to tell anyone, I didn’t want anything on my mind to remind me about it. So I basically tried to wipe it out of my mind as well. And up to today I don’t have any intention of knowing or remembering what date it was. That part of me is gone, because I don’t want every year to think about “Oh today, this is what happened.” So I didn’t want that.”</i> In fact she says she did not even remember what date it was because she did not want to be reminded of it every year. But because Julia kept living in the same house and she had to see her husband for the sake of her children, she was also constantly</p>

		<p>reminded of what had happened to her and that made her feel even less secure. She feared that the same thing would happen again. <i>“He could only come to the house with supervised visits for the children, but they didn’t allow it. Um, they said that there wasn’t proof that he hurt the children, and of course I couldn’t talk about the rape. So that became very difficult for me. So I had to agree to (him) getting the kids during the day, they just didn’t sleep over. Of course I went off my mind [sic] every time he has the kids because I didn’t know if anything was going to happen, if he was going to use drugs. So it was really a difficult time.”</i> She also felt insecure and powerless because she could not tell anyone about what had happened and she had to keep seeing her husband. Even his physical presence was a trigger for her. Julia also explains that even after her husband died because of an overdose, she was still depressed and even tried to commit suicide because this time, her husband’s family turned to her and blamed her for what had happened. <i>“they accused me that I murdered him [sic], and so they all turned against me and insisted that the police arrest me. But they didn’t because his place was locked from the inside and all the drugs was next to his bed ... I’ve got a 38 Special. I took the kids to my mom’s place and I went back home and I took it out. I had all the intentions of pulling that trigger. I was in such a bad space. And I actually sat on the corner of the bed and I had the gun to my head”</i>. All of these made her feel more insecure and powerless</p>
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		<p>because not only was she unable to talk about what happened to her but she was also being pursued by the people who loaned money to her husband and she was also being accused by her husband's family and she was constantly reminded of what had happened to her. <i>"So it was almost a constant reminder getting into the bed, looking at the headboard you know, just remembering what happened during the rape – I was looking at the headboard. So every time I got into the bed and saw the headboard, I remembered what happened."</i></p>
<p>"I just couldn't", "shame", "blamed myself",</p>	<p>Healing + recovery + Self- recognition</p>	<p>Julia explains how her self-healing and recovery process did not start for a long time because she could not tell anyone and until she admitted that she had gone through this traumatic rape and she had to tell the world about it. <i>"The only thing I never told them was about the rape. Because I just couldn't."</i> She also explains how for a long time, she questioned herself about what had happened, putting her on the path to victim-blaming. <i>"I think that there was a great deal of shame because how do you tell people that the man you loved and married did this to you. There was a great deal of shame as well. I often sat thinking, "Did I do something wrong to the relationship to send him on the path that he went?" So I blamed myself a lot for what had happened."</i> She then explains how there was a turning point in her life where she attended a seminar and the presenter told her that she had something bottled up, suppressed that was controlling her behaviour and emotions. <i>"And she</i></p>

		<p><i>had this seminar, and I attended this seminar, and during the seminar she said the words, “Whatever you are not talking about is controlling you.” In fact, she explains how she realized that she could not start a new, blank slate in her life before she dealt with her past and what had happened to her and that her healing process started only after she could start coping with her past. “Just like a wham inside my head [smiles and raises both hands to head]. And I actually had to get up and leave because I just thought that I was going to burst out in tears and I can’t tell people why. And I walked out and I just realised that I kept wanting to start a new slate, but I hadn’t dealt with what happened”.</i></p>
<p>“So I can deal with it”, “make peace with it”,</p>	<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>Julia explains how her empowerment process started by telling her children and the rest of the world about what had happened to her. She states that by telling others about being raped and not keeping quiet she felt even more empowered and that has become the motto of her activism. <i>“And that’s when I decided it’s time for me to tell everyone what happened. So that I can deal with it. So that I can make peace with it and just move on. So obviously the first (people) I had to tell was my children. That was a tough one”.</i> She also explains how she struggled with the idea of telling her children and that she felt guilty for making her children miserable and about telling the truth about their father, but she also felt this would be a major part of her healing. <i>“It’s a heart-breaking thing because I didn’t want her to feel like this,</i></p>

		<p><i>and it almost like I feel guilty having forced my story on her, almost you know, not having left her [tears up]. But I just couldn't carry on without people knowing my story".</i> She also explains how telling the world what had happened to her made her feel more supported and how people's reactions also helped in her healing process.</p> <p><i>"now it's out in the open and everybody knows. And it was just this massive weight lifted off my shoulders. And then the calls started coming in. And people were so supportive, and I got such lovely calls –I cannot tell you. And the calls after that, and the reaction of people. I mean, I didn't know how people would react if I told my story, and the reactions I got were just totally incredible. I cannot tell you. And all of that was just so much – Such a big part of the healing process. I mean I had people I hadn't spoken to for many years that I lost contact with, who looked me up, called me and said, "Wow, we didn't know this happened to you" and just gave so much support and encouragement"</i> I think it is implied that even though Julia felt like she had to suppress what had happened to her and she felt ashamed, once she started telling her story, she felt more empowered. <i>"And it took me a long time to realise this, and once you do speak up you will be surprised by what can happen in your life. My whole life has turned around because I came out with my story."</i></p>
"Comfort Pack project",	Activism	Julia goes on to explain how her experience made her realize she had a purpose in life and this was to carry out activism and civil society

<p>“purpose”, “rape survivors”</p>		<p>projects. <i>“I actually decided I wanted to do projects. So I was just going to empty out the one little room and start with the Comfort Pack project. That’s when I decided I was going to do it. I was just going to do these bags, hand them over because I didn’t want contact with rape survivors at all, I just wanted to know that I was doing that little bit”</i> However she also explains how she did not want any contact with rape survivors at first because she thought she would feel too overwhelmed when she heard other people’s stories. She also explains even though she did not want contact, it happened on its own and she found herself in this position where people were coming to confide in her. <i>“And then what started happening was, I would see someone hang around outside, until I’m alone in the shop, and then it would be a rape survivor coming in saying, “I’ve been raped, I’ve never told anyone about it”, sitting there telling me the story, so we started drinking tea.”</i></p>
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5.2.3 “Lomé”

5.2.3.1 Context

Name	‘Lomé’
Race	Black
Age	35
Language	Sotho, Pedi (First language) English (Second language)

I have met Lomé before with the work I did at Tears Foundation. We worked together when facilitating the LifeBoard³ with the children. This pre-existing contact

³ LifeBoard is an interactive board game that uses play to teach young children about rape and abuse

provided for a safe space to be created where Lomé could allow herself to be more open and vulnerable than I had previously experienced her in our interactions.

Since she is currently unemployed, Lomé did not have money for transportation, and though it was offered as part of her participation she was also given the option of me coming to her home. Lomé said that she would feel more comfortable having the interview there and therefore I drove out to her home.

Because I had already conducted the other interviews, I had an idea of which questions needed to be refined and focused on in order to have the most relevant information for the study. However, I found myself being drawn in very deeply to her narrative, and questioning followed naturally from what she put forward. I felt it very important to fully recognise Lomé's context and to allow her the space to unpack as much as she needed to. I struggled to contain my 'need to save' when seeing her distressed, but instead provided empathy through listening attentively and checking in with her often.

5.2.3.2 Word Picture

Lomé is an inspiring woman who has lived through many hardships. Her early life memories were ones of "heaven", consisting of the "perfect" family. This was broken by domestic violence; her family was split when her dad ordered a divorce. Moving from being "daddy's girl" to fearful of the man who divided her family, she wanted a home and went to live with her mother. Her mother worked away for weeks at a time, but her sisters were there though not very present. Lomé always felt a sense of isolation but longed to be embraced and accepted. She was fearful of being rejected from her new home therefore endured much suffering without disclosing it to her family. Lomé experienced suffering in the form of being commoditised at school for her beauty and "otherness". This led her innocence and naivety down a path

where it was betrayed, she was traded for initiation into a gang via gang-rape and her story is one of ownership by others which plays out violently time and time again. She was objectified, violated and isolated on numerous occasions through her initial rapists and then through her bullies whose violence consistently escalated. She blamed herself for this, blamed her body in its betrayal. Therefore, she gave into the victimisation, stopped resisting and started living up to the labels she was given by her peers, as “promiscuous” and “easy”. She was existing in a numb state, simply surviving with the inability to have any form of intimacy or closeness with others. Lomé starting abusing alcohol and drugs, and labelled herself a bitter “man-eater” who was exceptionally sexually active. This all changed when she fell pregnant at 25, when where she tried to escape everything else, she couldn’t escape her son growing inside her. She turned to faith, and God became the parent and support system she never had. Her path to “living” again was a culmination of finding her faith, confiding in a friend who was a counsellor, and finding a shared reality with other friends who too disclosed they had experiences with rape, where their stories were all met with acceptance and no blame – something she had not experienced before from her system, including her close family.

Once having her son, she became acutely aware of her desire to change the world they live in, not only to give victims a voice and see that they can heal, but to change the society that created the violence in the first place. Self-forgiveness, self-love and love of others is what she characterised as what saved her - true altruism has been meaningful for her recovery and redefining life as something worth living even in the face of adversity. She has since focused her activism efforts on assisting young people to celebrate their individuality, being able to do all the things you love

and be defined outside of your experiences and to get young people (potential perpetrators) thinking of victims as sisters, daughters and mothers.

5.2.3.3 Analysis

Keywords / Key phrases	Themes	Examples from the text
<p>“domestic violence”, “drunken”, “fight”,</p>	<p>Violence</p>	<p>Lomé explains how she witnessed her first account of domestic violence in her own home by her father when he threw her mother out of the house and divorced her without her knowledge. She states that they had to live with their father who had a drinking problem and with whom they would argue. <i>“My parents weren’t exactly going well in their life [sic], and there were some in-fights at home. My first bout of domestic violence – I think I was in Standard 1 or Grade two, where about my father came home late one night and decided that my mom should leave the house – Well he was in a drunken stupor. So a fight ensued, it was on a Tuesday at nine ‘o clock in the evening and we had to watch my mother in the street. It was one of those ridiculous first moments in my life that I thought, “Whoa [runs hands across eyebrow], I’ve never since this fight, not even on TV before.” So that escalated eventually to a point where my mom felt like she couldn’t take it anymore, and she left. She couldn’t take it anymore”</i>. They were also afraid of their father because he was violent, therefore when they first moved in with their mother after the divorce,</p>

		<p>they were scared. <i>“And I was so scared of my father because he was like, the alpha of the house. So coming here was quite a risk, for me. Because the first thing he would’ve done, we anticipated him driving all the way from wherever he was coming, to fetch me and dragging me by the hair back home. That’s how he was then. So, I have to say, coming here I felt – I was looking for a place of solitude, of refuge”</i>. She explains how she was running away from her father’s violence that she tried to find refuge in her mother’s home but she could not find what she was looking for. After she moved in with her mother and sisters when she and her brother left their home, she had to transfer to another school where she was “popular” or interesting because she was from a different area and she was called beautiful but she also felt that there was something wrong with the way the other children treated her. She was bullied, subject to beating etc. <i>“My bullies were quite extreme. Um, I had a bully who would make sure that every day was living hell. Take my school bag, beat me up to a pulp. I would get beaten up, I would get my clothes torn off, and um, if I didn’t have an imprint of a slap on my face then he did not do anything. So I, I had to learn to run [laughs]. I started running before I learnt how to fight. I ran every day from school, secondary school. Every day at two ‘o clock without skipping a beat. Some days there was study break which was an hour, so some days from three until four we would have to study at</i></p>
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		<i>school, and after that I would have to learn to run”.</i>
“You are better off in M...”, “wet behind the ears”, “hurt”, “choked”, “dragged”,	Powerlessness + Social perceptions	<p>Lomé also talks about how she felt powerless since the beginning in all the beating, bullying even before the rapes because she was afraid her mother would send her back to her father’s home so she would keep quiet about what was going on. <i>“And I was scared. Dude, I wasn’t used to this kind of life so I was very wet behind the ears coming from primary school, so I was afraid to tell, because the situation I came in at home [sic], I already felt like I was an imposter already because you know, of how I came and everything. Then coming now and saying that you have got problems and that you’ve got someone bullying you at school, it’s another problem, another thing again that I didn’t want to add to my résumé at the time. I was afraid that they would probably tell me, “Ag, you are better off in M_____”. So I kept quiet in hoping that it would abate”.</i> She then explains how she was raped multiple times starting at age 11 throughout her school years. She explains she was raped by multiple boys and men both from her school and outside her school while she was also subject to violence, beating, torture. <i>“So his friends came in and they raped me as well. They were brutal because I did not know what this kind of thing is ... I felt more like an object because I was tossed around. Because I think at some point I was choked, or slapped. I think I was threatened that if I don’t comply, if I screamed, if I did something, then I would get</i></p>

		<p><i>hurt</i>". Throughout all of this, she felt extremely powerless because she could not tell anyone and she almost came to a point where even though she did not give consent, she did not fight back either so she gave up on her chances of saving herself from the situation because she felt that there was nothing she could do. She coped with these ongoing traumatic rapes by pretending that they did not happen and she would try to keep quiet because she also knew that her rapists would get more violent if she resisted. She also felt extremely powerless because she was labelled as a "slut" by the other children in her school and her rapist from the same school would go around and talk about her as if it was consensual sex so she was afraid there would be a lot of victim blaming if she told the truth. <i>"I didn't tell anyone, I couldn't tell anyone because when you are being in that situation [sic], the person that is doing all these ungodly things to you is telling you it's your fault. It's your fault. That sticks. That sticks [nods head slowly]. It doesn't go away, and that immediately deters you from looking for help because if it's your fault, then even if you say this happened to me, then it's your fault. So I became afraid, I shut down"</i>. She was basically afraid of being told that it was her own fault rather than the people she confided in acknowledging that this was a crime. As the rapes and violence continued, her attitude changed, she had become depressed and her grades went down, she reacted without those around her knowing</p>
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		<p>what was going on. <i>“After Vuyo and his friends raped me, it became a feeding frenzy, so to speak. My bully, the – the one who used to beat me up as his game, felt like it was their turn [sic], and they would take me as well. Instead of the usual slapping around and all those things it became more heightened. So, it would be that, it was... Yes, I used to always find myself being dragged into a house like that.”</i></p>
<p>“couldn’t suppress”, “spacing out”, “dreams”, “nightmares”, “dark fantasies”,</p>	<p>Inability to cope</p>	<p>Lomé explains how she had become a distant person, she would zone out or space out for hours at times because she was unable to cope with what happened to her at a certain point. <i>“I found out that I couldn’t suppress it anymore and it kept on coming up so I would have periods of spacing out for like hours, where I wouldn’t know what has happened or what I had been doing. And, time would run away from me and I would come back and I had lost maybe an hour or two.”</i> She states that even though she seemed like going on with her life she was unable to do it because she had all this baggage on her shoulders. <i>“I couldn’t get over all those things. Sometimes they would come back in dreams, sometimes in nightmares, these guys chasing me and all those things. And I realised that these guys are going to get me one way or another.”</i> She also fantasized about revenge and dreamt about killing or hurting them but soon she realized that this would not be any different than what they did to her. <i>“So I would think of ways to kill them, and I would, fantasise</i></p>

		<p><i>that – Those were my ultimate dark fantasies, of making them hurt, the way they made me feel so hurt”. Then she had a phase in her life where she was partying, promiscuous and she had everyone move away from her because of her attitude. She was angry and in pain and these were reflected in her physical health as it would quite frequently deteriorate. “promiscuity was off the charts. I um, I was a serial dater, a serial man-eater and um, I was heartless, I was thoughtless. I couldn’t care. Anything I touched, I soaked with pain, bitterness and anger. I wanted to let it feel what I was feeling, what I went through. And it was fermenting every year. It was becoming so contagious and so, so dangerous that it started becoming physical. The anger, the pain, I used to get sick all the time. I had kidney failure, I had haemorrhoids, I had bouts of - I had headaches. I had anything you could think of that was extreme, not your average illnesses, I had it. I even had a bout of - I nearly had a stroke once, a heart attack of anger because that’s how angry I used to get. My heart nearly stopped. And that’s when I knew I needed to do something about it.”</i></p>
<p>“raped”, “exhibiting same patterns”, “Through prayer”</p>	<p>Healing + Faith</p>	<p>Her healing started with another traumatic event when her niece got raped and showed the same type of behaviour she did when she was first raped. “<i>When my niece got raped. My niece got raped and she started exhibiting the same, um, patterns, behaviour that I did.</i>” At that time, she also confided in her family about what had happened but she did not get the answer or</p>

		<p>comfort she expected, rather mixed emotions. <i>“But because it was after so many years, instead of comfort, I got mixed emotions, mixed feelings, mixed reactions. And they only told me that “I must not worry, it was only five minutes.” And I’m thinking, in those five minutes there were how many of them?”</i> She got a reaction from her mother where she hysterically asked Lomé why she had gone to that house with that boy. Lomé felt like this was the same as victim blaming which made her furious getting that reaction from her own mother. <i>“You know like, she made it sound like [sic] if I hadn’t have been there it wouldn’t have happened. And in my head it sounded like she said “It’s your fault.” And I Just lost it, I just – I lost it. I remember I started screaming and yelling and I remember, in that time, when all the energy had left me – It was still in the same house [indicates to the house we are sitting in], I was in that passage down there.”</i></p> <p>One of the major factors that contributed to her healing was pregnancy. She explains that when she got pregnant, she realized she did not want the same life for her own child and she decided to change her lifestyle. <i>“have realised that I have hurt a lot of people who have tried to give me love and care for me. All who tried to heal me. And that is one of the things I will never, never get back. I wish that was one of the things I could go back and fix. But um, but my son, when he came I literally had to stop. And recheck myself. And he was – Because with him I</i></p>
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		<p><i>couldn't run away from him, he was in my tummy [smiles], and it made me look at a lot of things about life and the way it was, and bringing him into this world. What kind of a mother would I be, what kind of a world would this be for him and my future children? And I thought, this needed a change, this – I don't know where I am going to start, where it was going to go and all, but this pattern needed to go away. Because even in my walking journey, every friend, most of my friends that I have connected with, were rape victims." Lomé then explains among all other things, she could only forgive herself through her faith. She explains how prayer and faith helped her in her path to healing. "And I realised that in my conversations with God that I was too hard on myself, even with my healing process. So I needed to slow my roll, to be more considerate ... psycho healing and a lot of prayer. And after the forgiveness part, I had to forgive them and realise that we were all thrown in the same cycle of life, some worse off than others. And some things happen to us more than others. Whatever made them to turn out to be that way [sic], must have been a horrible experience for them as well. So I felt that it was silly for me to actually be angry at them, where I realised – Where God made me realise, that for them, they haven't even figured it out themselves."</i></p>
<p>"giving back", "stigmatized", "injustice",</p>	<p>Empowerment</p>	<p>Lomé explains that she was always planning to do something to give back to her community through some sort of activism and this is how</p>

<p>“more people would put their consciousness into it”,</p>		<p>her empowerment started. <i>“I have been always, always obsessed with giving back. Even when I was modelling in school, I think the idea of giving back to the community hit me then because with every show, community show, that we used to have, something must be given back to the community.”</i> She also explains that it was not really easy for her to put her story out in the open and share it with others through a platform because she was still afraid of being blamed even though she was the victim. This was a natural instinct, a way to protect herself but her desire to help others overcame that fear.</p> <p><i>“Looking for a platform was not easy, and also the idea of being stigmatised all over again, you know? Going out and saying this was also not easy. But I felt that the more I shied away from it, the more the urge to want to do it became more than the urge for self-preservation, and I decided, you know what, it doesn’t matter who says what. I don’t care. So first I thought, maybe I would embarrass my family or one two three, but then I remembered something. That I would be doing myself and whoever has gone through what we have gone through some serious injustice, because the devil hides himself in secrecy. So if we put these things out there, the more people are aware of it, the more people would put their consciousness into it, “If I do this to this woman she is a daughter, she is a sister, what if it was my sister?” I want to get to that level at some point of - Or to get to that point where a guy says, “I want to love this woman</i></p>
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		<p><i>like they have never been loved, I want to love them like they are the only important thing in this world.”. She explains how her work which involved helping children who are victims of abuse and rape empowered her in a way and allowed her to cope with what she had gone through as a child. “It was like I had a million bucks in my pocket. You know seeing, seeing a child opening up, and being able to speak to you on a level where they feel they can trust and they can be themselves. Because the irony is that we are growing up as children, we are told to be individuals, to stand up and not be afraid to be yourself, then when you become yourself you are ridiculed and told why you are not like the rest of us. So it becomes quite confusing. So I love, especially the LifeBoard, it’s so spectacular, it opens up each and every child in their own space and yet they still get to identify with each other in their own way, a holistic kind of space.”</i></p>
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5.3 Establishing commonality: Global themes

5.3.1 Overview

From the three interviews that were analysed, four global themes emerge. These are powerlessness, empowerment, healing and social norms/gender roles. All three participants talk about their stories where they have transformed from feeling completely powerless as victims of rape and in the aftermath of rape into activists who are empowered to fight the injustice that they have faced as rape victims. They all explain the healing process that they had to go through which followed somewhat similar steps even though their stories are completely different. Their path to healing

involves stages of denial, taking control of their sexuality, careless life style, self-recognition, coming to terms with what they have gone through and finally healing. They have different families but they were all subject to certain social perceptions about women either gender roles associated with patriarchal societies where women are considered to be housewives and not equal partners or social norms imposed by conservative societies where women are not supposed to behave in certain ways. Even though they differ in terms of the specific incidents they have gone through, they have all been afraid of victim blaming and at one point thought that this was their own fault. This had further contributed to their powerlessness.

5.3.2 Enacting the Hermeneutic Circle: Exploring global themes and findings in relation to the research questions

5.3.2.1 “How have the participants experienced their journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist?”

5.3.2.1.1 “A victorious war fought on two fronts”

Cami, Lomé and Julia made very clear that although they feel they have recovered and healed, it has not been a linear or simple process. If anything, the women describe their experiences in a way that reminds me of a war fought on two fronts. The first front is their outside world. All women felt isolated and lacked support from their immediate environment, feeling the far-reaching effects of victim-blaming, stigmatisation, or simply the unspoken words of conservative, gendered and fraught households. The second front – themselves. The pervasive nature of their surroundings impacting their view of themselves, their role in their trauma and the constant questioning of whether they brought it on themselves, or could have done

more to stop it from happening in the first place. More than the two fronts, I use the word war as it evokes imagery of not one big clash, but of many hard-fought battles, long and bloody eventually leading to a victory – a conquest over the enemy, in this case – stagnation in trauma. These women all experienced difficulties in accepting what had happened, accepting themselves as valuable beings but found bright-spots in others, in the stories they heard, which allowed them to win a battle at a time. Only when winning the next battle, by encountering the next experience that shaped their view of themselves as survivors not as victims, did they overcome their battles one by one, still doing so to this day.

For example, Cami had multiple points of impact which shifted her view on what happened and the meaning she attributed to it. The first factor that did this was a consensual sexual relationship, the next was exposure to like-minded liberal people, this was followed by meeting her husband and being able to share her experience. Following this, was her becoming a mother, then it was an “ah-ha” moment at a rally from the words of another survivor, and lastly it continues to be in her activism work. Similarly for Julia, whose experience was redefined through her silence, through her writing, through her children, through her hearing the words of mentor, through the telling of her story, through her helping others. Lomé’s war too is peppered with battles won, for a long time there was hopelessness but she could face these through unlikely friends, brave words spoken, with the help of a psychologist friend, in becoming a mother, in her surrogate parental relationship with God, through testifying her story to those who will listen, and working with children. All of these women fought many battles within their war. Their healing punctuated by poignant moments but challenges such as substance use, secrecy and isolation also fighting back at times. Each of the participants leave me with the overwhelming

understanding that beauty can be had in brutality, that the experience of moving from rape victim to anti-rape activist is challenging, heart-breaking but absolutely possible, and more than possible, provides a narrative of victory and rebirth as the women they are today, by their own rules in their own way.

This notion of reinventing possibility as a factor of post-traumatic growth in those who are resilient is not new. According to Lindstrom, Cann, Calhoun, & Tedeschi (2013), in the process of struggling with adversity, the survivor discovers new options for one's life in multiple domains. This means that a new life path is created due to perceptions that are birthed out of a new philosophy on life which changes past assumptions and core beliefs. This leads to new possibilities and opportunities that ceased to exist before the trauma occurred (Ramos & Leal, 2013). Hence each battle fought and won, creating new opportunities as a consequence of their rape experience and subsequent impacts.

The implication of this is that by surviving the challenges and hardship, new possibilities could be created that were previously out of reach, thus redefining the relationship with the trauma and creating space for it to mean more than something negative. The opportunity to have survivors accept this notion as part of the process could alleviate distress and encourage active engagement with the self and others en-route to recovery. This notion is supported by Lindstrom et al., (2013) and Ramos and Leal (2013).

5.3.2.1.2 “The ebbs and flows of power and powerlessness”

Another prolific theme that weaved through all of the participant's narratives was their relationship with power and powerlessness. The dance of power dots back and forth within each activist's experience. For Cami, it was not so much the loss of

power that characterises her story, but her need to wield it in many forms. This was evidenced through her continuous referencing to “education”, “intelligence”, “thinking differently”, and being “other than”. Cami places her intellect as a prized possession that has put her ahead of others (i.e. allowed her opportunities other “good little Indian girls” would never had had like going to university). Her intellect also allowed her to form a non-sexual bond with her husband to be which stimulated her intellectually thus allowing space to confide the stories she had never told, and overcome these. This intellect also helps her writing and activist activities, allowing her power over her narrative, and power in how she is perceived and perceives others. She perceives herself as strong role-model and advocate as a result of her trauma.

For Julia, her dance with power was her powerlessness, trapped in her situation hugely isolated out of fear of shame and rejection for and from her children. She discussed being meek and afraid not only at home but in her place of work, but after speaking out and coming to terms with her rape experience and her husband’s role in it, she took back the power and redefined herself. She now sees herself as someone who has nothing to lose, someone who is brave, someone who will achieve whatever she sets out to achieve, triumphing over challenges and powerfully exercising her liberation. In doing so, she is powerfully providing a platform for other survivors of rape in her activism activities.

Lomé struggled in isolation for a very long time. Her trauma commenced at 11 and continued until she finished school. In order to survive she ultimately assumed the identity of the girl all the other children said she was, “easy” and “promiscuous”. By becoming powerless, by accepting the role she had been written into, by engaging in a careless lifestyle with many sexual partners, by not continuing to resist

– that is how Lomé survived, that was the only currency for power she had. Yet again ceding to an inevitability outside of her own volition, Lomé's unborn child forced her to choose a different path. At this turning point she took control, she found help and she developed a deep and committed relationship to her faith, to her relationship with God. At this point, she took even more power through forgiveness. She met with and forgave her perpetrators, and uses empathy as her platform of activism – not only to want to make a difference for those being perpetrated against, but those perpetrating. Lomé sees herself as an educator, and a voice for the voiceless as a result of her experiences.

Complex relationships with power and powerlessness are described in each account, with each activist expressing their use of power in their current expressions of themselves and in their activism work. This is supported by Lindstrom et al. (2013), and Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004), who describe a greater sense of personal strength as a characteristic of post-traumatic growth in resilience. This is where the survivor recognises that due to overcoming so much and surviving, they have greater capabilities to deal with future challenges. The survivor understands their perception of vulnerability and a clear understanding of the negative impacts of the trauma in their lives, but recognises themselves as a person with more strengths than when compared to the self before the trauma occurred.

This sense of agency can be created through the expression of power over many domains in life and thus the implication is that mastery of skills or activities can create space for victims to grow, and in so doing to heal.

5.3.2.2 How do the participants understand the relationship between their activism and their healing, if at all?

5.3.2.2.1 “The distant relative”

Globally across all accounts, the participants do not expressly state that there is a relationship between their activism and their own healing. The link is not a conscious one. When asked, the participants know that their altruism is important for them, and for those they are helping respectively, but do not acknowledge the two in direct relation to each other. This reminded me of the distant relative – the one you know you have and are somehow connected to, but you don't have a close or explicit relationship with. The participants describe their healing as a consequence of time and a collection of “ah-huh” moments, external driving forces that have left them reclaiming power, meaning and purpose; winning each battle at a time. Each woman had their own “ah-ha” moments and most of those involved other people. There was no explicitly stated connection between doing good (expressing altruism) and the positive impacts of this being healing, rather just being on a journey with the good Samaritan (the un-anticipated other) who served as a jolt or a mirror which made them reflect on their lives and their experience, and interpret it in a different way. However, simply because the women have not made the explicit connection, does not mean that the altruism has not had a mediating effect on their healing. Stidham et al (2012) found that most participants in their study who had experienced sexual violence were saliently concerned with the efforts of helping others. These helping activities included sharing their stories publically, being involved in education initiatives, volunteering as a crisis supporter, and participating in organisations focused on the preventing and treatment of sexual violence to name a few. Although these participants did not explicitly link their helping activities with healing, many of those who had already attained some level of their own healing actively partook in

altruism activities and expressed a wish for those they were helping to be impacted similarly.

Each of the participants in this study does discuss the large and positive role that their activism plays in their lives, particularly through being able to tell their own story, and in turn helping others (tacitly giving them permission), to tell theirs or to know that “they are not alone”.

The implications of this are two-fold:

1. Involvement in altruistic activities (whether explicitly or inexplicitly understood) provides benefits to the survivor which may have a mediating impact on the interactions had with themselves and others. This means that creating opportunities for helping behaviours in those affected by rape may have a positive influence on self-perception and/or mechanisms for recovery. This is particularly important at community-level where clinical interventions are limited and of questionable quality (Duma et al., 2007; Roberston, 2011).
2. The expressing of one’s story, or creating opportunities for stories of others to be heard is not only an act of altruism but is significant in cognitive processing which is central to growth after trauma. This is referred to as Emotional Disclosure where the disclosure of responses to trauma means that the victim has to describe an event in a way that makes it understandable to others. In doing so, the individual becomes able to accept their story as an interpretation and is therefore willing to accept other opinions (Lepore, Fernandez-Berrocal, Ragan, & Ramos, 2004). The impacts of emotionally disclosing are associated with increased physical and mental functioning as well as reduced distress (Lindstrom et al., 2013). Therefore, simply the act of emotional disclosing through story-telling is a powerful proponent of healing, and also

much more easily implementable in a non-clinical community based setting with other survivors and activists.

5.3.2.3 In the description of the journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist, what resilience factors, if any, are identified by the participants?

5.3.2.3.1 “The tools of the resilience trade”

The first and most surprising, yet powerful factor shared across all stories was motherhood. Julia, being a mom to two small children, who on the verge of taking her own life with a gun in her mouth, was saved by the thought of her daughters; Lomé who fell pregnant and turned her life around to something more positive and purposeful, clean from substance abuse and the “party-lifestyle”; and Cami, who when she had her daughter “finally understood what sex was all about” and redefined her relationship with herself and her trauma. Each of these women was profoundly shaped by their experiences of motherhood as something redeeming, saving, life-giving and redefining.

The next factor identified was the participants’ ability to re-author their own narrative. Each of the woman was open to using the tools and wisdom handed out to them (knowingly or not) by others to reframe their own stories. Each woman discusses a lightbulb moment where they heard someone else share their own story, or say something that resonated with them so deeply that they were able to challenge their own beliefs and narratives about their experiences. For Cami, she saw someone strip down to her pyjamas and talk about how she was raped in a home invasion in her bed wearing flannels, but then asking if it would have been her fault if she were in a silk-nighty instead. Cami’s world opened, and although she had redefined her trauma many times before then, and considered herself far into her

recovery as a wife and mother, the penny finally fully dropped for her – that her rape was not her fault. For Lomé, she had kept silent for so many years, feeling completely isolated, until she finally met a group of woman through church. All it took was one of them speaking up about a sexual assault she had suffered and all the other woman also recounted their events. In that moment Lom realised she was not alone, and for the first time felt safe enough to talk about what had happened, this opened the flood gates to change and self-acceptance, the abandonment of self-blame. Lastly, Julia was sitting in a conference, holding tightly onto the secret that her husband had taken money from another man to rape her, and she heard this woman say “whatever you aren’t saying is controlling you”, she broke down and a few weeks later shared her story with her daughters, with the world and that opened the door to the thriving foundation she leads today for rape survivors. The hearing, telling and re-telling of stories is expressed in the richness of the participant transcripts and has laid the path to recovery for themselves and others. As Cami says, she hopes that people hearing her stories allow them to speak their own truths, she doesn’t want her words or recovery to be the gold standard, or the weight they carry, but something inspiring that lets them know wherever they are on their journey is perfectly ok.

Lastly, the overwhelming themes that emerged throughout all narratives were those of grit (not giving up and powering through) and purpose. Grit was displayed through all woman’s tenacity and perseverance. Even when life felt unbearable, and they were operating in “numb” mode, they managed to power through, more often than not without support, in order to achieve the incredible outcomes they have as women and activists. This goes against the traditional notions of resilience which describe the likelihood of developing clinical pathology when lacking community

support, experiencing compound trauma's, having experienced childhood trauma, and displaying dissociative states and negative coping strategies lasting for more than one year after the trauma (Michenbaum, 2017). Each one of these woman experienced the previous descriptors, yet has been able to create meaning from their circumstances and adapt positively to their environments. Furthermore, as discussed above their altruism determines their purpose – which is to assist others who have experienced something similar to define their own truth and come to understand that the fault is not theirs.

Interestingly, all of the participants display the cognitive and meaning-making features identified in Meichenbaum's (2017) meta-analysis and discussion of resilience algorithms:

- Psychological flexibility which allows the survivor to discuss the aftermath of the event as interpreted both by themselves and others
- The ability to reframe and redefine trauma narratives with the inclusion of survival and coping stories
- Retaining a sense of agency by describing subsequent control and grit in the aftermath of the traumatic event.
- Inclusion of accomplishments and activities post the traumatic event - an "in spite of" outlook
- Stories which make reference to positive emotions, such as having the view that the bad traumatic event catalysed positive outcomes thus indicating benefit-finding approaches.

However do not display any evidence of

- The ability to share strategies in regulating intense negative emotions

If anything, there was a disclosure of the inability to deal with intense negative emotions via stories of dissociation, numbing, engaging in reckless activities, substance misuse and suicidal ideation. This is consistent with more recent discoveries that post traumatic growth and resilience can in fact co-exist with distress (a sense of vulnerability, exhibited lack of control over one's life) in that even those who perceive post-trauma growth may not exhibit decreased levels of distress (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Dekel, Ein-Dor, & Solomon, 2012).

This is particularly significant as it provides yet another opportunity for rape victims to move out from the pressures of "recovery" and understand that elements of growth can still exist where there are elements of distress. The clinical and community implication for all of the above suggests an open forum where stories can be shared without the expectation of recovery but the addition of hope of healing through altruism and sharing could create conditions of acceptance and re-authoring desperately needed within South African communities.

5.4 Situating the findings: implications for current and future research

As clearly put forth above, SA is in a precarious position when it comes to the sheer volume of rape perpetrations, and the limited ability to effectively and adequately address victims in a clinical capacity (Roberston, 2011). However, the above paints a picture of healing through helping, and healing through the power of story-telling, of emotional disclosure which cuts through the noise of rape-culture and victim blaming in often stigmatising communities.

Thus, the implication for current and future research lies in further unpacking the effects at individual and community level focussed on activities that correlate with cognitive processing and re-authoring which create space for healing after rape. Namely: acceptance of the trauma as an agent which creates opportunities; mastering control over various domains of life to re-assert power; engaging in altruistic activities; developing opportunities to recognise grit and perseverance; re-framing recovery as something that can also coincide with distress and thus not further isolate the victim with the pressured expectations of healing; an opportunity to openly share with other survivors, and lastly, focusing on establishing a purpose which lends meaning to the survivors current life.

However, in order to establish generalisability to larger populations that could benefit from the above enquiry, larger sizes of participant samples would be needed but with great care to avoid further marginalisation through statistical approaches.

5.5 Limitations of the study

5.5.1 The process

This study took place over 3 years. At the time I was writing it I was working full-time, and at some point moved countries. This meant that my relationship with the study was distant and a dance occurred between my motivation to finish it and the untold stories of the survivors. This created distance with the stories and in turn has potentially impacted the discipline required of truly enacting a hermeneutic enquiry. Chang (2010) notes that in order for a hermeneutic study to be effective the researcher must at all times remain close to the nuances and circles unfolding within and outside of the analysis. Furthermore, distance emerged between myself and the

participants which meant that the analysis weren't viewed and contributed to by them, this impacting the quality of the research. Packer (2010), that it is vital to safeguard the quality the hermeneutic process by building shared meaning via checking understanding. As my motivation waned as the researcher, distance grew in the supervision relationship resulting in less opportunity to engage more fully with the hermeneutic spiral, the building of loop upon loop with integrated levels of understanding, checking my understanding. This is key in establishing a solid foundation for a hermeneutic enquiry (De Kock, 2010).

Lastly, this research captures only the voices of three survivors. In an effort to honour their individual lived experiences, and in the spirit of non-marginalisation, a smaller sample size was acquired. Although consistent with the chosen phenomenological and methodological approaches, it lacks the general applicability to a greater population as the results of an objective quantitative study would. Thus the insights gained are deep and isolated (Creswell, 2009) However, this creates an opportunity for larger engagement with the themes uncovered in future research potentially focused on generating generalisable findings that can be applied to clinical practice.

5.5.2 The cultural implications

This study has been set in a particular cultural context in South Africa. This context is defined by deeply entrenched patriarchy and stories of masculinity and power (Jewkes, 2011). South Africa has the highest incidence of rape in the world (Robertson, 2011) and, as discussed in the literature review, provides a stage upon where intersections of gender, race, belief systems, and a culture of victim blaming act out complicated scenes. Cultural considerations are nuanced, not only to South

Africa as a country but to its sub-populations and communities. The cultural impacts felt by a white middle-aged Afrikaans woman entirely diverge from that of an Indian English speaking middle aged woman, or that of a Sotho speaking black young woman. The cultural context is as nuanced as the participants' stories. This impacts the way the research is understood and thus affects applicability to others, although intended by the research design.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have been fortunate enough to share the insights and interpretations co-constructed in the hermeneutic spiral with Cami, Lomé and Julia. Through their graciousness I was able to access their lived experiences and be part of telling their stories. These stories have led to important conclusions, namely that recovery is indeed possible, and there are mechanisms that can be employed to this effect namely re-framing the expected progression of recovery, accepting challenges and distress as part of the recovery process, acknowledging the trauma's provision of undiscovered beneficial opportunities, providing a peer-led safe and non-judgemental environment for sharing, and establishing mastery in one or more life-domains. More importantly, that there is indeed a relationship between helping others and healing through doing so with specific reference to sharing and witnessing others' stories. Motherhood, grit, purpose and distress have all revealed themselves as worthy allies in the journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist. Power, powerlessness and altruism, all the songs to which the dance of recovery sways. In summation, these findings keep with them an opportunity to springboard this deep and nuanced research into something more generalizable that has the potential to inform programmes and interventions at a local level in SA. Thus

satisfying the aim of this study which was to uncover potential mechanisms for recovery in light of the ongoing perpetration of rape in South Africa.

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APPENDIX A

Researcher:
Kalliste Kuhn
Cell: 0846671707
E-mail: kallistekuhn@rocketmail.com

Supervisor: Werner Human

Faculty of humanities
Department of psychology



University of Pretoria

30 October 2015

Dear Mara Glennie,

As per previous conversations, I am currently completing a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. In order to gain this qualification I need to complete a mini-dissertation.

The title of the study is: "From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors."

This study will be asking anti-rape activists, who themselves have been raped, to partake in a semi-structured interview in which they will be asked to discuss their personal rape experience and the subsequent journey that lead them to their current involvement in anti-rape activism.

The detailed information gained from these interviews will be used to better understand the mechanisms of recovery and resilience from their perspective that allowed the movement from victim, to survivor to activist.

As per previous agreement, by signing this letter it serves to confirm that you have agreed to provide me with the names and contact details of six anti-rape activists who work closely with TEARS Foundation.

However, upon review, it has become apparent that in order to provide me with the details of the anti-rape activists, you must first attain their consent to disclose their contact information.

Upholding ethical practice in attaining study participants is of great importance, not only for the integrity of the study, but for the protection and respect of potential participants too.

As soon as I have received my ethical clearance certificate from UP I will communicate this to you. At such point, please could you attain said consent via e-mail (a draft version of which is included below which can be amended to your liking as long as it conveys the main points of the mail). If consent to share their contact details is attained, please could you forward the proof of consent to me via e-mail (as is

discussed in the draft). The activist's consent to have their contact details shared, in no way indicates consent to participate in the study, it merely allows me access to the activist whereby I can provide more in-depth information allowing for a fully informed decision to participate or not.

Furthermore, I require of you a return date-stamped letter on a Tears Foundation Letterhead, which speaks to the issues above and states that you will first request consent to share the anti-rape activists details, and only once that consent has been attained, you will forward proof of consent as well as the contact details to me so that I can make further contact.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this issue, it is greatly appreciated. Kindly return this letter upon signing.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanking you in advance,
Kalliste Kuhn
Student number: 10525506

In consent to the above, this letter is signed by Mara E. Glennie,



(signature) _____ on this 31 day of October -
_2015.

Draft e-mail to anti-rape activists:

Dear (Name),

Tears Foundation has been in communications with Kalliste Kuhn who is currently completing her Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Pretoria. In order to do this, she has to complete a dissertation and has chosen a topic directly related to the Gender Based Violence sector Tears Foundation occupies.

The title of her study is: "From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors."

Kalliste is looking to interview anti-rape activists who themselves have had a rape experience.

Considering the work that you do within the activist sector, and your own story, I was wondering if you would allow me to pass on your contact details to Kalliste in order for her to tell you more about her study and what would be required of you if you chose to participate.

Please respond via mail **as soon as possible** in order to indicate your consent for your details to be passed forward to Kalliste. Your consent to have your details shared in no way is interpreted as consent to participate in the study, it is simply to allow Kalliste to contact you, upon which time a choice can be made whether to participate or not.

If you do consent to having your details shared, this mail will be forwarded to Kalliste who will be in telephonic contact soonest.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours Truly
(Founder)
(Signature)

APPENDIX B



3 November 2015

Dear Kalliste,

As per your letter of 30 October 2015, I will ensure that consent to share contact details is attained from the anti-rape activists I feel would greatly benefit your study, and from your study.

I have received your draft e-mail and find it to my satisfaction. Once you have communicated to me that you have received your ethical clearance certificate, I will send this e-mail to the six activists Tears works closely with who meet the requirements as specified by the title.

Upon receiving their written consent to share their contact details in the form of an e-mail, I will forward this to you, from which point you can begin to make contact.

I sincerely hope that Tears Foundation will be able to assist you accordingly, as this is a subject we fully support and a topic we feel is necessary to be explored within the Violence Against Women and Children sector.

Please let me know if there is anything else that I can assist with.

Yours Truly,

Mara Glennie
Founder of TEARS Foundation

Physical Address: Block C, Kingsley Office Park, 85 Protea Road, Chislehurst, Sandton, 2146
Postal Address: Postnet Suite 414, Private bag X9, Benmore, 2010, Gauteng, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)10 590 5920 **Fax:** +27 (0)86 520 0316
Company Registration Number: 2012/182211/08 **NPO:** 138-020 **PBO:** 9300 42 695



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

9 November 2015

Dear Prof Maree

Project: From rape victim to anti-rape activist: exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors
Researcher: K Kuhn
Supervisor: Mr W Human
Department: Psychology
Reference number: 10525506 (GW20150913HS)

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence of 9 October 2015.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 9 November 2015. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: karen.harris@up.ac.za

Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

APPENDIX D

Research study information.

Researcher:
Kalliste Kuhn
Cell: 0846671707
E-mail: kallistekuhn@rocketmail.com

Supervisor: Werner Human

Faculty of Humanities
Department of psychology



Title of study:

“From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors.”

Purpose of the study:

It is said that South Africa is “the rape capital of the world” (Human Rights Watch, 2010). 62 649 cases of sexual assault were reported to the SAPS in the 2013-2014 period alone, and this figure is considered to be largely underestimated. This often has implications for the physical, mental, emotional and economic health of those affected by sexual assault thus contributing to a break-down in society.

With the large number of people being victimised by sexual assault, it is important to start looking at ways of potential healing that allow victims to become survivors. What better way to do that than by explore the personal journeys of victims who have become anti-rape activists, who stand up against rape and sexual assault every day to try and make a difference in the world using their own experiences. By exploring this journey, some important information about the process of potential healing and resilience might be uncovered which could then be further explored.

As part of attaining my Masters in Counselling Psychology through the University of Pretoria, this study aims to contribute to information around the potential recovery process as described above.

Via our telephonic conversation and e-mail, you have indicated that you would like to take part in this study by participating in an interview where you will be sharing your journey from rape victim to anti-rape activist. Your participation is invaluable and I want to thank you in advance.

Your role in the study:

In order to learn more about your journey, we will be meeting at the TEARS offices in Sandton, in a private meeting room, at a time convenient for you to discuss your full story of moving from victim to activist. Upon agreeing to participate, I will forward the

details for the exact address and time. If required, travel expenses getting to the interview will be remunerated.

During our meeting I will ask some questions that act as guidelines and as we move through the interview we can pay attention to different parts of your answers and explore different pieces of your story. This will allow me to see the context of your story and to gain a deep understanding of all the factors and themes involved. Please set aside at least 90 minutes for the interview with the understanding that it might take longer than 90 minutes. The interview will be tape recorded. I will then transcribe the recordings and group the interview into themes. These themes will be written up into a findings and discussion section where it will be related back to literature and your story will be acknowledged as a contribution to this field of study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and the research process will be highly collaborative in line with seeking to understand your world and experiences. If at any point however you feel as though you would like to withdraw, you can do so at any time. If that happens, any information you have given me will be destroyed in order to protect your privacy.

If the interview or involvement in the study brings up any memories or emotions that could be distressing, particularly if you have a history of trauma, anxiety or depression please advise me immediately and we will stop the interview. Furthermore, if our conversation triggers any distressing emotions post-interview, please feel free to contact Laken Folster who is a registered Counselling Psychologist with the Health Professionals Council South Africa (HPCSA). She will provide you with free psychological support services for 4-6 sessions at her practice in Johannesburg. If necessary, transport costs to and from sessions will be covered.

Laken Folster
HPCSA Registration number: PS 0594326
Cell: 082 923 8465
e-mail: laken@mail.com

Requirements:

In order to participate in the study, it is required that you must personally have been a victim of rape. Rape as defined in this study specifies rape as non-consensual penetration of a body opening by an object or body part. Also, in order to participate, you must currently be engaged in activities (public speaking, writing, advocating for other's rights openly, working-in an organisation etc.) that address rape perpetration and advocacy for the rights of rape victims; and that you have a firm command of the English language even though it may not be your first language.

Confidentiality:

After gaining your consent to share your details, Mara Glennie from TEARS Foundation put me in touch with you. Outside of that referral, all information you share will be confidential. This means that any information that could identify you will be omitted or changed. Further to this, you will be encouraged to provide me with a pseudonym (false name) that I can use when making reference to your contribution in the study.

In order to ensure that this study is of a good standard, I will be supervised throughout the process. This means that information or data may be shared with my supervisor for monitoring and evaluation purposes. This sharing will only be done in a strictly academic capacity whereby every effort will be taken to respect your confidentiality.

Furthermore, any information collected will be securely stored. Electronic versions of information will be stored on a password protected laptop and USB flash drive only accessible by myself as the researcher. Any hard-copies of information, will be locked away in a secure filing cabinet for the duration of the study, whereby afterwards, any hardcopy information will be securely stored in the Psychology Department at the University of Pretoria in accordance with their storage protocol. After 15 years of secure storage, and data collected will be destroyed.

By agreeing to participate in this study, any information or data gathered will be re-used for future research.

My role in the study:

As the researcher I cannot deny that I am part of this process, and that my very presence will contribute to the overall findings, however, I will ensure that I am conscious of my involvement and will work collaboratively to remain respectful of your role as the expert of your own life. I will receive supervision throughout this process to ensure that a good standard of research is being observed.

The study will be written up into a final document to be handed to the University of Pretoria. It will be uploaded onto an electronic database that is publicly accessible. Furthermore, the information will be used for further research purposes that might be published in an academic journal which can be globally accessed. I will also be distributing a hard-copy of the study to participants if requested, and in that way you can see your story as it is understood by both of us.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation will most certainly add great value to understanding the movement from victim to survivor, and in so doing will potentially help others who have victimised at the hands of sexual violence. Kindly complete the consent form below and return it by e-mail to the address above.

My sincere gratitude,

Kalliste Kuhn (Masters Research Student)

Werner Human (Supervisor)

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Researcher:
Kalliste Kuhn
Cell: 0846671707
E-mail: kallistekuhn@rocketmail.com

Supervisor: Werner Human

Faculty of humanities
Department of psychology



University of Pretoria

Consent Form

I,, have read and understand the terms of the study as laid out in the Study Information Sheet above. I hereby freely consent to take part in this study as laid out above. Furthermore, I freely give permission for the researcher to use a voice recorder.

I understand that any information or data will be securely stored, either via password protected laptops/USB flash drives if electronic, or within the Psychology Department (Humanities building, room 11-22), in a locked filing cabinet if in hardcopy form, to be accessed by the researcher only. I understand that the data will be kept for 15 years and then destroyed.

I understand that should I require any psychological assistance, I can contact Laken Folster, registered Counselling Psychologist, (details above) who will provide a free follow up debriefing session as well as psychological support for 4 (or more) sessions.

Lastly, I give my permission for any data from this study, as well as the results to be used for future research purposes.

Name: _____ (Block letters please)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Kalliste Kuhn (Researcher)

10525506

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F

Researcher:
Kalliste Kuhn
Cell: 0846671707
E-mail: kallistekuhn@rocketmail.com

Supervisor: Werner Human

Faculty of humanities
Department of psychology



University of Pretoria

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DATE:	TIME:
LOCATION:	NAME:
AGE:	GENDER:
RACE:	RESEARCHER:

Opening:

- Introductions
i.e. Thank you for agreeing to participate today. As you know from the study information and our discussions, we are going to be talking a lot about very personal experiences that have to deal with difficult topics like rape. But we will also be talking about your current activities and the work you are doing within your sector. If at any stage you feel upset or uncomfortable, please do not hesitate to tell me and we can gladly take a break or stop. I appreciate you being here today and will value any contribution you are able to make in today's interview. Do you have any questions?
- Limitations to confidentiality
- Reviewing aspects of informed consent.
- Describing question/answer process i.e. the questions are open-ended, elaborate, give as much detail as you can, this includes thoughts, feelings and emotions etc.

Questions:

- 1) Please could you tell me a little bit about yourself (*This serves as an ice-breaker and attempts to establish rapport*)
- 2) I understand that this is a sensitive issue and I am asking quite a lot of you in this moment, but if you feel comfortable enough, can you please tell me about your rape experience?
- 3) Please can you tell me about how life was for you after the rape experience you just told me about?
- 4) Since the rape experience happened, do you feel that you have taken any steps towards potential healing or recovery in any way? Please could you provide as much detail as possible.

Potential probes:

- Please describe any moments you might recall as a 'turning point'?

5) If you do feel that you have taken some steps towards healing, what factors do you think helped you to do this?

Potential probes:

- Factors that affected recovery positively
- Factors that hindered recovery

6) Please can you describe your journey to becoming an anti-rape activist?

Potential Probes:

- What encouraged the move to activism?
- What does activism do for you?

7) Please describe how you experience yourself now as somebody who is both a rape survivor as well as an anti-rape activist?

APPENDIX G

Researcher:
Kalliste Kuhn
Cell: 0846671707
E-mail: kallistekuhn@rocketmail.com

Supervisor: Werner Human

Faculty of humanities
Department of psychology



University of Pretoria

19 February 2016

Dear

Thank you very much for participating in the research interview in November 2015. As discussed with you then, the nature of this research means that I will be making contact with you throughout the process in order to gain a deeper understanding of your experiences, and also for you to provide feedback on my understanding of your story.

The interview was exceptionally rich with detail, but there are a few more areas that I would appreciate elaboration on if you are so willing.

Please be so kind as to answer the questions below and return these answers via e-mail within the next two weeks. Your answers can be any length you wish, but please could you be as detailed as possible and use whatever writing style you choose. They do not have to be attached as a separate document but can be included in the body of the e-mail if you so wish.

By sending the responses to the questions below, you are providing your continued consent to be part of this study, and for me to use this information as part of the research project.

Question 1:

What, in particular, drew you to activism?

Question 2:

Do you think that you would be in a different point of your recovery without your activism? If so, why?

Question 3:

What **internal** tools/characteristics/traits have you used to keep moving forward on your healing journey?

Question 4:

What makes you get up when you have been knocked down?

Warm Regards,
Kalliste Kuhn

APPENDIX H

Interview Transcripts

From Rape Victim to Anti-Rape Activist: Exploring the Personal Journeys of Three South African Survivors: Interview 1.

Context:

As per Cami's request, the interview was conducted at her home as this would be more convenient for her as her children are home-schooled and she would feel more comfortable there.

I have had some previous interaction with Cami through the Tears Foundation, where I worked during 2015. This allowed previous rapport to be established which aided with the comfortability and familiarity that was so important when discussing such sensitive issues.

Initially I was extremely excited about the interview as it represented the next step in an already complicated research process. It symbolised movement and brought hope. Simultaneously, I felt nervous that I would not be able to honour the hermeneutic approach to interviewing as effectively due to my relative inexperience with the framework, I did however read up on hermeneutic interviewing strategies, which I tried to remain mindful of. Due to my training as a counselling psychologist, I often automatically provided Cami with empathic statements to either ask her to expand, or to check my understanding. I understand that this may have guided the interaction at times or limited the free flow of Cami's thought process. However, I feel that it contributed to creating shared understanding, a vital component of hermeneutic analysis.

At times, the interview was interrupted by her children or by other household distractions. This left me feeling frustrated at times, and hampered the flow and development of Cami's narrative. At times I felt as though I was providing leading questions rather than probing for expansion of the answer, but tried to remain mindful of this and took a genuine interest in Cami's retelling of her own story, rather than pushing my agenda.

Transcript:

I guided Cami through the informed consent form and asked for further questions of which she had none. I then notified her of her options for psychological support as well as reminded her that she could stop at any point and withdraw from the study if she wished. I then asked her to sign the informed consent form and made her aware that she was also consenting to being recorded for research purposes.

Interviewer: Alright, thank you very much.

Participant: Sure.

I: So basically, first and foremost, thanks for having me [smiles], thank you for agreeing to participate. You don't find very many people who are open to going through the process and helping to give back [sic], and I really do appreciate your time. Um ja⁴, so basically I gave a brief introduction of what we were going to be talking about and the theme of the research, and please - again I have to emphasise that if you could give as much detail as you can that would be really helpful. If you want to speak in metaphors that's perfect, elaborate, you know - just flesh it out as much as you can. If at any point you feel you might want a bit more privacy so we can really go into it more deeply let me know, or anything else you may need. So I am trying to understand your lived experience through words.

P: Okey Dokey

I: Do you have any questions up until this point?

P: No not yet

I: Ok, well if you do stop me – comment or whatever please. Alright, so um as we start I'm just going to state that the date is the 7th of December, I am here with Cami, and we are just going to go into the interview now. So to begin, just to shake the cobwebs off, tell me a bit about yourself give me some context – Who is Cami?

P: Um, at the moment I am 41 years old, a full time mom, housewife, part time everything else [smiles]...

I: Ja, ja [smiles].

P: With two kids that are home schooling, which is why everything else is part time. I try to do my activism work online as far as possible and then the things that I have to do like meetings and actual marches and rallies and things, the whole family gets

⁴ “Ja” is the Afrikaans word for “Yes”, widely used and understood in the South African context across most languages.

involved because they all understand how important it is to me. Um my son was - had just turned two, the first Slut Walk that we went to...

I: OK awesome...

P: I pushed him along in a pram, at a rape protest march because that's just what my life is like right now.

I: And your family has embraced that and supported you through your activism journey?

P: All the way through. Um the first time I heard of Slut Walk my daughter was 10 and, um I just read this little article in the newspaper and thought, "Oh that's something I think I want to look into." - And I went and googled it and started researching where it came from and all of that and my daughter walked into the room and she's like, "mommy what are you doing?"

I: Ja

P: And I sat down and I talked her through it at 10 years old [nods].

I: Talked her through what?

K: What rape is about because we have always been very open in talking about our bodies and where babies come from and stuff like that, and in fact she was at the birth of her brother she caught him when he came out in the birthing pool [smiles].

I: Wow, schjoe⁵.

K: Well obviously with help from the midwife [laughs].

I: Ja of course [laughs]

P: You know, and cut the cord and stuff like that. So we have always been open about that sort of thing, there has never been any of that, "the stork brought him" kind of crap. So she has known about that, but talking to her about it in the context of rape is very difficult.

I: In the context of personal experience or of rape in general?

P: Rape in general. Um we did later as she got older, we talked about my own experiences and things like that, but initially when I was looking at Slut Walk in terms of participating in the cause, we talked about rape in general.

I: Ja.

⁵ "Schjoe" is a commonly used and understood South African colloquial expression used to indicate awe, disbelief or surprise.

P: The context of what it is, the type of violation, what our rights are that are being violated, body autonomy - that kind of thing. And by the end of it she said, "Mommy, I am doing this with you" - And she made her own placard that said "I was made with love not force." [smiles].

I: Wow.

P: At the age of 10! And she has been my inspiration through all of this. The strength, the compassion that she brings to these things with me is phenomenal. You know, I mean the capacity for understanding something like that, to that concept [sic], at that age just blew my mind.

Son: Mom the power went off.

P: Ah no, that's such bad timing. Can we just take a break?

I: Of course.

Interruption – Son came in to tell his mom that the power went off. This was followed by her realising that they were low on electricity and so Kammi spent the next twenty minutes purchasing more and loading it, at which time she apologised for the disruption and we resumed.

I: OK, so you were giving me an overview of how you got into Slut Walk and we will get into that a little bit more - I would just like to know a little bit more about your motivations. So if we could take it back, I know that it might be a bit difficult to talk about, or it might not be – that's your understanding and experience of it, but if you could, please could you tell me about your personal experience with rape.

P: OK, I - It's a bit difficult to find a starting point because I was molested by a cousin as a child from when I was about six years old through to about 11 (years old). Every time we slept over at their house he would, well essentially, rape me. It really irritates me when we use all these euphemisms for it, what he did was rape. Every second or third weekend for many years. So I grew up not really knowing about boundaries, about having personal space and things like that so, it was a bit difficult to be firm about saying no when you are not really sure about what you are allowed to say no to and what you are not. And then when I was 18 there was a guy that I kind of went out with but not quite. He was just like one of the guys that partied with us, and in those days, "good little Indian girls" [air quotes] stayed at home and learned how to cook and clean and be good housewives, and I wasn't one of those girls. I wanted to go out to clubs and stuff like that but at that time it was mainly guys doing that sort of thing and very few girls, and so I partied with the guys a lot and - The guys that I grew up with

knew me and knew that we were just buddies and they accepted me as one of the guys. But this guy was a friend of a friend and he had gone out with us a couple of times, and I knew that he liked me. And then the one day we went to a house party, the whole bunch of us, and he was the only one with a car, so he drove everybody else home first and then he took me to this vacant parking lot in the middle of the night, and we went into the back seat, and I thought he just wanted to kiss and cuddle a little bit then he would take me home [inhales deeply], and then when he started taking my clothes off, I said “no”, and he wouldn’t listen to me and he said, um, “Stop playing hard to get. I know what you are” [frowns], and I said, “No I am not playing hard to get, I don’t want you to do this to me” [raises hands to chest, frowns], and he completely ignored me. And afterwards, I was throwing up outside his car. I opened up the car door and was throwing up, and he said “Oh my God. I am so sorry. I didn’t realise you were a virgin, I thought you were just playing hard to get” [shakes head], “Wh-what difference does it make? I said no!” But you know it was in 1992, 1993, and at that time there was just no concept of date rape so I didn’t report it and I didn’t go to the police station because I just couldn’t bear the thought. I mean in those days it just - the new South Africa wasn’t even here yet, it was just old judgemental Indian men who were police officers, and the idea of trying to explain to them – ja, there would have been a lot of victim blaming you know? I wouldn’t even have known where to start explaining that I was in the backseat of this guy’s car to start off with, you know? And in the process of trying to work through that idea that I had said no but he didn’t listen, but at the same time I was there so was I asking for it by putting myself into that situation. You know for a long time I didn’t even define it as rape.

I: What did you define it as?

P: Ag it was - I didn’t. It was just what happened [shrugs shoulders].

I: Is it something that you processed? Is it something that you put to the side or.....? [probes].

P: I very much just suppressed it, pretended it didn’t happen. Stopped hanging out with that group of friends, started going out with a guy who I knew was friends with my cousin that I knew was definitely, *definitely* safe you know?

I: Was it the same cousin that had raped you growing up?

P: His brother and another cousin on the other side of the family as well. They both knew this guy. One was friends with him [sic] because they were neighbours, and the cousin from the other side, my mother’s side of the family, was in the air force with him

and knew him. The cousins - I just knew he was safe. I knew he wasn't going to push any boundaries. That was just - you know - he was able to have a good time. He accepted that I smoked and I drank and all of those things, but he also knew that I was a "good girl". You know he wasn't...

I: What do you mean by a "good girl"? You've mentioned that twice now – the "good Indian girl, the good girl". Could you unpack what that means?

P: The ones that followed the rules you know? Especially the Indian community in those days.

I: Can you explain that to me a bit more? About the culture and context of the Indian community?

P: Well it was the kind of world where if I went out onto the balcony in long flannel pyjamas I got shouted at by my great aunt for being indecent.

I: OK

Son: [Enters room] Mommy, mooties.

P: Oh, mooties time! Can we take a break quickly please?

Recording paused: Again, the flow was interrupted which left me feeling slightly frustrated but allowed me time to reflect on the interview so far at which point I jotted down a few observations and potential emerging themes. Recording continues.

I: OK, so you were giving me a little bit of context - You would go onto the balcony in your flannel pyjamas and you would be indecent according to your family?

P: Ja, there were very strict codes of conduct which I was never able to understand, you know? You had to stay indoors, when you went out in public you were always perfectly made up and dressed a certain way, and you didn't talk to the boys that hung out on the street corners, and street harassment was just taken for granted. There were always boys who just stood on the street and chatted up girls, that was just what they did.

I: And your role was to ignore it and just move on?

P: Exactly [nods]. You know? And if you talk back to them then that means that you are loose⁶ you see?

I: Oh, I see. So just the association with them was enough to give you a label?

P: Exactly.

⁶ "Loose" is a colloquial term used to describe someone who appears to have "loose morals or values". In this context, "loose" is used to indicate promiscuity.

I: So then how did something like incest in the family - how was that dealt with? Was it ever speculated or ...

P: It wasn't ever spoken about, you just didn't talk about that sort of thing. Because there is no sex education at all. You don't talk about genitalia you don't say those kinds of words at all, *ever*. There is no frame of reference for speaking about it at all. Ever. There is this weird thing that you can't talk to the boys on the street corner because that's wrong, but it's just wrong because it's wrong, because your grandmother told you that you can't talk to boys, you know? But they don't tell you why. They don't tell you what's wrong with it. They just expect you to obey. That's what the whole "Good girl" thing is, that you follow the rules.

I: And because you didn't follow the rules 100% you don't see yourself as a good girl?

P: Yes. Ja, well I do now because I realise it's a load of bullshit, but you know, when you are 14 years old and you can't understand why it's wrong to go swimming with a bunch of guys and actually wear a costume. And it's difficult to find your own sense of identity, it's difficult to, you know, read. I read a lot as a child, you know? Like things like [sic] *Cry the Beloved Country*⁷ so, I was doing that sort of reading where I was questioning the way the world works for as long as I can remember.

I: OK [nods].

P: To put that kind of mind-set into that kind of society, I had to be almost schizophrenic to survive. You know? I had to be able to present that image of what was expected of me whilst still processing the way I see the world.

I: So by schizophrenic, do you mean you feel you had to have that split?

P: Ja exactly [nods]. That ability to pretend to be something that you are not. To pretend to follow the rules while knowing that the rules are bullshit. And it's quite difficult to do that because it's so entrenched you know? It's everywhere. It's whether you can cook a curry by the time you are twelve years old, its whether you wear a swimming costume to the pool or shorts, it's whether you scream obscenities at guys who are trying to pick you up, its whether - My cousin owned a fleet of taxis growing up and good girls didn't smoke in public ever, but I went to varsity where there were feminists left right and centre who smoked in the cafeteria and didn't give a shit about the rules. And when my cousin owned this fleet of taxis, the guys knew that I smoked and I couldn't smoke in the house in front of all the old ladies, so I would go outside to

⁷ A political book written about democracy in apartheid South Africa by _____

smoke with them, and I'd chat to them and they were real human beings. They just happened to have different genitalia, which to me was just [shrugs shoulders] – “so what?” But you know, that also contributed to the reputation of being a loose woman or a bad girl [air quotes], or you know, the kind that deserves to be raped.

I: Which you felt put you in a difficult position when you did have your rape experience?

P: Exactly. Because it just confirmed for me - or that programming kicked in – which made the self-blame a lot worse, when I finally realised what was going on.

I: So let's talk about that a little bit. If you think back to the night in the car in the back seat. If you think about saying “no” and not being listened to, and being violated against your will - and you said after it happened you opened the door and you vomited with what I'm assuming was trauma, and fear – Tell me about your headspace in that moment, what was going on for you?

P: There wasn't actually [sic]. I was strangely blank. It was as if the trauma has just kicked everything out, you know, there were no – immediately after it was just the physicality of the throwing up, of the feeling sore, of the feeling sick, and that absolute revulsion where you are literally sick to your stomach with this, “I can't believe what actually just happened to my body” kind of feeling. And, I was just In a daze. I don't remember going home, I don't remember my mom opening the door. I don't know whether I showered. I remember crying at some point before going to sleep but the next few weeks even [sic], is a complete blur. Up to now even [sic], I don't remember [frowns]. I must have gone to varsity, I must have carried on working on Rock Concert doing radio shows, all the stuff that I did on campus. I don't remember any of it, I was just going through the motions.

I: Mechanical. And what memory – When do you remember having an experience after your rape experience, where you had your wits about you so to speak, or you felt that you re-entered the world for a moment?

P: Hmm [looks away]. I don't know, there is a long time after that that was just - I strangely started drinking a lot more after that. Then probably about six months later I was at um, a different cousin's daughter's birthday party, and everybody else had gone already, and just a bunch of us were playing cards and drinking. And Kesh – That's the guy I went out with for a couple of years afterwards - was there. And he was just treating me like a normal human being.

I: Not like you were broken?

P: Not like I was broken. Not like there was something wrong with me for drinking and playing cards with the boys and being awake until three o'clock in the morning. There wasn't that labelling process that I felt. You know even with the guys that accepted me, they accepted that I smoke and drank and partied [sic], but I was just one of the guys and it defined me as a more masculine personality, do you know what I mean?

I: Ja [nods], you couldn't be a female who just happened to engage in social activities of that nature.

P: Exactly [nods]. You know I was defined as the "not a girl" and I wasn't approachable as a female or desirable as a woman. I was "one of the guys". Where with Kesh, he made it clear that I was a normal, attractive woman who just happened to do things that other normal attractive women didn't do. He joked with me, he put his arm around me. At the end of the night he asked for my number and, you know, it was all very proper and also at the same time flattering, that he had seen me as whole.

I: So you felt seen?

P: I felt seen. I felt heard. I felt respected, which is something I hadn't felt in a long time.

I: When was the last time you felt respected? Did you ever feel respected?

P: [Pause] I don't think I did, now that I think about it.

I: So it was new for you?

P: Ja, and I felt admired. I felt wanted. I've always been academically brilliant so in terms of that I was the kind of girl who got asked "Which university are you going to?" at a time when girl's education was not prioritised. So I was in that percentage of girls who were thought to be worth educating, not just be boring old housewives. There were cousins of mine that were pulled out of school in standard eight to be married off at the age of 17 years old.

I: It was a different kind of admiration.

P: Exactly [nods], but it was always - there was always a sort of "you're different, you don't belong, you don't, you don't, you don't". For the first time that night, just sitting there drinking, smoking, being myself, he saw me for who I was - and he had known me since I was 9/10 years old - but suddenly that night everything was different somehow, I was suddenly old enough to attract his attention in a different way. I had always been the little sister goofing around, not taken seriously, but always playful. He would always include me in the boys games and stuff like that. It was an evolution of that same relationship where I felt safe. It was also safe in the sense that, whilst all of

that was going on, he was still conditioned into the belief that girls were meant to be virginal, that it was something that was only given away on your wedding night, so in that way I knew I was safe too you know? Safe from intimacy. That's what I meant when I said I felt safe with him. I knew how this would play out. I knew that it wasn't really fireworks going off you know, like childhood friend-turned-lover or anything. It was more like this would be a safe relationship to go into because I wouldn't be threatened physically or emotionally or sexually...

I: Or anything that I am not ready for....?

K: Exactly. And that was, you know, the first time I started to come back as a person, as a human being. So that was a good starting point for me in terms of building up my confidence again in who I was. He called me and we would talk for three hours about everything on earth from music to drinking, to clubs, to philosophy. He allowed me the space to explore my own thoughts, exploring who I was, not being as harshly judgmental of myself. Being able to see myself through different eyes.

I: A different perspective.

P: Ja, it also coincided with being at varsity and being introduced to feminism and a whole different mind-set and broadening my concepts of the world, where I suddenly stopped feeling like the outcast and started realising that it was society that was messed up and not me. And, you know, just that process of unpacking - at that point 18/19 years of conditioning - that started at that point. The coincidence of hitting varsity with the first time in my life, the multicultural experience, different race groups, different belief systems, the first time I met atheists, you know? Just this melting pot of different philosophies to be explored. And that opened up a lot of questions for me, and also freed me from a lot of the baggage.

I: So that allowed you to liberate yourself from a lot of the cultural baggage and the programming?

P: Ja, definitely [nods].

I: And during your time with Kesh, at any point, were you able to confide in him what had happened before hand?

P: No [shakes head].

I: You hadn't told anyone?

P: No.

I: So there were a lot of other liberations and freedoms you were finding yourself in, but that didn't form part of one of them?

P: No, because at that stage I still wasn't completely clear. I wasn't processing it myself. It was just shut off into its own separate little compartment that stayed untouched, which I have done all my life.

I: With everything? So every stress or trauma - it's just easier to put it in its box and deal with it at a different time?

P: Or not deal with it at all [smiles].

I: And when would you say you actually acknowledged and dealt with that box? Or have you not?

P: I have now. Um, the first time I actually recognised it for what it was, it was - just trying to think [frowns] - about 4 or 5 years later when I had my first consensual sexual relationship. The contrast between the two experiences was cataclysmic. It just hit me like a ton of bricks.

I: What hit you like a ton of bricks?

P: The fact that what happened in the back seat of that car was rape. It was not sex. It was not somebody pushing too far. It wasn't my fault for being there, it was his choice. Because - what happened was, I was in Israel and I had just turned 21, and on my 21st birthday I got rip-roaring drunk, I mean, drunker than I have ever been before or since. Um, and we were at a pub and everything was hazy - it still is to this day. But at some point, I remember coming out of it a little bit into my surroundings, and realising that I was in a room alone with a man that a few times before; my gay best friend and I had gone "Oh my God, he's so hot!" [smiles], and ogled over him in the pub a few times before. And now suddenly (I'm) alone with this guy, in his room, on a different Kibbutz, and I had my shirt off and just said "Oh my god, what is going on!" and he stopped right in the middle of that, let me get dressed, and took me back to my friends, no questions asked. And that's the only memory I have of that night. And when he did that, it suddenly made me realise, "wait a minute, it wasn't me". Because here I was, in an even more compromising and vulnerable situation, more drunk, more everything and the guy was able to make a different choice. So it wasn't me. Because if it was me then the choice would have been the same, then he wouldn't be able to stop.

I: When did that realisation hit?

P: It was probably a week later, because he came back to our Kibbutz and he actually courted me properly. (He) took me out to dinner, bought me ice cream, you know the whole sort of - it's what everybody else takes for granted - but for me it was a fairy

tale. I had never been treated like that before. Because even with Kesh, we were buddies that played together, I knew that it wasn't going to lead to anything I wouldn't be able to handle. Whereas with Vlad, it started off at something that I couldn't handle but he handled it off for me, which just changed things around completely.

I: That opened up the possibility to have something more romantic that isn't as safe or as sure?

P: And feel comfortable with my own body, and to feel like I could be desired without feeling dirty about it. And in that first intimate encounter with him when we made love for the first time, he was so considerate. He made me fully understand that it could be about me. It's not about your wedding night as a gift for your husband - this whole puritanical kind of attitude towards sex - it was just the pure joy of giving each other physical pleasure. It was important that it was reciprocal, that it wasn't me playing the role of the woman giving sexual pleasure to the man above all things. It was mutual, it was consensual, it was enjoyable. And in the weeks that followed, that there was all of this going on, on a sub-conscious level, there was this comparison.

I: The dissonance about the previous rape experience and what was happening now?

P: Exactly. And then all the stuff in the box started coming up.

I: How? How did that happen?

P: Um. It was just, you know, um just suddenly wanting to cry in the middle of it without being able to explain, and I didn't have the words for it so I would just run into the bathroom and have a good weep. And of course the poor guy was completely confused [laughs], and didn't know what the hell was going on [laughs]. Ja, but I don't even remember trying to explain it to him.

I: Did you feel that you didn't have to?

P: There wasn't a need. I could see that he was hurt because I wasn't communicating because I was just, ja, running off when he thought I was ok and then suddenly I would just - I've always had a thing about crying in front of people which I have just started dealing with in the last sort of year or two, and he didn't even know that I was crying. All he knew was that in the middle of sex I would just get up and run off to the bathroom and I don't know what he thought about it you know? But then I came home. I was only in Israel for six months and I knew I had to come home at some, and that also played a part in not being able to deal with things properly because everything was turned on its head. You know, here was this wonderful physical relationship that was mutual and consensual and happy, with both of us knowing it was going to end in a

definite time period as opposed to “this is something that you only do with someone that you are going to spend the rest of your life with”.

I: And then being faced with that cultural reality when you have to shift out of that context and go back to the same environment that made you feel dirty for the things that you felt empowered by in Israel.

P: *Exactly*. I actually suffered more cultural shock coming back home than going there because there I felt like for the first time – I fit. All of the things that were considered weird, or strange or wrong about me at home was [sic] suddenly the norm. Everybody was sleeping around, everybody was drinking, everybody was smoking, everybody was partying until ridiculous hours of the morning – that was just what people went to Kibbutz for. It was legendary at that time.

I: And the weeping there, what did that become at home? What was the process that unfolded which allowed you to speak out about your rape – if at all?

P: It was another two years. Um, I tried once with another guy that – Because what happened was, having experienced that and coming back to a South Africa that was starting to change, I decided that “OK well this must be an Indian thing. Indian people are just stupid, Indian men have unrealistic expectations blah blah blah”, and I started partying at the white clubs. And just in my naivety, because of having grown up in apartheid South Africa, there was still all of that racial crap to deal with as well not understanding about cultural things as well. Because Vlad was white, I assumed all white men were the same and as liberal as he was, so I started partying at the white clubs hoping to find something similar, assuming that that’s what it would be like. Of course it wasn’t you know? Its not a racial thing, it’s a male-female thing and it just didn’t work. I woke up after every one night stand feeling worse about myself, feeling less fulfilled, feeling horrible. (I) was in the worst space I had ever been at in my whole life. Just drinking, drugging, sleeping around. Trying to escape my life as far as possible. Working as little as possible, just enough to pay the rent because at that stage – Oh right! [claps hands together] It came out with my mom first. There was a guy that I was working with that I, um he was based in _____ and he had come up to _____ to do some training work as sales manager and stuff, and he was really good looking, and naturally I ended up seducing him. And he for some reason hadn’t booked into a hotel that weekend, and I said “Just come back to my mom’s house and you can spend the night there.” And in the middle of the night we were in the lounge, and I’m not sure why we didn’t sleep in the room - probably propriety or whatever - I

was just going to have sex in the lounge with him [sic] then go back to my room so that when my mom woke up in the morning it looked like he slept in the lounge or whatever. Except, my mom woke up to get a drink of water and had to walk down the passage to the kitchen past the lounge. And the next day she had confronted me about what she had seen. We had a screaming match and that's how it actually came out. In the middle of a fight. I just screamed at her "Well you think sex is so fucking important but you wouldn't if you had been raped, then you would know that sex means nothing!" [raises and shakes hands]. I just screamed it out at her in that context as opposed to sitting down and having a conversation with her about it.

I: And how was that for you? To get that out?

P: Um. In a way it was quite cathartic, but for a long time it completely destroyed my relationship with my mom because she had some serious preconceptions about how people should react to being raped, and I wasn't living up to those.

I: What were those preconceptions?

P: You know, you should become "anti-men" and not want to have anything to do with them and you should be afraid of them and report it to the police.

I: Did she engage in more dialogue with you about being raped when that had finally come out or did she avoid it? Or how did that interaction go after that screaming match?

P: Um. She tried to get me therapy, which really didn't work for me [smiles and shakes head], and she perceived that as me not wanting to get help and get better. So she said "If you're not going to change the way you are dealing with this then you can't live under my roof because I'm not willing to deal with it the way that you are." So I said, "Fine, I'm working, I'm earning my own money and I can go live on my own. Bye". And that was how it went. You know, we didn't see each other for months at a time and she breezed into my life every six months or so, (to) buy me a whole bunch of clothes and feel like she's done her maternal duty, take me out to lunch, and go back to living her life and ignoring me.

I: Do you feel like it was a tick-box approach?

P: Ja, pretty much. It was just like, "OK I've done my maternal duty and that should keep her happy for the next while." You know? Without ever having any deep, meaningful interaction.

I: What would you have wanted her to do? In an ideal world? How would you have wanted her to handle it?

P: I would have wanted her to say, "I love you and however you deal with this is completely your choice and I will support you in whatever you decide." She has got to that point now when we have talked over the years, and now when I speak, she comes to my events and, you know, she's there and she listens and she tells me that she's proud of me for speaking up and stuff like that. But at the time she was just not there.

I: And that leaves you feeling?

P: Grateful actually. Because then I gave myself the space to deal with it the way that I needed to.

I: So tell me a little bit more about that. So at any point, do you feel as though you have made any movements towards healing or recovery?

P: *Huge* leaps. [Pause]

I: Huge leaps [nods head]. And can you tell me about that movement? What were the factors that allowed you to make those 'leaps' in your words?

P: Well the first was meeting my husband, because going through all, um, during that phase that I was calling my "slut phase" - long before Slut Walk even started - Um, I was going through a phase where I would walk into a club and go - in so many words - to by that stage I had a few really close girlfriends who I partied with as well, and I would walk into a club and I would go, "That's who I'm fucking tonight" in so many words, and of course - I mean it felt incredibly empowering - it was like, "OK, I am taking control of my own sexuality. I'm doing this on my terms". It was only much later that I realised guys were at clubs to pick up women, and a girl who was even moderately attractive who threw themselves at him was going to get laid [smiles]. You know, it wasn't like any great achievement to bang the hottest guy in the club, do you know what I mean [laughs]? And, I mean, it was just, you know, expected. But it wasn't as much of an achievement.

I: It wasn't as much of a liberating and empowering thing as you thought it was to start with? When you realised in the end that it was just par for the course?

P: Exactly. You know, it wasn't like I was that hot that I could get any guy. Or it wasn't like I was in control, it was that that was the way society worked [sic].

I: And was that realisation also part of the leap towards recovery? How does that tie in with you meeting your husband?

P: Um, it was during that time that I met him. Um, the first time we met was at a pub. A friend of his kind of liked a friend of mine but she wasn't ever interested but you know? So a whole bunch of his friends and a whole bunch of my friends were at the

pub together when I walked in after work. And I, um, he was talking about what a word meant or something. He asked “Who knows what the word erudite means?”, and I just answered without even thinking as I was walking past the table on my way to the bar to get a drink. When I think back, he was just looking at me like...

I: Who are you.

P: Exactly [smiles], like “You’re in a pub with all these alcoholics and you throw a perfect definition at me and walk by as if it wasn’t even a question.” [laughs]. So our immediate first interaction was based on an intellectual connection.

I: And you pride yourself in your intellect?

P: I do, because that for me is far more important than being a size 6 at nearly the age of 42. That I take for granted, my physicality I always take for granted. But my intellect is something that I feel privileged to have because it set me aside from all of the stereotyping I might otherwise always have fallen prey to.

I: The “good little girl”?

P: Exactly. You know, being able to process things differently helped me to avoid an arranged marriage at the age of 18. You know, that was what differentiated me from the other girls you know? My potential to be something. So that for me is an important aspect and when he picked up on that, it was an immediate connection and we spent the rest of the night just talking philosophy. There was just, for the first time in probably two years, I spent an entire night at a pub without a single sexual thought in my head. And that’s what set him apart from everybody else, was that I didn’t want to immediately fuck him. You know, that was the changing point for me that it brought me back to being able to connect with a human being of the opposite sex as an intellect [sic], as somebody to talk to, as somebody to build a relationship with.

I: And that your interaction wasn’t defined by any form of sexuality in that initial moment?

P: Exactly. It was probably only a week or two later that – he’d been working as a manager at a restaurant, and he lost his job because he stood up against the owner for an employee that the owner was mistreating, so he got fired, and that also for me – that level of bystander intervention, the standing up for the weaker person and all of that, was really, really attractive in terms of (him) being an actual decent human being. So when he left that position he also had to give up his room at the time share resort and he didn’t have anywhere to stay, so I said “OK, I’ve only got a one bedroom place,

so you can put a sleeping bag on the floor or whatever”, and we have lived together ever since [smiles].

I: And how has your relationship with him helped you with your ‘leaps’?

P: He was the first man that I was actually able to speak to about everything.

I: OK, tell me about that?

P: Hmm, I didn’t realise at the time that it was a normal part of building relationships to talk about previous, sexual history and stuff like that, and um, he was very open about having been married twice and having had ridiculous numbers of girlfriends, and not judging me for having had so many sexual partners before him. And, you know, just the fact that we could wake up in the morning together, have coffee have a chat, you know? The sex was only one part of the relationship. And then the one day [sic], we were just talking about how we got to be where we are, and I don’t even know how, but it just all came out. It started with talking about my cousin, which I had never done before, and for the first time actually called the rape a rape. I said to him “I was raped”.

I: And how was that?

P: Um, it was a bit scary, but he was very supportive.

I: What was scary?

P: The fear of being rejected, um, having my self-blame confirmed. But he didn’t. He didn’t say “Why were you in the backseat of the car?”, he didn’t say, “Why were you drinking with the boys?”. He didn’t say any of that. What he said was “Well I’m sorry that happened to you, it is absolutely unforgivable what he did to you, but you are an incredibly beautiful woman and he didn’t know how else to share that beauty.” And that was just a whole different perspective for me. You know, it was about me but it wasn’t about what I had done wrong, it was about how somebody just wanted to be a part of who I was and didn’t know how to ask you know? And that changed my perspective of what it was.

I: Was that a turning point for you?

P: It was very much so [nods].

I: The redefining of the rape?

P: It was. It was a case of saying, “Oh wait a minute. I wasn’t wrong to be there.”

I: Would you say even more so than your revelation after your Kibbutz encounter?

P: Yes, because it was more poignant in that I was actually talking about it now. It was all of those same feelings of having that level of a sexual relationship but now with the conversation, with the freedom to speak out, with the freedom to know that I could say

whatever the hell I wanted to and still be loved, no matter what I said. I wasn't pushing him away.

I: And would you say that that has been the biggest thing for you that has contributed to your healing? Or what other factors do you feel have contributed?

P: Yes, that was the first of many big steps. But that was the first one. At that stage, I was still defining it as date rape, as if that was somehow different from, or lesser than, "stranger in the bushes" kind of rape. And I still hadn't fully dealt with the control issues about sex and sexuality, you know, just in terms of being monogamous or intimate, because that still felt like he had control. If he was the only one, then I would still be...

I: What, a sense of ownership?

P: Yes. Um, when I got pregnant with Helena that redefined things for me again. Because now suddenly all of the things that had been conditioned into me about sex, were now starting to make sense but in a way that I could process. Because I had gone through all of the other sides of being promiscuous, of being the slut, of being the loose woman, of living up to that label and taking it beyond, and when I found out that I was pregnant with Helena - it was more than a year after I got married - which I thought was hilarious initially because my whole family was convinced that I would be pregnant out of wedlock and bring shame to the family [laughs] - and here I was a full year before I even got pregnant, so there is no suspicion [smiles]. Uh, but then there was also the feeling of having another human being growing inside of me, and then the process of childbirth and breast feeding and all of that, was showing me what my body was capable of, and what sex was actually designed to do. That when you have sex with another person, you are harnessing enough energy to create *life* [pause], and that completely blew my mind. And that was *the* biggest healing moment for me.

I: In what way?

P: Because I suddenly realised what it was actually about.

I: Versus?

P: Versus all of the crap that society tells us about it. You know - the - you know, it's about fun, it's about saving it for your wedding day, it's about marriage and children, it's about - you know - this whole puritanical thing of "you've got to stay covered, you've got to do this, and you've got to do that" without telling us why [lifts hands up to air].

I: And in the case of rape it's about taking, ownership and for you, you have discovered a completely different narrative now of what sex was about?

P: Exactly. It's not about power, it's not about control, it's not about who does what to who in the physical act. It's about who you are willing to share that energy with.

I: And how did that influence your healing process?

P: It taught me that no matter what happened, I had ultimate control because I was the one who bore the child. I was the one whose body was capable of this miracle [touches hands to chest].

I: That's profound hey. How was that "ah-ha" moment for you?

P: It was fantastic. Ah, initially after Helena was born I struggled with cervical cancer - or pre-cancer, it was one step away from cancer. Because what happened, is I did the usual six week after pap-smear, the doctor came back and said, "You've got CIN2, we need to do laser treatment and cut it out.", and I said "No. I'm going to work with this, I'm going to meditate. I'm going to do things differently." And when I had that realisation (of the meaning of the birth) I was able to let go of the anger that I felt about the rape, the violation, the fear having had a girl child, you know, the fear of what she was going to be exposed to. The fear of that just fell away when I had that realisation.

I: So the anger and the fear, what you had been holding onto because of the rape, and the after-effects like your "slut" [air quotes] phase as you call it and the resulting baggage, fell away when you made that realisation, that you had absolute control?

P: Exactly.

I: You were the woman who harnessed enough energy to create life in a consensual sexual relationship that was designed purely for this purpose. Schjoe.

P: Ja [still nodding], and so I realised that George is the only man that I want to share that energy with, which helped with the questions of monogamy and trusting him even more and that [sic].

I: And can I ask - you know obviously between the childhood rape, the rape as an adult, then your realisation and ah-ha moments, during this whole time - would you say that you imploded or were you able to keep your head above water and keep going so that you could move from place to place, from point to point, in your emotional journey?

P: Um, I think because of all of my experience of compartmentalising things, I was able to keep my head above water. Because when I was going to work I was going to

work, and that was the compartment I was living in for that time you know, and when I was cooking supper I was being wife and dealing with that, and then when Helena was born we decided that I was going to be a full-time mom and that I was going to home school (the children) and all of that, and that redefined my role, as well and opened me up in a lot of different ways. It gave me a new compartment that was now positive, and where I could just live in love. You know where that was my daily reality 24-7, was this space where I could create a loving environment.

I: And then it was no longer head above water?

P: Exactly, it was my lived reality.

I: And what else, outside of meeting George, the birth - what would you say are any other factors that helped you get through? I'm thinking in my mind, I know of - and you know - of a lot of people who go through rape experiences, who fall apart, they aren't able to pull themselves up, they aren't able to move on with meaningful relationships...

P: Mmm

I: ...They aren't able to redefine themselves and their lived reality – and what were those factors for you that you think set you apart? That allowed you to get to this place that you are in now?

P: Hmm. I think a lot of it was about already having accepted that I wasn't the type to fit in. Being weird in a way was a good thing because I had already accepted that I wasn't going to fit in or be accepted. So however I dealt with things, I might as well be authentic because I couldn't deal with anything else, I couldn't be anything else.

I: And would you say that outside of the cultural influences growing up and the dogma, would you say that there was anything in the way that you've grown up that you feel you've used as a tool in you healing or recovery?

P: Hmm. I think it was also my dad allowing me to play with gender roles. Because my dad was always very sporty and always wanted a son, and when my sister was born she was cerebral palsied and lived her life as a vegetable pretty much. So I was born first and he was hoping for a son the second time round, and when he didn't get that - what he got was somebody who was physically incapable of meeting his expectations, I became his "lighty"⁸. That is what he called me. He took me to cricket training with him, soccer training with him, which in those days were not sports that girls played.

⁸ "Lighty" is a commonly used colloquial term within South Africa, particularly with the Indian populace, that means "little boy" or "young boy".

They played netball if they played sport at all. I knew all the cricket rules, I knew all the soccer rules. I was the only girl in my class who could explain the offside rule to boys who couldn't understand it [laughs]. You know, so that also helped me to be more confident doing things that challenged gender roles. You know, he - If I was going to do athletics, he would take me up to the local sports field and he would time me and, um, things like that, where he encouraged my physicality, my "tom-boyishness" as everybody else called it. It was something he embraced and was proud of, and when that was just not the norm.

I: So can I feed it back to you and you can challenge the way I am understanding it because I want to have it as a meeting of the minds?

P: Mmm

I: So what I am hearing is that there is a bit of circularity. So your dad treating you or allowing you to experiment with gender roles, which was in contradiction to the "good girl" ideology within the Indian community,...

P: mmm [nods]

I: ... created enough space for you to not see yourself - and your communication and playing with guys, your drinking and smoking or whatever - as a going against the "good girl" but just as a way of being? It allowed you to just be?

P: Yes

I: So it allowed you to be able to have inter-gendered relationships/ interactions that were stigmatised by the community but not by you. And those things encouraged your participation with the other gender, and because it was so frowned upon in your culture, and other girls didn't do it - you became a minority. Which was inextricably linked, or lead, to your rape experience?

P: Mmhmm [nods].

I: But one of the big things that helped you overcome, or understand, your rape experience - which helped you with you healing, was this idea that you didn't have to be a gendered version, you didn't have to be a female stereotype...

P: Yes.

I: Challenging the gender stereotype helped you understand your own rape experience, and then that links again to the full circle with how your dad had not gender stereotyped you, and the realisation that if you had then been in, inverted commas [air quote], "the good girl", the path that your life has taken would never have been what it is today?

P: Mmm. Absolutely. If I had bought into that, I would be just like one of my cousins being miserable in _____ in an arranged marriage that they had no control over, having had kids at the age of 18/19. Ja, I mean, that would be horrendous for me. I couldn't imagine a worse fate.

I: So it's very, its prominent and important - the role that gender plays in your life, and how it continues to feature?

P: Yes.

I: And can you tell me how that now works into your role as an activist? I want to better understand that. You've told me a bit earlier about the Slut Walks, tell me, how did you get into activism, when did it start becoming a thought?

P: Um, it was always there on different levels [looks down, pauses]. For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to change the world. (I have) always looked at the world and went, "Nah, that's not working for me." Um, I was in primary school when I first understood poverty. There was a kid in my class who was so poor that they didn't even have money to buy brown bread to bring her two slices of bread to bring to school, so I started bringing her my lunch, that's just the type of person I was: if there was something wrong, I found a solution. You know, and when I got home starving more than usual everyday for a week, my mom asked me what was going on and I said, "Well I've been giving my lunch away", so she started making me more lunch. Ja, and that was my first form of activism looking back - was just providing a meal for someone else. Helping. That is always how I have seen my role in the world, as a helper.

I: What does that do for you?

P: It makes me feel like I am doing my bit. (It) makes me feel like even though the world is mostly an ugly place, I can bring a bit of light to it. It makes me feel empowered in a way, that I have the capacity to change somebody's life. I can make somebody's life better. That is what I started off with my activism, the first Slut Walk was very powerful for me.

I: How did that come about? The planning, the conceptualisation, George's support, how did it all start coming together?

P: The first one I didn't organise, I just walked. I saw an ad in the newspaper, or an article about Sas - her life story was almost a mirror image of mine. She was molested as a child repeatedly by a relative and then there was a break-in at her house where she was violently raped, and she speaks about it openly. She has given me full

permission to talk about her experiences in any situation. And at that first Slut Walk, she stood up there in her pyjamas that she was wearing when she was raped and she said, "This is what I was wearing in my own bed when I was raped, and in a way I'm glad that that is how it happened, because then I can't blame myself. But what if" – and she starts unbuttoning this pyjama top and she takes it off, and she's got this sexy little camisole on underneath – "but what if I was wearing this at a club? Would that have given any man the right to violate me?" And in that moment it just completely crystallised everything that I had been processing, on every level for the past twenty years. It took the whole idea of victim blaming and summed it up in that one little performance.

I: Done.

P: Done. Sorted. Verbalised. Every realisation that I had in twenty years was suddenly crystal clear in my mind, and it was just like, "This is what I want to do for other people, I want to wake them up. I want every survivor to feel this complete freedom that I feel in this moment." Because even though I had conceptualised it over the years and come to terms with it, whatever, it was in that moment where I suddenly realised that it doesn't matter. There is no date rape, there is no rape within marriage, there is no any of the euphemisms we would like to attach [sic]. It's not enticement of a minor, it's not whatever else the judicial system or the media wants to break it down as, or make it sound more acceptable. Rape is rape. You say "no", the other person keeps going, it is rape. End of discussion. It is not your fault, it is somebody's choice to violate you and that is the point where I think - going back to what you were saying earlier about people who have been raped who don't recovery, who just cannot get past it - is that they haven't been given the opportunity, or that they haven't been placed in the situation like I have, where they have been given the support and the full understanding that it's not their fault. And I think that a lot of that self-blame tends to play itself out in reliving abusive relationships, in - because I have found a lot of people I have talked to have been raped repeatedly, or have gone into physically abusive relationships...

I: And that cycle is just playing itself out.

P: Exactly, just repeating that victim role over, and over, and over again. And I find myself, quite often, questioning my own relationships now, you know? Like in terms of my relationship with George, and I'll look at it and I'll read something about narcissistic personalities or emotional abuse or whatever, and I still look for those signs of me

being in a victim role. And I think that is something we deal with throughout our lives as survivors. We constantly analyse everything. So um, in terms of that, in terms of actually redefining the victimisation is where the healing happens I think.

I: The redefining of the victimisation. And for you, that redefining was the crystallisation, and at that moment you were like, "This is what I want to be able to do for someone else because I want them to...?"

P: Let go of the self-blame. I want them to understand fully that they could not have prevented it.

I: And if they do understand that, then what would that mean for them?

P: It would help them to let go of - because I think a lot of the pain that we feel comes from the guilt of blaming ourselves for what happened.

I: So your role in activism is to be a facilitator of change for other victims? For them to let go and redefine their relationship with guilt and shame?

P: [Nods]. Especially shame.

I: Or how else would you elaborate? Because those are just my words?

P: And also to educate people in general, to move society away from the slut shaming, away from the victim blaming, away from telling survivors how they should deal with their rapes.

I: Because what would that mean?

P: That would mean that survivors then continue to look to the outside for their own healing, to continue to seek the approval of everybody around them, from society at large you know. It's just - somebody saying that its OK to be who you are, and when you are still looking for that then the healing doesn't come from inside anymore, and I think its important that we teach not just survivors but society at large. That's where getting involved with Tears and the LifeBoard project was important for me, because I want people to understand, as young as possible, that there is no class of woman that deserves to be raped. And that for me is the biggest part of the activism. So getting that message through to survivors as well as to kids, that you can be who you are, and that doesn't make you responsible for somebody else's choice of behaviour.

I: So with that - So now we have the two main faces of your activism which is reaching out to victims, and it's the education component, which not only reaches victims but society as a whole, especially children, to erode away the guilt, and the shame, and the self-blame, so it becomes an internalised healing process?

P: Exactly.

I: What outside of that, what does activism do for you? How does it serve you in your life?

P: Um, it allows me to feel like I am changing the world, even if it's one tiny little baby step. When I started this, George said, "You know you're not ever going to end rape?", and I said, "Of course I'm not going to end rape" you know, there's - it's too big. But if I can touch one life then it feels like I have made a difference to the world at large. Because of my experience, because of what I have lived through and learnt, somebody else out there gets to have a chance at a better life.

I: And that feels?

P: Empowering. It feels like no matter how ugly the world gets, I can create one part of it that isn't. I can bring beauty to the world. I can bring healing to people who need it most and that makes me feel stronger. It makes me feel like I am giving back. It makes me feel like I can somehow balance out the ugliness of the world. You know, even, just this morning I was having a conversation defending Miley Cyrus of all people. Ja I mean - I have no particular fondness for any sort of celeb crap, but somebody posted something about the way that she dresses, or being a bad influence on people in the world and I said, "You know what? You don't get the right to judge. Because what she is doing is challenging our perceptions, and if you don't like it then tough shit..."

I: Don't look...

P: Exactly [nods]. "You know it's not about you it's about her."

I: And your activism has become - For somebody who compartmentalises, your activism is not a compartment?

P: No [shakes head], it's part of the whole world. It's about changing the dialogues [sic] that we have in every context.

I: And would you say that - When did you start your defined activist journey? Was it from that moment you heard Sas' talk, was that the start?

P: Yes it was [nods]. It was 2011.

I: And outside of her and the crystallised redefinition which helped you have this "ah ha" moment and put so much to bed, has there been anything else in your activism career that you feel has contributed towards your recovery or healing?

P: Mmm, every single time I get up to speak.

I: Tell me about that?

P: Uh, it reinforced for me how far I have come from that broken person that was looking for approval, that was looking to be normal. Every time I get up and say I celebrate not fitting in, it reinforces that for me. Every time I get up and tell other people that it's OK to heal in your own way, it reinforces for me that where I am right now is OK. It reminds me that I'm not a victim anymore. The fact that I can help somebody else on their journey reminds me that I am a few steps (ahead) along that same path. It reminds me of where I am and puts into perspective for me how much I've grown. It redefines for me who I am. And every year when it comes around to the organising the march time, I find my writing growing. Before that first Slut Walk I wrote a poem called 'I say no' that focuses on saying "no", the voicelessness. And it ends with, I can't remember the exact line, but along the lines of him having had the physical strength to overpower my body but not the strength to take away my capacity for love. And then the year after that I wrote a poem called 'I said yes' which is about where I have come to with my activism in terms of raising my voice. And giving other people the strength to do the same. And that shift for me was quite meaningful in terms of taking all the negative experiences and then channelling it into strength and the capacity for healing and sharing those experiences with other people who haven't quite figured it out yet, or who need to just hear that there is another option.

I: Would you be able to share those with me? Would you be able to e-mail them to me? Would it be ok to use it as part of the study?

K: Ja of course [nods]. It's on my Facebook page, you are welcome to use everything on there. There is a description of what it felt like to be raped, there is a description of how I feel about the word slut, there are the two poems. So you can use all of that in the study. They are all dated as well which gives you an idea of development.

I: And if I could just ask you - I know this might sound like a strange question but just answer it as honestly as you can - How do you experience yourself as someone who is both a rape victim as well as an anti-rape activist?

P: I don't really define myself as a rape victim anymore, or as an anti-rape activist. I don't see myself as either. I just see myself as a person who has had life experiences that has allowed me to help other people with their life experiences. I don't see the people that I talk to as victims or survivors either. I talk with people all the time who have been raped, who have healed, who are - For me it's about treating every human being as a whole human being, as an equal, and giving them that respect that they

deserve just by virtue of being a human being, you know? Sometimes that's all it takes to change a life.

I: Schjoe. And um, after all of this and having to think about something in quite a structured way, and interacting with it the way we have - Is there anything in our conversation, thinking back on it now, that you would like add? Any thoughts that have come up for you before we close up?

P: Uh, the one thing that I haven't mentioned through the talk is something that I have been really struggling with this year is being - is who I am as a public figure. Um because whenever I get up to speak it is like this, you know, there are no tears left anymore I don't feel the need to cry about these things, so to present - I've done my crying. So when I get up to present this image of being successful in that regard, of being over it, of being strong, of being confident, of having my shit together, and sometimes I feel like that can be damaging to the cause because that creates expectations of what one thinks a survivor should be and this year's march - it took six people stepping up to say, "What can we do to make it happen?", to get me to actually do a march because I had actually got to a point where I felt as if I was doing survivors a disservice by being strong and presenting this image of what, in a way, patriarchy does define as a survivor, as success. But for me, the women living in pain everyday are *just* as successful. The fact that they, more days than not, get out of bed and go to work and live through that day of emotional disaster, or even if they stay in bed the whole day, and don't slit their wrists, is a success. It is an achievement. For those who want to look at me and go, "Why can't I be like that?", for me is a constant battle. The fact that I am giving those women one more thing to beat themselves up about. The fact that I can stand up there and look at these women and go I admire you for being as strong as you are and I wish I could be that. That makes me sad, *that* makes me want to cry. The fact that somebody else has said, "I wish I could be like that", is sad for me because I wish that they didn't want to be like me. I want them to see their own strength where they are. I want them to love who they are in that moment because that's where our strength comes from, is loving our weaknesses.

I: And how do you reconcile those things then? You get up and you speak, and so much of that has bought you happiness in some ways and the hope that you have maybe been able to allow someone to think it's not their fault, to allow someone their own healing process - Versus standing up there and thinking that by saying that and

by being the woman you are, you are giving them one more thing to blame themselves about. How do you reconcile those two things?

P: Um, after Star Walk a very close friend of mine who hadn't spoken about her own rape experience before, sent me a message and she said, "Cami, some of us are not ready to talk yet but your talking helps us feel stronger, you give voice to those of us who still feel voiceless.", and that helped me reconcile it. It was OK, she is not wishing to be me but she is feeling stronger by living through my strength and I can live with that.

I: OK.

P: But it is hard, it is really hard sometimes to look at the brokenness, to remember what it's like to be that broken and to wish that I could help people love themselves in that brokenness and that for me is very hard, is – that's the hardest part of being an activist is seeing people not loving themselves when I can see so much in them [tears up].

I: And that takes a lot to get up every day and face?

P: It does.

I: From what I know of you Cami, you are an amazing woman and from sitting here and you telling me you are upset about the fact that other women might not be able to reach your level of success, shows me - shows everyone - It speaks volumes that you do care beyond just having a platform and that you really want to make a change and there is nothing more powerful than that.

P: And hopefully one day we will get to a stage where – I always joke about it with the people who do the TV and radio interviews – I say, "I'm probably the only person on the planet who has a job she wishes didn't exist [smiles]. I'm working towards ending the need for my job to exist. I feel drowned by it a lot.

I: And how do you handle that?

P: What I do is I tend to take things in little doses, like with Tears. I will do one education facilitation in six months and I will get fully involved in it, and then I will back off for another six months you know? I take it in manageable doses. I know how much I can handle and I won't take on more than I can. Um it's a balancing act but I wouldn't change anything.

I: Well we are unfortunately coming to the end of our time [sighs]. I can't thank you enough for agreeing to participate and sharing so much of yourself and your journey

with me today, I truly feel privileged [smiles]. Would it be OK with you if once I have worked on the interview that I send it back to you for your input?

P: Of course [smiles].

Recording ends at 01:31:08

I said NO

[September 23, 2011 at 7:50am](#)

I said no

He heard maybe

I screamed no

He still took me

This shameful, painful secret

For years I kept

Life went on outside me

Silent tears I wept

I said no

He heard maybe

I screamed no

He still took me

My body was molested

I had no choice

My spirit is not broken

I have a voice

I said no

He heard maybe

I screamed no

He still took me

My body was violated

Nobody can take ME

My Power My Strength My Love

THAT MAKES ME.

Copyright Karmilla Pillay – Siokos, September 2011

I SAY YES

August 1, 2014 at 11:50am

I SAY YES

I didn't choose

for rape to destroy me

Pain was all I could see

until I found another me

I say yes

I make the choice

to be more, not less

to have a voice

I choose

my own way to heal

to honor all that I feel

and to know that I am real

I say yes

I make the choice

to be more, not less

to find my voice

I choose

to lose the victim role

to heal, mind, body and soul

until once more I feel whole

I say yes

I make the choice

to be more, not less

to use my voice

I choose

to stand up and fight

for every body's right

to be safe day or night

I say yes

I make the choice

to be more, not less

I RAISE MY VOICE.

Copyright Karmilla Pillay – Siokos, August 2014

From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors. Interview 2 – ‘Julia’.

8 December 2015

Participant:

Name	'Julia'
Race	White
Age	52
Language	Afrikaans (First language) English (Second language)

Background:

Context:

This interview was conducted at Julia's place of work. Due to her very busy schedule it was more convenient to meet there. Julia had booked a private board-room where the meeting took place, and expressed no concerns or fears about the location.

Whilst working at Tears Foundation, I had sporadic contact with Julia and this had allowed us to establish positive rapport that translated throughout the entire interview. We were both very comfortable with each other and this lent itself to creating a shared context and a safe environment to share.

After my first interview, I had concerns that I was not adequately addressing the questions on the interview schedule, so I tried to ensure that those were introduced which at times I worry, distracted Julia from her train of thought or current explanation. It was very interesting trying to balance my role as researcher, as well as caring acquaintance and striking a balance between what I wanted to know personally versus what was relevant to the study. At times this deviation can be seen.

Transcript:

Interviewer: If we could just sign the consent form, and you could sign for me. Just let me know if there is anything you don't understand, although I know you deal with piles and piles of documents everyday [smiles].

Participant: No, it's quite straightforward [smiles].

I: Um, ja. So with this type of study I'm using what's called Hermeneutic phenomenology and what that means, pretty much, is that you are the expert of your own life. There is no way that I could possibly understand your life the way you understand and experience it...

P: OK

I: And the best way to do that is to ask you questions that allow you to just elaborate as much as you can to try and bring me into your understanding.

P: OK

I: So, if there are questions or anything like that you know, I encourage you to expand on them. If a memory is triggered, to tell me about the memory, to tell me about the feelings. If you want to go off on a tangent then do so. The more information and the deeper you get into the questions the better.

P: Mhmm

I: And then at certain points of the interview, so to speak, I'll check things with you like, "does this mean this? Or am understanding this right?" because we are going to try and build a shared understanding. So that's just pretty much it.

P: OK, sounds perfect.

Both sign the consent form

I: We are going to use a pseudonym to write up for confidentiality purposes. Is there any other name you could think of that we could use that you might like?

P: I can't think of anything now. I like my name. Its short and sweet [smiles]. Hmm [looks away], Julia.

I: That's a nice one, stunning. You shall be Julia [laughs].

P: [laughs]

I: So we touched on the study and how I'm looking to understand more about your journey from being a personal victim of rape, all the way through to your activism that you participate in through Epic Foundation, and how that has unfolded for you. So first of all, tell me a bit about yourself? Just who is 'Julia'?

P: Well the Julia now and the Julia in the beginning were two very, very different people.

I: OK.

P: I mean in my younger days I grew up in a very, very conservative Afrikaans home. I mean *extremely* conservative. I mean, the sex talk was never even done because

that word wasn't used in the house. It was a case of my mom giving me a book and saying, "go to your room and read, and no questions asked."

I: Ja, OK.

P: So that's how I was brought up you know? Because it was a very Afrikaans family the man was the head of the house, and you know, the wife had to stay at home and look after the children. And I had a bit of a rebellious streak when I was small because I just decided that I don't want a household like my mom and dad had where she had to stay at home and look after the children and he went out to work, I wanted a relationship where you have equal partners and that's one of the reasons that when I started to date, I refused to date Afrikaans guys and I only dated English guys because I wanted that different life.

I: OK so you felt English guys were a bit more liberal? They weren't as patriarchal?

P: Yes. Yes. Not that it worked at the end of the day [laughs].

I: But that's where it was coming from?

P: Ja. So that's how I grew up.

I: How would you describe your relationship with your parents?

P: Um, I was extremely close to my dad, I never quite got along with my mom from very small [sic]. My mom is a very cold, hard person. Like as a child if you would go to her and give her a hug, she wouldn't hug you back.

I: Mhmm

P: And she is still like that, she is not very affectionate. And she is a very negative person, she always sees the bad in everything first. So its sometimes difficult to live with someone like that, or be around someone like that, but you learn to adjust – I mean, that's my mom [raises hand palm up].

I: Ja

P: Its funny now, that out of three kids, I'm the one to look after her now.

I: And your dad?

P: My dad was such a fantastic man. We got along so well. He passed away – schjoe when [looks down], 1999 already. So that was a big gap out of my life when he was gone.

I: Ad what made him such a great dad?

P: Um, he's also always affectionate, caring. Took interest in everything you did. You know, he was just always there for you. He always knew – He was always someone to turn to, someone to go to.

I: A support system for you?

P: Ja, absolutely [smiles and nods]. And he was my absolute rock while I was growing up.

I: And then so that was the Julia of old, the slightly rebellious Julia dating English men, not wanting to fulfil the role of the conservative Afrikaans household. Is that right?

P: Ja, very much so. But with all of that I was still quiet, timid and shy and scared to do things. And I think that's also part of growing up in a house where the wife is like – where the woman is like – takes second place almost. So you almost have this thing where you don't really want to go out there and try things and do this, and be adventurous. So I always had that reserved, how can I put it, that reserved way of doing things you know, and not just going into things and doing it, and taking up challenges and going crazy [puts both hands up to face]. Where that has changed completely because of what I have been through in my life. I don't have that fear anymore.

I: OK

P: Not at all. If someone comes to say, "This is new, do you want to try it?", I hardly ever say no [smiles]. I just go into things, because why be scared of things, because you have one life, you have to do with it what you can. If opportunities come your way, don't turn it down, try your all [sic] because if you don't try then how are you going to know if you are going to succeed or not?

I: Ja.

P: If – If I didn't start my little room, now its not such a little room [smiles], to work out of – and now its exploded into this big thing – it was a whole sequence of events. And if the first thing happened – like my e-mail that went out, because I sent an e-mail to my family and friends saying, "This is what I want to do is comfort packs, this is the stuff I need. I m just going to do it from home and supply just a few centers around where I live." And someone took that e-mail and it went everywhere. There were so many people who got that e-mail, and I got so many calls. And people stopped at my house with carloads full of stuff. I had stuff down the passages in the house and all the rest. I drove my family insane [smiles] because they didn't know what was happening.

I: Yeah.

P: Now if I didn't look at the situation, and think, "OK, this is a sign that I need to do something more" OK, I could have stepped back and went, "Whoa, this is too much, let's stop this", then if I did that I wouldn't have been where I am now...

I: Ja

P: So these things happen and you have to take it up, and to run with it, to do it. And you need to not worry where you are going to end up [smiles and nods].

I: That's awesome. Lovely. So if I could just take you back a bit with specific regard to the process of having been affected by rape, and how you have understood it moving forward? If we could just unpack the rape itself, if you feel comfortable enough to do that? And just share what the experience was like, what happened, your feelings and emotions around that time?

P: Mm, sure. I got married when I was 21 and he was just like, the perfect guy, we fell so madly in love. We got married about a year after that. We struggled to fall pregnant, we couldn't have a baby at first. We struggled for about three years, and then I fell pregnant with twins. We were like ecstatic. At five months, I had a miscarriage but then I fell pregnant again quite soon after. Then I had my first baby, so my path was still – everything perfect [sic]. My gorgeous husband, my lovely home, first baby was there. Four years later I had my second child, and straight after the birth of Sandy, things were not right with my husband anymore. He used to be affectionate, kind, and that whole affectin changed into aggression...

I: Mm

P: ...and he's whole personality was always irritated, miserable and often, often, very aggressive. And honestly at some point I felt like I was living with a stranger in the house. And I honestly didn't understand what was happening and what was going on. Um, he had his own business, the business was doing quite well. I wasn't aware of anything going wrong. And then the one day he came to me and said to me, "The business is in trouble. We have been liquidated and we have two weeks to get out of the house." [Takes a deep breath] So I was devastated because I didn't even expect anything. So we had to pack up, move back in with my mom and dad. He didn't want to come and stay with my mom and dad, which I was puzzled about because "why don't you want to be with your wife and children?" His parents lived down in _____ and they had a little flat up here, a bachelor pad. So he decided he wanted to stay there, but that was up in the _____ of Jo'burg so it was also to difficult for me and the kids to be there because their schools were out in the _____. So we were split during that time. Um, you know, I was quite desperate to get the family back together and just work on things because I was really very in love with him.

I: Ja

P: I wanted our relationship to work. Um, I then approached the bank, and I wasn't earning much at that point, I approached the bank and got a pre-approved bond and went house-hunting. So I found this little house next to a petrol depo, which I could afford with my little bond [chuckles] – You could quite literally smell fumes from the petrol depo in the place [laughs] – but it was fine...

I: It was yours.

P: It was mine. I moved in with the kids and there were people who donated furniture and everything was mismatched but it was fine, we had our house. And then, I just decided that when we were there for a while, that things just didn't feel right. You know, your womanly intuition where it just keeps scratching, scratching, saying "Something's wrong." I just thought the best thing is to start going through his stuff to see if I could find anything, because I was clueless and I just didn't know.

I: What did you initially think was happening when you were listening to your intuition?

P: You know what, I had no idea what to expect. I had no clue what it could have been. I just knew there was something wrong. So I went digging in his briefcase and I found drugs in his briefcase. So I confronted him and he admitted to it, he admitted that he had been taking it for quite a while. So it was then obvious to me what had happened to his business – he had neglected his business because he was using drugs. And then after I found out, he was like a little boy in a sweet shop. He used drugs all the time at home, in front of the kids. He just didn't care because now we knew. So often I had to – when he started – had to get the kids in the car, take them off to my mom, tried to protect them as much as I could, not wanting them to know what was really going on. I mean, Jess was 11 at that time and Sandy was about seven. So Jess more or less knew what was going on but Sandy wasn't too sure. So I had to tell them about the drug thing so they knew about that. So often I just had to take them away and let them stay over by my mom [sic]. Um.

I: How was that for you? That time?

P: It was difficult, because, you know, here's this man that you fell in love with and he is sitting in front of you this absolute stranger. I mean, he wouldn't even marry me because I smoked [shakes head], so I stopped smoking because I value our relationship so much. And here I am looking in at him, sitting in front of me taking drugs. So it was really very difficult. Um, and so my next big blow came – He took me out the one night and said, "There is something I need to tell you", that there was something important that he needed to share with me, discuss with me. And once

again I had no clue what. And it was also a big shocker because he started talking and I heard what he was saying but my mind wouldn't take it in [smiles].

I: Mhmm.

P: He was telling me he was bisexual for 12 years of our 14 year marriage he had been having affairs with other men. I still remember, I heard it but my mind just wouldn't work through it and I said to him, "Oh that's nice, so you have male friends." I think it's only the next day that I realised what he actually said to me.

I: What happened in that moment?

P: You know what, I was absolutely floored. I don't think anything could have prepared me for that. It was just totally unexpected. Totally, totally. I was so deeply hurt because with that, this man that I loved so much, cheated on me for 12 years and I had no clue. Um, you know, initially I sat thinking to myself, "How could you have missed it? How did you not notice anything?" But then I thought, "If you truly love someone with your whole heart, you don't see these things". You might see it, but because you love and trust that person, you don't attach anything to it. You don't think anything about it. So there were signs but I just didn't pick it up because I trusted him, I loved him and he was my husband. That was it. So, a lot of people say to me: "How did you not know?" I won't apologise for not knowing, because I loved him [sigh]. [Pause] Then came the point when I knew something more was wrong, I had that gut feeling again and I went scratching again. And I discovered a newspaper add in his briefcase.

I: Mm

P: So this is now a man who has lost his job, has no income, has a drug habit to support. Um, I found in his briefcase this newspaper add where he was advertising his sexual services to other men. So he was prostituting himself for money. So this was another shock – just the one thing after the other thing. It was just too many things. Um, and then one of the clients found out he was married, and apparently this is a big thing in the gay community or bisexual (community), that if there is a married guy then the aim is to get to the wife. I did not know this. But this guy then offered him double if he could have me while my husband watched.

I: Mm

P: So he put something in my cool-drink that night. I was drugged. I wasn't completely out of it, I was floating in and out but I knew exactly what was happening.

I: Where were you guys?

P: At our house with my children sleeping in the room next door. Um..

I: How does that make you feel?

P: Terrified. Because I wasn't even able to protect myself. What if they went into the room next door? So I had that feeling inside. I was drifting in and out of it. The guy then came through to the bedroom and he proceeded to rape me while my husband was sitting in the corner.

I: And thinking back on that time now, what comes up for you when you think about the rape?

P: Look, I've made peace with what had happened, but then it was just absolute horror. Absolute horror [shakes head]. Especially that I couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't protect myself. Only the next morning when I went and said "What did you do? Why did you do that to me?" and his attitude was that he organised a fun evening for me so I should be happy that I had good sex [pause]. So I was horrified you know, and with everything that happened, with the whole sequence of events and everything – I got to a point where I was just feeling so numb inside that all feeling I had just went away. I just knew that I needed to sort myself out. So I decided not to report. Partly because how do I tell people my husband organised it? I've been with him for the last 15 years. And then I was thinking about my children, if they find out someday their father did this, what effect would that have on them? So I made a decision not to report, and I do regret it today. Um, I did go to our family GP and told her what happened. I got onto ARVs and antibiotics and had all the tests. The tests came out clear, there wasn't any HIV or anything luckily and I kept on going back. She eventually said to me, "You don't have to come back anymore" [smiles], you are fine.

I: What did that do for you? Getting the tests and going back?

P: You know what? I just wanted to know that I wasn't going to have anything lasting that was going to remind me all of the time about it. Because what if now I was HIV infected and I had to live with it? It would be the most constant reminder of what happened back then and that's one thing as well, I didn't want to have a reminder so I made a conscious effort not to remember what day of the week it was, what date it happened on, what month it was – It was like I wiped it out of my head because after it happened and I decided not to tell anyone, I didn't want anything on my mind to remind me about it. So I basically tried to wipe it out of my mind as well. And up to today I don't have any intention of knowing or remembering what date it was. That part of me is gone, because I don't want every years to think about "Oh today, this is what happened." So I didn't want that.

I: Ja. And how was life for you afterwards? In the aftermath of the rape?

P: After the rape I asked him to leave the house because I was honestly scared that the next would be my children [sic]. So he moved out and then he moved into a little garden cottage thing on a plot. Um I was very dead inside at this point and I just couldn't feel anything, and I couldn't really speak to anyone about any of the things, not even about him being bisexual because my dad, um was seriously ill with emphysema, his dad – who I had a good relationship with, had cancer. So that December his dad passed away first, me and the girls were hijacked, shot-at – We had to run away – and then my dad passed away. So all those things, it was all in one month.

I: Trauma on trauma on trauma.

P: Ja. I remember I didn't even cry at my dad's funeral. I just couldn't find tears. It was just a wall with no emotions. Totally, totally dead inside.

I: Just dissociated?

P: Ja. Ja. Ja [nods]. And then I just went into this revenge mode. I don't know where it came from but it did.

I: How long after the rape?

P: Um, it was probably three months, three or four months I think. Grabbed the first guy I could find and started dating him. That was a bad idea because he was also jealous, possessive and started becoming quite aggressive. I mean because of his jealousy – I had quite a nice figure at that point, not anymore [laughs] – I used to wear mini-skirts and nice little tops, he used to pinch me and bite me so that there were marks and I had to wear longer pants or skirts to cover up.

I: Schjoe.

P: And I sat at home one day and thought, "You know what, this is not the life for me. I can't do this." So I got out of the relationship very quickly um, but he was also a very weird guy, he stalked me for quite a while. I mean, he would phone me when sitting in places and say, "I'm standing somewhere, I can see you. Who are you with? Who are these people?". Or I'll be living somewhere and he'll phone me and say, "Where are you going? I'm driving behind you." SO it freaked me out so badly.

I: So your sense of security had been violated for ages now?

P: Totally. Totally [nods]. Um, what happened then with my husband not being in the house, I tried to institute divorce procedures, um, and I tried to – He could only come to the house with supervised visits for the children, but they didn't allow it. Um, they

said that there wasn't proof that he hurt the children, and of course I couldn't talk about the rape. So that became very difficult for me. So I had to agree to (him) getting the kids during the day, they just didn't sleep over. Of course I went off my mind [sic] every time he has the kids because I didn't know if anything was going to happen, if he was going to use drugs. So it was really a difficult time.

I: Mm.

P: So one morning he didn't pitch to pick them up, and he would often disappear for a while because he went to these gay drug parties where they would just party for days on end and there were just drugs freely available everywhere. So I thought "OK, he's on one of those again." [Raises and drops hand, rolls eyes]. And after five days we didn't hear anything. So I phoned his brother and said, "Look, we haven't heard from him so don't you want to just check?" Because I wasn't going to drive out there, plat⁹ out in _____ which was very far away. Um and then I got the call from his brother that they found him and he was dead. He had died of a drug overdose in his apartment. Because his family didn't believe any of these things, they accused me that I murdered him [sic], and so they all turned against me and insisted that the police arrest me. But they didn't because his place was locked from the inside and all the drugs was next to his bed [sic].

I: So after all the violations and everything that had happened, the finger came round to you?

P: Mm, Exactly. And at that point I went into an absolute state of depression. Really, really bad.

I: So were you numb up until that point?

P: Ja, and then I had this state of just absolute depression, and I actually – I tried to commit suicide.

I: OK.

P: Um, I've got a 38 Special. I took the kids to my mom's place and I went back home and I took it out. I had all the intentions of pulling that trigger. I was in such a bad space. And I actually sat on the corner of the bed and I had the gun to my head, and you know what? I sat there just thinking, "What are my kids going to do?" They don't have a father, now I'm going to take their mother away as well, so it's not fair [sighs]. And I think that was just y turning point and I just sat there and thought, "I've got this

⁹ "Plat" is the Afrikaans word for "Flat".

life that was given to me, and I've got these two beautiful children. I have to get over the things that happened to me in the past, I need to make a new life for myself." So the sequence of events to my new life started back then already because he died a week before our divorce went through.

I: Mm.

P: And I was working for _____ at that point and I had a policy with them. So that paid out. I had to hide it away in a trust, and the guys here helped me because, after he died, I had ex-boyfriends of his, I had drug-dealers – He owed money to so many people and they knew where we lived. So it was quite scary and they contacted me, and they all wanted their money back. So we hid the money away in the trust for a year, after a year my mom wasn't coping well because my dad didn't leave her any money – he didn't have policies or anything – So I just thought it made sense for her to sell her house and for me to sell my place, and for us to get another place, because we wanted to get out of that place where it happened.

I: So you stayed at the house – What was it for a year after the rape?

P: Yes. Ja.

I: How was that?

P: It was quite bad, I must admit. Because I mean, I couldn't go sleep somewhere else. I had to go sleep in the bed where it happened, in that same bed. So it was almost a constant reminder getting into the bed, looking at the headboard you know, just remembering what happened during the rape – I was looking at the headboard. So every time I got into the bed and saw the headboard, I remembered what happened. So it took me a long time to work through that and get over it. I did – I did try counselling then once, because I thought, "OK, with all these things I am going to be totally messed up." So I went off to the offices of LifeLine and a lady came out and she sat in front of me, I told her my whole story. She burst out in tears and walked out, and a guy walked in and said to me, "I'm so sorry about that, won't you tell me your story?" I took my bag and I left. So I never went back for counselling again which – This is why up to today, if someone has done a five day counselling course, don't tell me you can do counselling. Because if I had proper counselling from the beginning, I would have been able to work through my stuff way before I actually did on my own. Um, where was I – I've gone off track now [laughs].

I: That's OK. Go for it [smiles]. So you and your mom decided to buy a house together.

P: Ja.

I: During this time, had you disclosed anything to your mom about your husband's drug addiction, about the rape, anything like that?

P: Well when he died, I did tell the whole family about his drug problem, and I did tell the whole family about him being bisexual and having other affairs and what he had done. The only thing I never told them was about the rape. Because I just couldn't.

I: Had you not made sense of it yourself? Or what was the reasoning, you know, with everything else that you were able to tell them after he passed away, what was it that kept it a secret?

P: I think the big thing for me is that it was the father of my children and I didn't want it to have a bad effect on my children.

I: If you could explain to me, what other emotions were around that other than the fear for your children? Was there shame, was there guilt? I don't want to put words in your mouth, but could you tell me more about that?

P: Look, I think that there was a great deal of shame because how do you tell people that the man you loved and married did this to you. There was a great deal of shame as well. I often sat thinking, "Did I do something wrong to the relationship to send him on the path that he went?" So I blamed myself a lot for what had happened. Um, until I realised that I'm not at fault here, that there are other factors that are involved here, and before my husband passed away, I actually had a discussion with him and I said to him, you know, "Why did you go this way? Why did you have all these affairs? Why did you have a preference for men? Was I not enough?" And he disclosed that – I mean, there family was quite a big family, they've got about nine kids – and I think that maybe it was too many kids for his mom to manage [sic], so wherever they could go sleep over with friends or not be at home left alone with the maid, that was done. And he told me that when he was seven years old he was sleeping over by a friend [sic], and this friend actually raped him. He didn't know what it was, didn't realise what it was, and they remained friends for long, from seven until he went to the army this had been going on. He had this affair with this young guy which he hid away. And of course in those days conscription was in place where he had to do the two-year army service. So of course he couldn't say anything to anyone then because they were – You know the guys in the army back then didn't tolerate things like that.

I: Mm

P: And it was just after he did his two- year army service, a bit after that still, when we met. So he just wanted to see what it would be like to be a normal guy. He didn't tell

me anything and we started this life together. So that's where the whole thing originated from.

I: And when you heard this, how did that have an affect – if any- on the way you saw this whole situation playing out?

P: Um, look when he told me that, I was very angry at his mom.

I: OK, because I mean, if you are going to have so many children then make sure you are going to take good care of them. Don't just ship them off to be left with other people, because you never know what would've happened. So at the end of the day, they are to blame for what happened and then they turned around and blamed me for – That I was the horrible person. But they don't even know this part of the story because I never told them this [pause]. So ja, and his mom passed away about two years back. They didn't speak to me for quite some time and then she contacted me out of the blue one day – but I think its because she found out she had cancer and she wanted to have contacts with the kids again. Um, she said to me she understands what happened and she's spry about everything. But I don't know if she was really sorry...

I: Genuine.

P: [Nods] or if she just wanted a way in to see the children before she passed away.

I: So it affected that whole trust and everything form that side?

P: Mm [nods]. Ja, ja. What happened next is – Then this is another turning point in my life – Me and my mom bought this house, moved in, new beginnings. A blank slate. Just a fresh start, leave the past in the past and carry on. So we started off in the house, got all set-up, and I was struggling financially because now I had to take care of my mom as well and two kids on my own.

I: Mm

P: So I joined the direct selling industry, like selling stuff for _____ Fashion Accessories, like jewellery and stuff. And I got some good money out of it. And there is a lady by the name of Angel, they took over _____ Fashion Accessories at a certain point. And she had this seminar, and I attended this seminar, and during the seminar she said the words, "Whatever you are not talking about is controlling you."

I: Schjoe.

P: And I sat there and I got this – Just like a *wham* inside my head [smiles and raises both hands to head]. And I actually had to get up and leave because I just thought that I was going to burst out in tears and I can't tell people why. And I walked out and I just realised that I kept wanting to start a new slate, but I hadn't dealt with what happened.

I: And it kept coming through?

P: Ja. But I sat thinking after that – The way I handle situations, the way I am towards other people, it's all very negative. Because I mean, I used to get very angry very quickly, and get irritated with people and I would show it, I wouldn't worry about it.

I: Like how?

P: Like if someone – Say for instance someone would come and ask me questions like here at work, and I explained to them and they didn't understand what I explained, then it was like [balls fists] "Urgh!", and people saw me as more irritated and not approachable. And I actually got in some performance reviews that "Julia is not approachable".

I: So is it that layer that kept coming up?

P: [Nods]. And I did not realise that it was because of that. So I was really a horrible person for a while not realising I was doing that, until that point when I heard those words and I really sat thinking about it. And that's when I decided it's time for me to tell everyone what happened. So that I can deal with it. So that I can make peace with it and just move on. So obviously the first (people) I had to tell was my children. That was a tough one [shakes head].

I: Can you tell me about that day?

P: Well what happened is that Angel actually asked me to write my story and she asked me to write my story as part of her book – she was writing a book, and she didn't know about the rape either, she just knew about the drugs and his sexuality or whatever.

I: Did you confide it in her before the conference, or after you had heard her speak?

P: No before the conference. So she knew about that. So at the point she came to ask me to write my story, I had already made up my mind that I wanted to come out with my story, so it was just another sign that it's the right avenue. So in my mind I thought it would be a good idea to write the story and then rather give that story to my children, and tell them "There's something nasty that happened." But rather give them the whole thing, not just sit in front of them and say to them, "Listen, I was raped" and then shock them out of their minds.

I: Mm.

P: So I wrote my story, and that's the one that's on the website. So with Sandy, my youngest one, she had an idea that something was wrong because when we were going through the divorce, the lawyer that I had at that time, told me to keep note of

everything. So I had this diary and I kept it locked away far in the back of the cupboard so that no one could get to it, but Sandy went scratching and found this diary. So I was sitting in the lounge this one day [sic] and Sandy walked in with this diary and she had read the first page. And she said to me, "Mommy, what is this?", and I said, "No, no, no. That's nothing." I tried to cover it up but she never believed me. So she deep-down knew that there was something wrong, but she didn't ask me again. So she was the first one. I said to her, "Something bad happened, but I want you to know, and here is the full story so go and read it," and I left her, she read it, and she came back and gave me a hug, and we were both crying. And we had a good discussion, and we talked about it and now, although it was hurtful for her, I think because she had a suspicion, it wasn't that big of a shock to her.

I: OK [nods].

P: But with Jess it was different. She had no idea. I went and I said to her, "I need to tell you something bad that happened, and I wrote it." And she refused. She didn't want to know.

I: She didn't want to read it?

P: [Nods]. So I said to her that, "It's important for me that you know." And she didn't want to read it, she didn't want Sandy to tell her...

I: Because you had told Sandy before you told Jess?

P: Ja. But Jess just said she doesn't want to know anything [sic], and that she doesn't want to know bad things about the past, she doesn't want to know bad things about her father, she just – Because she was very angry with him about the drug thing, you know for the way that he died and left us. She had this deep anger, I mean she wouldn't put up photographs of him, she wouldn't look at videos we had from when they were children, she refused. So she didn't want to know anything else. So that was hard for me because I needed her to know and she didn't want to.

I: Mm.

P: So it upset me tremendously and then Sandy, the one day, went to visit Jess and she just blurted out to her, "Mommy's been raped. You need to listen to her story." She arrived at the house the one day in tears and she said to me, "OK I'll read the story." So I gave it to her and she was devastated. She actually had to go to counselling afterwards just to deal with it. And I think that although she has dealt with it a lot, I don't think that she has totally made peace with everything because she still doesn't want to really talk about it [sic].

I: OK.

P: So I just – I leave her. I let her go. She's very involved with Epic now, and she understands things and she is very supportive but she just doesn't want to talk about the past.

I: Mm, and how does that feel for you?

P: You know what? It's a –It's a heart-breaking thing because I didn't want her to feel like this, and it almost like I feel guilty having forced my story on her, almost you know, not having left her [tears up]. But I just couldn't carry on without people knowing my story. I just didn't want her to hear it via the grapevine, through someone else and [pause].

I: It sounds like, for you it was so hard weighing up Julia and what you needed for your healing process, and the potential for damage that that could have on Jess, and it looks like that's still a real battle for you.

P: Ja, it is. It is I mean, just to give you an example, we are busy sorting out the house and there is a lot of old stuff there. There are these two little dressing tables that their father bought for them when they were small, and I still have these things at home. Um, and I said to her, "Can I give these away because we are not using it and it's in my way?" And she just looked at me, looked at the dressing table, started crying, and walked away. Because to her there is still that emotional bond over something her father gave to her. So she hasn't let go of that.

I: She hasn't worked through her own process yet at all.

P: [Nods].

I: And that's the reminder for you? It's what keeps it alive for you?

P: Mm. Ja.

I: And, from when everything had happened to now, I won't ever assume that you have healed and recovered, but have you experienced a form of healing, or a form of recovery since the rape?

P: Mm. Definitely [nods].

I: OK. And what were some of the factors? We have spoken about the "ah ha" moment of moving out and having the house with your mom, and of hearing Angel speak, and then of having to tell your girls and sharing your story. What other factors do you think contributed to this sense of healing and recovery that you have achieved?

P: Well by far, the most important thing for me was to speak out about what happened to me, and you know it started off with just letting the family know. But you know, it

was also just another sequence of events that was unexpected. I mean I got the _____ Hero of the Month nomination and I was called into the studios and I sat there on _____, and she asked me questions and to tell my story. And while I was sitting there I was thinking, “Oh gosh, now I’m going to tell the whole world my story right now.” And from there I went onto _____ with (a DJ) and I left there thinking, “I wonder now what’s going to happen [sic]. I feel like the whole world knows.” And that alone – I drove away from there and was like “Phew” [runs hand across eyebrow as if wiping sweat away from it].

I: Really [smiles]?

P: Ja. It was just like, now it’s out in the open and everybody knows. And it was just this massive weight lifted off my shoulders. And then the calls started coming in. And people were so supportive, and I got such lovely calls –I cannot tell you. And the calls after that, and the reaction of people. I mean, I didn’t know how people would react if I told my story, and the reactions I got were just totally incredible. I cannot tell you. And all of that was just so much – Such a big part of the healing process. I mean I had people I hadn’t spoken to for many years that I lost contact with, who looked me up, called me and said, “Wow, we didn’t know this happened to you” and just gave so much support and encouragement.

I: So the support from the community, from society, from outside of yourself also helped with the healing process?

P: Very much. Very much [nods]. And this is why I go out there now and I tell my story, and I tell people, “Speak up. Don’t keep quiet about it because it affects you negatively.” And it took me a long time to realise this, and once you do speak up you will be surprised by what can happen in your life. My whole life has turned around because I came out with my story.

I: So for other people who have, let’s say for instance – A lot of rape victims don’t move to rape survivor. They stay stuck, um, whether it be with their secret, or they have disclosed but just can’t cope with the trauma of it all and might, you know, develop addictions, or try and take their lives you know?

P: Mm [nods].

I: So what are the differentiating factors? What do you think has allowed you to get to where you are today? What do you think stopped you from falling into the abyss? Outside of your girls and nearly pulling that trigger, what factors have contributed to that outside of speaking out?

P: Um, I think it's realising that I have a purpose in life, and just getting to that point where having realised that having gone through this doesn't mean the end of my life. Um, you only get this one life to live, so are you going to let this situation control the rest of your life and be miserable and have an unhappy life, or are you going to come to terms with it. Deal with it, move on and make a better life for yourself. And I think having my kids helped me with that decision as well.

I: So being a parent?

P: [Nods]. Mm.

I: And what do you think - If any other factors, such as how you were raised, have contributed to your mind-set or, you know, your decision to have the best life...

P: I wouldn't really say that from the way I was raised.

I: OK.

P: Because I have always been a very ambitious, determined person. I get something in my mind I don't give up very easily.

I: And where did that come from, or has that just always been how it is?

P: Ja. Ja. Very much so. That's probably been from how I was brought up, knowing that I didn't want this life. Knowing that I wanted to change that. So maybe in a way it does go back to that?

I: No it doesn't have to, I was just asking because of the relationship with your dad and I was just thinking whether he allowed you to believe you could do anything you know?

P: Ja. He would be the one to encourage me to go forward and do what I can. Ja.

I: So the factors (that contributed to your healing) that we have heard so far, and by far the biggest one for you, was not being controlled by your secret?

P: Ja. Definitely.

I: And that's what your aim is with your activism? So like, when would you say you first became involved in your activist activities? When did you know you wanted to do something for others?

P: Um, October 2010. I actually decided I wanted to do projects. So I was just going to empty out the one little room and start with the Comfort Pack project. That's when I decided I was going to do it. I was just going to do these bags, hand them over because I didn't want contact with rape survivors at all, I just wanted to know that I was doing that little bit...

I: Why? Why didn't you want the contact?

P: I don't know I think I was scared that I wouldn't be able to deal with other people's pain.

I: Because you had so recently come out about your story?

P: Yes. Ja. So I think there was a little bit of a sense of fear. But what happened was – Life pushes you in directions, always. So what happened was, the house got to full and I had to find another place, and I knew the owner of a shopping mall. And she offered me a shop. So I moved into the shopping mall and put posters up, and didn't think anything about it. So people, of course, stopped, came in, asked questions about what we doing, people hanging around outside. And then what started happening was, I would see someone hang around outside, until I'm alone in the shop, and then it would be a rape survivor coming in saying, "I've been raped, I've never told anyone about it", sitting there telling me the story, so we started drinking tea.

P: How was that?

I: You know, when the first one came in, I thought, "Oh, whoa, whoa." [Waves hands in front of body]. But then it was quite funny because it was someone I knew. So it was a big shock for me and then I just realised well, "OK, this is going to happen." Because I had a few incidents where I had people following me to my car and then chatting to me at my car. And then I thought, "I'm not quite prepared for this contact", so I did a five day counselling course through ChildLine, because they do this five day intensive counselling for the psychology students from Wits and RAU. So I decided, just so I can manage that initial contact – Because I know what happened to me when someone did the wrong thing, when they came to me to speak, and I would hate to say something wrong to someone else and affect them badly. So I did that just to manage that initial contact. And I had so many survivors that just walked in, and some of them would come back in and we would have a cup of tea together and just chat about things, and that was great for me. It opened another door that I didn't expect. Um, and that's why we are doing the free counselling services as well.

I: That's awesome [smiles].

P: [Smiles and laughs]. So everything just happened, a line of events.

I: And outside of that, would you say that Epic has played a role in your healing process?

P: Oh yes. Yes. Very much so.

I: Can you tell me about that?

P: You know what, being able to register an actual organisation and be thinking [sic] “This is my organisation.” And then looking at what we are doing out there – It just, it just blows my mind. And I think “Is this real? Have I really got this?” I often walk into my office, and we have a massive office now, we have 227 square meters – I walk in there and I think, “Wow. From a tiny room in my house to this!” [Pause].

I: So explain to me how the work as an activist, at Epic and stuff, has contributed to your healing process?

P: You know, being in a position where you know you are making a difference in someone’s life. Um, when I was going through all my stuff I was feeling very alone, I didn’t know who to talk to – If I had walked into a shopping mall and saw that there was someone there doing stuff for rape survivors, I would have also stopped and snuck in and talked to them.

I: So breaking that isolation?

P: Yes [nods]. Absolutely. Just having an avenue available and knowing that I can provide that to others out there, that I can help them through the process. And even though I don’t have the contact through the survivors, like when they get their comfort packs at some of the centres, knowing that that person is going through the worst day of their lives and is at their absolute lowest, gets this little bag that just says “We care for you. Here’s something to help you get through.”

I: “You are not alone.”

P: “You are not alone.” That’s a big thing. To look at my Facebook page it says there [sic], “You are not alone. I am there to walk with you.” So, knowing that we can do that and make things easier is so rewarding. There isn’t even [sic] words to explain the satisfaction we get from knowing that we can do it. And a lot of people, they come to me and they say, “Oh, it’s so sad that you have to do all these bags. Don’t you get depressed?” And I go, “No, I mean, I am sad that we have to do them, yes. But we can’t do much to stop the rapists out there, but we can at least do something to help the people who have been affected to get through it, and to get their lives back on track again.”

I: Ja.

P: And this why I go out and do my motivational talks as well, because that’s got bigger impact when there is someone sitting in the audience and she looks at you and goes, “Wow, you are a survivor, look where you are standing.” And I’ve had that quite often

where people come up to me and say, “I’m a rape survivor” and then they say to me, “I want to be like you. I want to be where you are now.” And that’s encouragement for them to then carry on and do what’s necessary for them to heal as well.

I: And where are you in your healing process?

P: Um, I have totally made peace with it. Um, now and then – especially like that thing with the dressing tables and the girls, things like that knocks me back a little bit again. But I get myself back on track again because I’ve got so many things motivating me to keep going. Because the things at Epic, it grows on a yearly basis. It’s just incredible.

I: And with the whole healing and recovery process, could you tell me some factors that hindered the recovery process? Were there things that got in the way?

P: Um, not really. I think the main obstacle was Jess and her reaction, and my feelings towards that. I still sometimes, when I think about her and how she is when we mention his name or anything, I still get this like [sharp intake of breath and puts hands to stomach] funny gut feeling that I didn’t want to do this to her, but I had no choice, and then I wish it wasn’t like that.

I: Mm. And after you went to Lifeline, had that disastrous experience where you were consoling the counsellor [smiles]...

P: [Laughs]

I: (It) Just blows my mind...

P: I know [smiles].

I: But, um, did you take any other steps, other than – How did you work through your own process of healing? Can you tell me more about that?

P: Um, I went through a stage quite a while after that, where I felt I needed counselling again, and I went through _____, because I just found at one point that I couldn’t focus. My mind was everywhere, because I wanted to do everything and I couldn’t get to things, and I was getting frustrated. And I did have a few sessions with a counsellor from _____, which was a positive experience. Thank goodness.

I: Good.

P: Because I remember I was sitting there and still thinking that I wished I had had her the first time that I went, because then I could’ve started (healing) about 10 years back [laughs]. Um, and it just helped me to find my focus again, look at things from a different perspective, because sometimes you get – How can I say it? Sometimes you look at things and you can’t see through it and you almost get paranoia and you get into a state of panic, and you don’t calm down and just think through things logically.

You just don't get anywhere, you get stuck. And that was where I was for a while, and it was just a matter of me getting myself to look at things from a different perspective, with the help of this counsellor, and just getting myself back on track again.

I: So would you say that was a positive factor towards the healing process?

P: Mm. Ja, definitely. Definitely [nods].

I: And where did the idea come from to start Epic?

P: You know what, it was born out of something that turned bad as well, but that's another long story.

I: Go for it.

P: OK, when I started, I wanted to do something...

I: Because you still hadn't spoken about the rape? You had spoken about everything else but you knew you wanted to get involved. Is that right

P: Mm. Ja, ja.

I: OK.

P: Um, I met a young girl from (South African province) who was running an organisation and she was doing these packs¹⁰, and I thought, "This is what I want to do."

I: Where did you meet her?

P: Someone sent me an email and said, "Look what this girl is doing." And that someone didn't know what I went through [laughs].

I: They just knew that you had a giving nature? Or...?

P: Um, ja, I've got no idea why she sent it to me, even until today. And I thought, "Wow, this is amazing." So I started – I phoned friends to ask "Can you give me stuff?", and I realised, "Oh heck, they are in (South African province)", and I phoned them and they said to me, no (the founder of the foundation) is in _____ so you can meet with her there. So I met with her and gave her the stuff and I said, "Well I'd really like to do this stuff, and I was thinking of starting something up." And she said to me, "Well, why don't you do it under the name of the _____ Foundation?" and I thought, "Great stuff, I can do it." So I was all eager and everything and I started up this room in my house and thought it was great. At least I could do it under an organisation's name. I asked

¹⁰ These are referred to as Comfort Packs throughout the interview. These packs contain hygiene products, i.e. face-cloths, soap, toothpaste, deodorant, sanitary towels etc.; some snacks i.e. chips, sweets and juice; a clean pair of underwear and possibly a clean item of clothing; as well as a comfort item such as a soft toy etc. These comfort Packs are distributed to clinics, hospitals and police stations across the province to rape victims.

them if I could go down to (SA province) and see what they are doing. But from the start I could never meet their board of directors. So I started up on my own with my e-mails going out, um, I even set up – The shop that I set up, I even put her logo on the window and everything and I was in that shop for three years, and she came up to see me once.

I: Mhmm. So you were doing all the legwork?

P: Ja [nods]. So I was doing, or set up the distribution – I didn't know who to give the bags to, I had to do research, find where the places are, see how it works, get a reliable person in each place because I didn't want to just give the bags to police stations. So I had to first get a network established, make contacts, find reliable people. So it took a lot of work to get to that point where I had this continuous distribution going. Um, then it got to a point where they came up to do fundraising, up here in _____. And the last fundraising thing they did was this hand-bag bingo night with (a radio show and a radio DJ) because he was (the founders) family member, so he arranged it for her. And they did it up in _____ where I live and where all my supporters are. So because they didn't give me any funding, I had to continuously ask the community, "I need shampoo, I need this, I need that." Um, and people started saying to me, "But you guys got all this money through this (Radio station) thing, why are you asking me for stuff?" And then I just realised at that point that it wasn't working. I'm too passionate about it, I've gone too far, I've put too much work in to it, um - I can't risk having a bad name and people think, "Oh, this organisation takes money and they don't use it for the stuff." And I'm linked to it. So at that point I said – I wrote a nice e-mail to (the founder) and I said to her, "You know, I want to break away from the _____ Foundation, I want to register my own organisation because having been involved with this work I have now seen where the gaps are, and I want to do more. I just feel I can do better if I operate on my own. I'm prepared to work in association with you but I want to be at a point where I can do my own fundraising and build things up further."

I: Mm.

P: Um, that turned very nasty. She never phoned me or anything. She got a lawyer on her board of directors, and the next thing I got all these horrible, intimidating, threatening e-mails from this lawyer about me wanting to start up my own thing, and um, how they will take me to court [rolls eyes], and I don't know what else – And a whole lot of other things.

I: It's so ironic that you were victimised by a foundation that's supposed to support people.

P: Precisely [nods]. Precisely. But what happened then, the office that I had set up – The furniture for that shopping centre, the furniture my company gave to me – They kitted out the whole office, um, and I had a lot of stock at that point. What they did is they sent me an e-mail and said I got all this stuff while I was working under the name of the _____ Foundation so they are sending a truck to fetch everything. They arrived there with a truck and a group of people – They just bundled everything in a truck. They cleared it out. There was nothing left in that shop.

I: Shjoe.

P: That broke my heart because I had worked hard to get it to that point and they had no involvement, no back-up, no help. So, I actually had a friend who sat with me because I had to sit there watching them load all these things in. I mean, for example, I know this is probably silly, but I don't have shelves in the shop and I needed shelves to pack the stock in [sic]. So my company was throwing out you know, these lockers...

I: Ja, ja.

P: ...But they were rusted and they looked terrible. So I decided I would take it [sic] and what we did is we cut the doors off with the angle grinder – I did it myself until someone actually said "You are going to injure yourself" [laughs], and then I had a primary school who did volunteer work who said their little boys would come in and paint these for me. So these little guys came in for me on Saturday and they painted these lockers, and they were all blue, and red, and yellow. And we stacked them on top of each other so that they could all make flat shelves. It looked so beautiful, and these guys came in and, ah, the way that they loaded it, scratched it [shakes head]. I was thinking, "These little guys worked so hard and now it's just being treated with absolute disrespect."

I: Which is how everything was being treated at that time.

P: Ja. Ja. But then a positive from that again, was that I was contacted by the _____ newspaper by a reporter while I was still at the _____ Foundation, and she didn't know my whole story either, and she said she wanted to do a story on my life and the work that I am doing now. So I said to her, "I don't want it done while I'm still linked to the Foundation, can you wait because I am busy moving away from them." But she kept in contact with me, phoning regularly, asking how things were going. So I told her about them wanting to send a truck to fetch everything. So she did this thing in the

_____ Newspaper, not naming any organisation, just saying – And the _____ Foundation calls it the _____ Project – And she (the reporter) was the first one to say “Comfort Pack Project”.

I: So she coined the term Comfort Pack?

P: Ja. She put it in, and she listed the items and she asked people to drop off donations at the (hardware) Stores, um, and they put out bins and posters everywhere – Lovely stuff [smiles]. And the on the Friday the _____ Foundation’s truck came in and cleared everything out, by the Saturday morning, the truck came in from the (hardware) Stores. I had enough stuff to pack 500 bags [smiles]. So even though everything I had was taken away from me, my distribution to my centres never stopped.

I: Schjoe.

P: That was just amazing. Just, once again, you sit and you look at what happened, and you think, “How on earth?”

I: Ja. That’s incredible. And the name ‘Epic’, where did that come from?

P: You know what, I was sitting in the traffic one day [laughs], and I was thinking, “What can I call my organisation?” And it was also just like – Like someone said, “Here it is.” [Smiles]. And I thought about EPIC and exactly what it stood for: Empowering People In Crisis. It was just something in traffic. And then when I did my registration, I had only put down Epic Foundation, and my lawyer said to me, “No, there are so many places with ‘Epic’ in [sic], that the chances of getting that name is zero, so give us a few others.” I can’t even remember the others because I just didn’t want any of the others. And then I got a call from the lawyer the one day and he said, “I can’t believe it, you got it!”, [laughs].

I: So just everything lining up.

P: Just everything how it should be, ja. I firmly believe that things in life happens [sic] for a reason, and that what’s meant to be will be.

I: And would you say, Epic, as much as it is – and the activism that you do with your speaking – As much as it is to empower others, and to have them feel that they are not alone, and to have them feel that they can be brave enough to speak out, and that recovery is possible. So outside of all of those things, is it fair to say that Epic is a reflection of your work ethic? That you weren’t going to do anything half-arsed because Julia doesn’t do anything half-arsed?

P: Ja [nods]. Totally. Well my children say to me the name Epic is not always what I thought it was, its actually that I always do things in epic proportions [laughs].

I: OK [smiles].

P: So, ja. I always start something small, and it never ends up small. It always ends up big.

I: And it's always been like that?

P: You know what, the thing is that with what I have been through in life and everything, and because I am not scared to take up challenges anymore, and I don't give up...

I: When was that flip? That not being scared anymore?

P: I think that was after I heard the words from Angel, and deciding, "This is it. I have to change my life." I couldn't stay in that negative space anymore. And with that I was so determined to change things around that my fear of taking up challenges just went with it. I mean if someone walks through the door with a challenge today and I think, "Wow, that's a big one." I won't say "no" because I don't want to ever turn back in my life and think, "What if I tried it." If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. Then at least you know you have tried it.

I: Ja.

P: I have had too many things work though [laughs]. But it's good. It's good. I'm still managing [smiles].

I: And you are still managing?

P: It's getting a bit tough at the moment, but my aim next year is to really look at funding, and getting more fuds in because I want to get to the point where I can leave here (job), and run it full time. Now they (work) have been very good to me with my flexible hours, and um – Because I had an old boss, I've now got a new one...

I: Mhmm.

P: ...And he doesn't quite get me. We clash a bit. But I'm on as a pro-bono client of theirs, they do my auditing, accounting, secretarial work. I'm part of their corporate social responsibility, so I'm a client and an employee at the moment which is a bit weird but at least they help.

I: So what, if you could – It's quite a tough question - but, what does activism do for you, personally?

P: [Sighs and looks up]. [Pause]. I don't know. It's like – Its almost – Its given my life a greater purpose.

I: OK.

P: I mean, I have basically found what I am passionate about and what my purpose is in life, and I feel that with the sequence of events, even when the bad things happened, with the sequence of events everything that happened after that was something that put me on a path to get to the point where I am living my purpose. And I feel that being an activist is my purpose in life. And there needs to be a voice to stand up and speak when those cannot, and there needs to be someone to hold out a hand to those who don't have anyone.

I: Mm.

P: So it's just given my life so much more purpose and so much more meaning. And I wouldn't have it any other way. I mean, although I hear bad things and I hear horrible stories, it still won't put me off from doing what I doing. Because a lot of people say to me, "How can you do what you do?" And you hear so many horrible things at the end of the day but they don't realise that at the end of the day we do give help, we do bring people out of that horrible situation. And that just makes life worthwhile. I often feel like all these things that was put on my path [sic] – Like people just don't notice when an opportunity is given to them, and they don't reach their full purpose in life. Which is sad.

I: Mm [nods]. And, just answer as best as you can, how do you experience yourself as both a rape victim and an anti-rape activist?

P: How do experience myself [laughs]?

I: As both of those things?

P: I don't often think about myself. Um, I think what happened to me, the rape that I went through, it changed me as a person, completely. Because I will never again be that person I was before.

I: Tell me more about that.

P: Um, well the person before wouldn't have taken up those challenges and done the things I'm doing now. If I think who I was back then, I wouldn't have imagined half the things I have achieved. I mean I walk into situations that back then I would have turned away and said, "Oh no. Not for me.", and now I'm not scared. I go out and I do it. So I have changed and I do see myself as a better person and a stronger person. And I am proud of myself that I didn't let what happened to me control my life. And I have gotten to that point. And I am thankful for Angel for just that one sentence, it changed my life around. It got me to that point of realising that, and I am grateful for that. And I

am happy where I am today and what I am doing. I am content. I am at peace with what I am doing.

I: So would it be fair to say that the rape was the death of the old Julia and started the path for the anti-rape activist Julia?

P: Completely [nods].

I: And that's how we can understand those two things together?

P: Ja. Ja. Completely.

I: And after everything we have spoken about today, and – do you have any thoughts, or feelings, or comments outside of these specific questions that you know, you would like to say that you haven't had a chance to say?

P: Um, nothing specific other than there will be new things coming up because I am continuously looking at new things to do, new avenues, getting more involved. I mean my Charities for Change that I started this year has been such a huge success that there is always another angle, another something and I don't want to stop. Whatever I can achieve and do, I will. You know I'm not young anymore, so I want to make the most of what's left of my life, really make my mark out there.

I: For what, self-fulfilment?

P: Mm. Ja. Ja,

I: Well thank you very much for your time – Oh one more thing. You made a comment about "I don't really think about myself that much." Tell me about that?

P: I think, no, it's not that I don't want to, it's just that I get so busy with stuff, because of having my job and having Epic, I don't normally make me-time, and when I do I have to just cut off and do something else. So I don't just sit and think about myself. Like for example, my day consists of – I get up at four, I start here six 'o clock to 12 'o clock, then I get off and go do Epic work, like running around or going to the Epic office – I've always got something on. I've got quite a hectic schedule. Then I get home and then I've got to log in and do another two and a half hours, because I have to do my full eight hours for work. By the time I get to bed I am so tired, from that having to focus on work, work, work the whole day, I'm so tired that there hasn't been any time to think about me. And this year has been quite a rough year because we haven't had an assistant at work either the last few months, so there really isn't me-time. And when there is a gap I am so exhausted that you can't really do anything. So I've been trying to cut off now, I've converted one of the rooms of my house into a hobby and craft room...

I: Good. Ja.

P: ...So my family knows when I go in there with my bottle of wine...

I: It's quiet time.

P: Ja [smiles]. So I sit and craft so that I can just focus on something else and just relax completely. Because the thing is, if I just sit and think, I think about all the things I need to do, and then the "to do" list comes out – I sleep with a pen and book next to my bed.

I: Mm. Wake up in the morning and scribble.

P: I wake up in the middle of the night and think of things and I can't go back to sleep unless I've written it down because I am scared I forget it [sic]. So I think I'm just in a bit of a hectic spot at the moment and I haven't really given myself much attention over the last few months.

I: Please do [smiles].

P: Well Friday I'm finishing off here for a bit of a break, but I've got Epic work to do.

I: But, um, do you ever have moments when you speak to a rape victim and it's just too much, or there is something that happens and you just need a god cry? You struggle to kind of tap into that Julia that's like, "I must keep going", because that's what I'm experiencing as we are chatting. You always want to put your best foot forward and strive to make it better. Like are there any moments you do feel like, "Wow this is a lot. I'm overwhelmed."?

I: Look when I speak to rape victims, initially it was hard from me because they tell me their story and like, I couldn't get their stories out my head, and it bugged me a lot. And I think, because I have been doing it for so long I realised I can't keep their stories with me. I need to let go of it. I give them advice and help them. The main thing is I refer them on, because I am not a counsellor and I don't want to be in the situation. I'm there for a casual chat and I make them understand that. But there are cases that stick with me that I can't get out my mind that I'll have maybe a sleepless night about. And, ja. Well now that I've got Elze¹¹ on my Board of Directors, I phone her when things like that happen and have a chat.

I: So you have a support system?

¹¹ Elze is a Trauma trained social worker who is new to the Epic team and runs counselling sessions and support groups for the organisation.

P: Ja. And I didn't have that before and that was difficult because you sometimes felt like – I didn't want to speak to my children about it because I don't want them to hear all these horror stories as well. So at least I've got Elze now who can help me work through it.

I: So did you just compartmentalise when you didn't have the support system?

P: Totally. It never overflowed. It was like I always compressed it all the time. But I was concerned about myself because, you know, sometimes when you compress things to much they go [makes explosion actions with hands]. But working here you sometimes get very angry a lot at the partners, so you just jam those other things in when you are screaming [laughs].

I: Got you [laughs]. But thank you for your time today [smiles].

P: It's my pleasure [smiles].

I: I really appreciate you being so open and sharing so much. I'll be in touch if I need to check any of this with you. Would that be OK?

P: Ja. Of course.

I: Thank you again.

Recording ends 01:11:53

From rape victim to anti-rape activist: Exploring the personal journeys of three South African survivors. Interview 3 – ‘Lomé’.

11 December 2015

Participant:

Name	‘Lomé’
Race	Black
Age	35
Language	Sotho, Pedi (First language) English (Second language)

Background:

Lomé is a 35 year old woman who lives with her siblings and mother at their family home in a semi-rural area outside of Gauteng. Lomé is currently unemployed and has successfully completed matric as well as a tertiary qualification in tourism.

Lomé is exceptionally fluent in English although it is not her home language. She experienced her first rape at the age of 11 and was subsequently raped frequently until she left school and pursued further studies.

After school Lomé found a job in the city and moved there for a while whilst establishing herself in adulthood. She had ‘party’ lifestyle and admits to pushing people away at this stage. She used drugs, drank excessively and explains that she was promiscuous through high school and up until the point that she fell pregnant.

At 25 years old, Lomé fell pregnant with her son and at this point decided to make lifestyle changes. As events unfolded she found herself being drawn to a path of service to others, and discusses her faith as an important part of this.

Her current activist activities include facilitating an educational board game that teaches children about rape and abuse for the Tears Foundation. She has also used this platform to do public speaking about her experiences, and uses these platforms as a call to action for a better future. Currently she is also looking into starting up her own outreach project that combines her motivational speaking with creative activities as a therapeutic outlet for youths.

Context:

I have met Lomé before with the work I did at Tears Foundation. We worked together when facilitating the LifeBoard with the children. This pre-existing contact provided for

a safe space to be created where Lomé could allow herself to be more open and vulnerable than I had previously experienced her as in our interactions.

Since she is currently unemployed, Lomé did not have money for transportation, and though it was offered as part of her participation she was also given the option of me coming to her home. Lomé said that she would feel more comfortable having the interview there and therefore I drove out to her home.

Because I had already conducted the other interviews, I had an idea of which questions needed to be refined and focused on in order to have the most relevant information for the study. However, I found myself being drawn in very deeply to her narrative, and questioning followed naturally from what she put forward. I felt it very important to fully recognise Lomé's context and to allow her the space to unpack as much as she needed to. I struggled to contain my 'need to save' when seeing her distressed, but instead provide empathy through listening attentively and checking in with her often.

Before recording started, I went through the informed consent sheet with her as well as let her know about the psychological support service available to her. I also made it clear that I would be recording the interview and would be adhering to confidentiality guidelines. At this stage she did not have any questions, so recording started.

Transcript:

Interviewer: So we are here today on the 11th of December at quarter to eleven.

Participant: I said November, I'm a month behind [smiles].

I: [Laughs]. That's OK. You are not the only one who did that.

Interviewer takes signed consent form.

I: Perfect. So we have gone over the informed consent.

P: Yes.

I: So basically, like I said, we are just going to be going through a few questions and more so going to be having a discussion. The whole point of the research is, I don't understand your world experience, so I'm trying my best, for you to use your words and explain the best you can, so that I can match my understanding to yours. And we can create a shared understanding of your experience that I can then write up into the study, that you also agree with.

P: Yes.

I: So just to start off, can you tell me a bit about yourself?

P: OK. Um, I grew up, well I was born in this place _____ but when I was five I moved here to M_____. But I grew up quite differently because these places are quite culturally different.

I: Mhmm.

P: M_____ was your more urban, more rainbow nation in the day. So white and black used to live together. I remember my first best friend was Indian, so it was paradise on earth really.

I: Ja.

P: So it was very safe, very caged, you know very well protected. Kids were protected by all the adults in the streets and that kind of thing, you know? It was a very well-knit community. So well, ja, it was – And it was also diverse, very diverse you know, cosmopolitan if you will. Because there were some people from Germany and some from China and it was just beautiful. So I lived in a sheltered and very happy life. And um, I think that somewhere along the lines, life happens. My parents weren't exactly going well in their life [sic], and there were some in-fights at home. My first bout of domestic violence – I think I was in Standard 1 or Grade two, where about my father came home late one night and decided that my mom should leave the house – Well he was in a drunken stupor. So a fight ensued, it was on a Tuesday at nine 'o clock in the evening and we had to watch my mother in the street. It was one of those ridiculous first moments in my life that I thought, "Whoa [runs hands across eyebrow], I've never since this fight, not even on TV before." So that escalated eventually to a point where my mom felt like she couldn't take it anymore, and she left. She couldn't take it anymore.

I: Mm.

P: And my father got a divorce, uncontested without my mother's knowledge, yes. So things just went haywire from there. And I think, a couple of years later, after me struggling to, you know, live without my mother, because I was young, my father got cross with me and my brother. We were young, I couldn't understand. My brother had to be the guide of it all you know, bottling it up. I just couldn't do it. So I asked my mother to come fetch us because there would be days when my father would travel, and we would be alone at home so there would be no parental guidance, nothing. So we would go for days without eating sometimes, and um, yeah after a while, even though my father would fight my mother off, I told him, "I can't do this". So I came without his knowledge.

I: Mm.

P: And I was so scared of my father because he was like, the alpha of the house. So coming here was quite a risk, for me. Because the first thing he would've done, we anticipated him driving all the way from wherever he was coming, to fetch me and dragging me by the hair back home. That's how he was then. So, I have to say, coming here I felt – I was looking for a place of solitude, of refuge.

I: With your mom?

P: Yeah, with my mother.

I: Did you have a better relationship with your mom than your dad, or can you describe your relationship with both parents?

P: My relationship with my mother, I never had a chance because it happened so quickly when I was young. You know, when you are still a kids chasing butterflies [smiles], and all of a sudden she is not there anymore. And that's when I realised I really needed her more. And growing up throughout puberty and all those experiences, all those body changes without her – I really needed that you know? But we were not that close. I was actually my father's daughter.

I: Mm.

P: Yes I was daddy's little girl. Tom boy each and every way. But when - When life happened to him he became something else. You couldn't speak to him, you couldn't approach him with a problem, with anything. So with that I felt like I needed my mother around.

I: OK

P: So it was around then that I moved here with my brother. We got here and we – My mother was working somewhere else, she was only staying here on holidays [sic]. But it was better because I had my two sisters. But because of their single life and their schedules, they weren't exactly chuffed to be dropped with baggage of that kind. I understand completely where they were coming from but then it hurt [laughs]. Now I understand it but then it really hurt [smiles]. And um, having to get used to – My siblings, the friends that I grew up with back then on the streets, those were close to me. I used to go on holidays so we grew up together, I was born here. But the rest of the outside world did not know me. So when I got to school I was known as the girl from M_____.

I: OK. Ja.

P: And the girl from M_____ becomes notoriously known because apparently she is pretty, she speaks fluent English like an English person, and ja. So immediately I got hit with that stigma and I became “popular” [uses air quotes and whispers the word]. So ja, it was my first bout of popularity. And coming from a reserved and very closed background, I didn’t know what was that [sic].

I: Ja. What do you understand it as now if you had to describe what popularity is?

P: Well I think for them it was getting a piece of something that they did not know, you know? Something that was new to them. I was different. And to them, either difference was marvelled at, or squashed, or you know, or something you become afraid of. Just like, as with human beings, anything we don’t understand, those are the first reactions that we do [sic].

I: Mm.

P: It’s either, “Wow awesome”, or it’s “Oh my Lord, it’s going to kill us [laughs]” or something else. Or there’s a kind of jealousy like, “How is she different from us?” and that’s what I got.

I: So did you get a combination of those thigs?

P: All of the above. All of the above. I instantly had fans, groupies, ah, psychos actually. Bullies – women and guys. There were, you know, some would come to me and say “What makes you think you are better than me?” You know, defence like, “I’m still beautiful too” and I would be like, “Yeah go on, good for yourself [smiles]”. I mean hey, I have always been one of those people who like happy endings, I’ve always been like that. I am gullible like that. So when a person is like, you know, feeling good about themselves then I’m like, “Yeah, go on with your bad self [smiles]” because it’s contagious and I like it [smiles]. So, I would never understand when they were trying to like, rub it in my face at the time like, “Don’t think you are the only one.” And I don’t even think that I am good looking, “You guys were the ones who named me.” So I remember the first time I actually heard that at school. I was in school and it was short break and somebody was speaking, and I came outside of the class – Because I didn’t know anyone, in short break, I would sit in class, and read my books and whatever, and people would come peeking. And this time it was a couple of days later, and I braved this and said, “Come on, you need to get outside and look at this world.” And I stepped outside and there was a group of people standing by the door, and I stood

there and they were talking, “Ja, no, this girl. She is beautiful, she is one, two, three”. So I am standing behind them while they are talking...

I: Mm.

P: And they are like “This girl is beautiful, you know she is from M_____, her name is Lomé .”, and I’m like what? Really? I would like to see her too you know [laughs]. It’s like, I get home with this perplexed look on my face and my sister, she’s like “What’s up?” and I’m like, “Well I heard from people today that I am beautiful” you know? And she looked at me, and I looked at her with the same look and we went, “Humph [shrugs shoulders]” you know, and just walked about the house like normal. So, cricket moment [claps hands together and sighs].

I: Ja.

P: So that’s how it was. I never, in some way, was looking for all of the attention that I got. My bullies were quite extreme. Um, I had a bully who would make sure that every day was living hell. Take my school bag, beat me up to a pulp. I would get beaten up, I would get my clothes torn off, and um, if I didn’t have an imprint of a slap on my face then he did not do anything. So I, I had to learn to run [laughs]. I started running before I learnt how to fight. I ran every day from school, secondary school. Every day at two ‘o clock without skipping a beat. Some days there was study break which was an hour, so some days from three until four we would have to study at school, and after that I would have to learn to run. That’s a distance from – That’s a long distance. So, I learned to find different ways of going home, but they would still catch me out, and um...

I: What happened to your fans when the bullies were bullying?

P: They would cheer. Some would cheer, some would just stand there. For them it was entertainment. For them it’s what they are used to. And, some would actually say, “No its wrong”, but without doing anything. And those that were saying that it was wrong, they are tiny pint sizes like me so they couldn’t do anything. And I was scared. Dude, I wasn’t used to this kind of life so I was very wet behind the ears coming from primary school, so I was afraid to tell, because the situation I came in at home [sic], I already felt like I was an imposter already because you know, of how I came and everything. Then coming now and saying that you have got problems and that you’ve got someone bullying you at school, its another problem, another thing again that I didn’t want to add to my résumé at the time. I was afraid that they would probably tell me, “Ag, you are better off in M_____”. So I kept quiet in hoping that it would abate.

I: Did you ever think that sometimes? That it would have been easier if you had stayed in M_____?

P: Not really. I think, thinking about it now, like my soul would have just shrivelled up and died.

I: So even though you had so much, like physical abuse happening, and you were so anxious and things, you still thought that this was the better place for you because you felt that in M_____ you weren't able to truly be yourself? Or...?

P: I feel like in M_____ we were abandoned.

I: OK.

P: Because we went there to make a family. Because when my parents divorced, my mum took my older two sisters with her, because they are not my father's children. And it was me and my brother. So the family was halved.

I: Mm. And you felt like here was a full family?

P: Ja, and it's like we were, it's like in M_____ we were abandoned, like it's just us because my father was always travelling you know. So this was much better than that you know?

I: The home-life?

P: Yes. And so the bullying, it kept on going and I remember I had a crush. My first crush was in secondary school, and it was this young boy. It was this guy – Well he wasn't young, he was a bit older, maybe even a bit older to be in standard six or standard seven [sic], including my bully. They were kind of way older to be in secondary.

I: What do you mean by that?

P: Like those people who are always, like – Because I think my bully, my bully was 21, and I was 11. Yes. Same age as the guy who was my crush at school. So they were a bit older, I never had to interact with people in the same school that old. It was a very different demographic to the one in M_____ you know, where the oldest girl in primary is probably two or three years older than you, like that is the oldest person you have ever been around. So this to me was like, "Phew, wow." I had a lot to adjust to. And I remember this guy, he was very handsome. He was very handsome and popular at school and all of those things and I didn't know a thing about dating and all those things, so I liked him from afar. So you can imagine how it was when you are so young and so innocent and the captain of the softball team comes to say hi. So yes, I was like any other girl. I was taken aback, I was thrilled. I was all of the above. So yeah, by

the time he had left I had stars in my eyes and I was picturing white picket fences and two dogs and all of that [smiles]. And um, I did not know that I was a ploy, I was a game.

I: Mm. In what way?

P: Um, he became more friendly [sic]. He came to visit at classes in between [sic] and he pretended that he was interested in me, and then eventually telling me that he loves me. And as much as I did not know what it was all about, I went sure, "I love you". I mean, all I knew about dating was holding hands, that's how gullible I was. Silly. So I thought, "Ag you know, this is the life. I get to hold hands forever and get married and it's going to be awesome [claps hands and smiles]."

I: Mm.

P: You know, nobody told me about the birds and the bees. Yes I did know where babies came from, but I didn't not know that relationships, uh, that's where you get to – where babies comes from. Yes, I didn't actually know those two connected.

I: Which two?

P: Where babies come from. Um, dating and sex [laughs]. I knew sex was for marriage and not for (dating). So this guy came to – Started walking me home you know. I remember there was this day when he said he wanted to share this special moment with me, this special moment. And I thought, "Oh, time alone," for talking and bonding and you know probably having ice-cream or something. You know, I was a kid Kal, so young [laughs]. My first idea of a date would have been those ice-lollies that we used to buy on our way home. Ad he said to me he wants to go to a quiet place where we can be alone, and I thought, "OK, this must be serious alone time." And he said, "No this time we are going to go do grown-up stuff." And I am thinking, "I can do grown up stuff. What are those grown up stuff [sic]?"

I: Mm.

P: And I go there and we get to this house, it's just close to the school – opposite the school. And we get there and there are two guys already there drinking, and I think they were on some sort of drugs or something because they were just not your normal, just, average drunken stupor kind of state [sic]. I get in, this guy sits with me and he tells me we are going to have sex, and I say, "Well I have never had sex before and I am not sure I do know how to." And he says, "I'll show you." And I'm like, "OK. How are you going to do that?" and he says, "Let's take off our clothes". But as we were taking off our clothes I realised, "I don't know this. I don't want to do this." So I said no,

but he keeps on saying, “No but I promise you it will be fine.” And I thought, “OK. This guy knows much better, clearly he knows much better.” But the more he did, the more I said no, and for me it was something that I had to get over quick – Well it took me a long time- but I needed to get over it quick because I felt like it was my fault. If I hadn’t gone there, if I hadn’t let that guy talk me into it – Yes I said no, but still, I was there, so. And from him, after him, I said, “Can I go home?” and then his friends came in. So his friends came in and they raped me as well. They were brutal because I did not know what this kind of thing is. How can somebody love you, do this and then after that bring in people that you don’t even know from a bar of soap [pauses, looks away]?
I: Mm.

P: To want to do something so intimate to you.

I: So would it be fair to say that it was very confusing as well as traumatising, because with him, although you didn’t want it, a part of you thought, “Well maybe if he loves me it’s OK”...

P: It’s OK [nods].

I: ...It’s what we should be doing?

P: Yes.

I: Then only afterwards did you realise it wasn’t. But then as soon as the other men came in you felt more...?

P: I felt more like an object because I was tossed around. Because I think at some point I was choked, or slapped. I think I was threatened that if I don’t comply, if I screamed, if I did something, then I would get hurt.

I: Mm. How old were you when this happened?

P: I was eleven. And ja, and I thought it, it’s um, I thought, “OK this is how life is supposed to be.” You go through some things. I thought this is what normally happens to girls, that this is normal in this place.

I: How were you feeling? What emotions did you experience?

P: I was so shaken, I was so sacred. I was dirty. I felt like the scum of the earth, like I was not even worth to be picked up from underneath, you know, the shoe [sic]. That’s how I felt. And at that time it did not help the fact that it was during study break at school [sic], so everybody saw me get in that place and get out [sic], so to everybody I was a whore.

I: So their impression was different from the reality?

P: Yes, and, apparently at the same time while I was being raped, one of the guys who was high was singing a song about it.

I: What was the song?

P: Apparently some song about how nice I am and, um, I don't know. I can't remember clearly. Some song about how nice I am, enjoyable, and um, that I must never leave him because he would just die from insanity. It was a catch phrase, it was such a catch phrase then because kids can be cruel. So kids at school used to sing that song to me, those who remembered it.

I: Mm.

P: Because those two guys were not from school, he was. And I had to – He had to pretend to be my boyfriend for a couple of while [sic] so I wasn't the wiser of what he did. So only later in life, I heard from someone that it was actually a ritual to get into a gang, to join that gang.

I: Schjoe. And were you suspecting that those other two people were part of the gang?

P: Ja, well they looked dodgy. They didn't look like your average student you know like that Ivy League, kind of scholarship in mind. They looked dodgy, I mean, they looked like gangsters. But I thought that he was just misguided under peer-pressure from friends. So, but uh, yeah, but at the time he told me that he wanted to do it again, I said, "Look, no. I don't want to do that again. *Ever. Ever Again.*" And that's when his true colours came out, ja actually. That's when he said it was for that purely and that, "I would never go for someone like you." You know? He started becoming ugly and I was devastated.

I: Mm.

P: And yes, at the time I was 'seeing someone', you know it was the culture here to have boyfriends. I didn't even understand the ritual, I just went with the flow. That's why I just hate, now days, this phrase "go with the flow", I hate it with a passion [smiles]. And the guy I was 'seeing', we never had physical contact. My idea of dating this guy was when seeing him, I ran the other direction. That was my version of dating.

I: And what happened after you left the house? Can you tell me about the time after the rape, like, how were you feeling? If you told anyone? What was going on for you? What you were thinking...

P: I was – I didn't tell anyone, I couldn't tell anyone because when you are being in that situation [sic], the person that is doing all these ungodly things to you is telling you it's your fault. It's your fault. That sticks. That sticks [nods head slowly]. It doesn't go

away, and that immediately deters you from looking for help because if it's your fault, then even if you say this happened to me, then it's your fault. So I became afraid, I shut down.

I: How did you shut down?

P: In every way. The 'bubbly' me left, I stopped talking, my grades went down. I was a straight-A student, granted maths was always my subject that I would have a challenge with, it was the only thing that I passed average or that I would flunk if I flunked. But my grades took like, a down-spill, and um, I changed, I became – And not only from just that. My attitude, I became vulgar, vile. I became disrespectful. I became all of my friends that I used to wonder, "What happened to you?" [Shakes head]

I: Mm. And was it fair to say that you had anger, or?

P: I was angry [nods], and I thought, "Ag, if this is what people wanted from me then, so." Um you know, the loose, um – because I was branded a slut. So I thought, "You know what, OK. Fine. And if slut is what they want, slut is what they are going to get. Might as well. Who am I to disappoint the masses." You know.

I: So explain that a bit more?

P: I stopped trying to be good. I just let things go. I just did whatever. If somebody would tell me, "OK, let's go and do-", you know – My boyfriend would be like, "Let's go and have sex" and I would be like, "OK, let's go and do it later" – I stopped questioning, I stopped having limits. I became [pause] devil-may-care, I – Because the irony of it, is that it was not the only rape.

I: OK. Because after that came others because it spread? So tell me about that? Explain that a bit more?

P: After Vuyo and his friends raped me, it became a feeding frenzy, so to speak. My bully, the – the one who used to beat me up as his game, felt like it was their turn [sic], and they would take me as well. Instead of the usual slapping around and all those things it became more heightened. So, it would be that, it was...

I: Are you saying that your bully and his gang would rape you too?

P: Yes. Yes.

I: How would it happen if you don't mind me asking?

P: After school they would – Houses that don't have parents that are at home, you know? So you get a house that has nobody, and it's all boys and probably parents who are working and only coming on weekends. Yes, I used to always find myself being dragged into a house like that.

I: Mhmm.

P: And, yes. Kicking and screaming, bloody nose.

I: What would happen in those moments, in the multiple rapes? What was going through your head? How did you cope?

P: I would shut-down. I didn't cope. I left – I left the day that happened, uh, it took me a long time to come back. Everything was just moving through the motions.

I: Tell me about that a bit more?

P: I, I – You know I would always hear that people would tell you that they were hovering above their bodies? Well I never did that, I experienced everything. So that was too much for me so I checked out, literally. My spirit, my soul literally checked-out. I went on lunch permanently, and the only thing that you would see was just, was the shell and I was just going through the motions. And everything else was just, was gone, because I felt like they took it and I had no way of taking it back. So I was [pauses, tears fall from eyes], was empty for a long time [wipes tears]. And um [sighs], but I had to, I had to – On the exterior I was always calm, it's one of those things that's a conundrum: you are screaming inside but on the outside no one can hear you.

I: Ja [whispers].

P: And I had to learn to live with it you know? They say, "Fake it 'till you make it." I had to fake it until it didn't hurt anymore, until it didn't register anymore. And um at home I was just becoming unbearable.

I: What do you mean?

P: I was not listening, I was always fighting with my parents, my sisters, my siblings.

I: Did anyone ever ask you, where's this coming from? What's going on?

P: They thought it was just teenage, you know, phase [sic]. It's just getting that some can handle it better than others [sic], so they thought that maybe I was just worse off to ware [sic]. Because they are also quite busy. You know when you are living in a house where – Because if the first time I found them at home, if I had found them I would have said something.

I: Mm.

P: But because there was no one at home, I cried myself for hours [sic], for hours, four *hours* and then I cleaned myself up, washed myself, cleaned myself off. Washed my uniform. And I slept, wanting it all to be a bad dream. Hoping that when I wake up it's going to be much different. It's going to be better.

I: But it never was.

P: No, it never was. It was always the same mundane, dull beating in the back of my head. I remember even, in New Year's Eve [sic]. Now I was dating then, having sex, quite promiscuous, with some guy I was dating at the time. I still didn't know what all of it meant. And this friend of mine, asked me to go for an errand somewhere for her mum...

I: And how many years after the first rape was this?

P: It was the same year. It was the same year New Year's eve. And I was the go-to, running errands. But this errand, it was a ploy for going out and seeing some party. So when we deviated from the plan I didn't like it. I was one of those that was brought up in a certain way, that small-minded way, that when you are told to do something, go do it first and then come back later. Do what you need to do first and then come back and do what you want to do.

I: Mm.

P: So immediately that felt wrong to me, my conscience just [clicks fingers] you know? And I didn't know what it meant at the time but I really didn't like it, and I really didn't want to go. Against my better judgement she said, "No, come on lets go, it will be fun and we won't stay long." When we got there I didn't even want to go into the place, because it was rowdy under-age drinking, bottles were flying everywhere, you know? And I'm thinking to her, "Why are you bringing me to such a place?" And for her, she needed – She wanted to get there to see the boyfriend, and it was one of those things. So as I was standing by the door and some guy saw me, came to speak to me and I didn't even want to speak to anyone, so when I refused his interaction he grabbed my arm. I thought he was joking, you know those things. And he dragged me, to um, a close by house. He dragged me to that place. It was busy, the sound from the music was so loud, I was screaming and nobody could care less. To everybody on the outside it probably looked like I was the girlfriend and didn't want to leave the party [lifts hands palms upwards].

I: Mm.

P: And, he dragged me to this place where I found he had two more guys in there, who forced me to drink, who forced me to do a lot of things to them. Touching them [pauses]. Doing all sorts of funny things to them, fondling them. Um, that was the first time I gave my first blowjob. I always like to put it that way, because whether it (be) willingly or unwillingly it was the first time I had to put that in my mouth. Didn't even know what that was for. And the others were cheering him (on) and, and I was

brutalised. They – They [looks down]. And, they raped me there, in that house. They took me out because I was screaming, because of the pain...

I: Mm [nods lightly]

P: And they, I remember they said they needed to go somewhere else where the family wouldn't start asking questions, with all that noise. So we literally walked the whole night, walking one place to another being raped, by these guys approaching me. I remember there was a time, I was in a toilet, an outside toilet, and this one was biting my nipple so hard that it started bleeding, ugh – Still today, I still have that mark, my nipple looks funny. And um – I then immediately, at that time, I never understood it. The one thing that I never anticipated I would encounter, is that my body started enjoying whatever it is. It started responding, and when semen¹² and all those started coming out [sic] – and they went crazy, they were all, "Ah so you *like* it, oh wow." And they were so jubilantly happy, it's like – You know they were on steroids now, like on a different level. It's like they hit some other high level and they were gone. And the things that they were saying and the things that they were doing, I wasn't angry at them, I became angry at myself, at my body for betraying me.

I: Ja [says softly].

P: Because I did not want it, why is it, you know?

I: Do you feel like your body gave them the permission that your mouth and your soul and everything else –

P: - Wasn't [nods]. And you know, I felt so betrayed then, at that point. That's, that's when the checking out came in you know?

I: [nods].

P: I could handle the betrayal from another person to me, but my own body to me? It was something else that I needed to really swallow. To me it felt like, that if it did this, I must be enjoying it. This must be up my alley. This must be what I was made for. So why deny it. Why fight it you know [tears fall from eyes]?

I: So it fed into that idea that, "I'm going to stop fighting it."

P: Yes. Ja [wipes eyes].

I: So what did the promiscuity do for you from then on? Because that sounds like it was your tipping point right?

P: Mhmm [nods].

¹² Here the participant uses 'semen' to describe her own vaginal fluids.

I: What was it for you other than an, “OK I am going to stop fighting, I am just going to give in to it.”

P: At some point in some ways I thought that it was making the hurt less. Because my heart in some ways was no longer caring anymore. Because I cared so much to try and protect my virtue and my self-worth, that now we don’t care anymore. So I don’t – It’s not as bad as trying to shield it, so it doesn’t matter. Let whatever happens happen to it, so let them.

I: So it took you into this weird place, after that, where there was still never consent but...

P: There was no resistance.

I: It’s not that there was (consent) and it’s not that there wasn’t, because you were in this limbo?

P: Yes.

I: So from that point on it wasn’t consensual sexual activity but –

P: I was also not denying it.

I: - Not denying it. It was just “Let’s just get this over with?”

P: [Nods.] And I told myself, “Mostly you know what these guys want when they come to you. So why not just give it to them and let them leave you alone.” Because I know what it does to resist, I’ve seen what happened when I resisted, so let them get what they get, and hopefully they will leave me alone.

I: So could you say that it was almost a way of protecting yourself?

P: Self-preservation. Yes [nods]. The only way I knew how.

I: And if I use the word “control” how does that relate to the decisions that you have made?

P: [Sighs]. I would say that I got to a point where what happened to me - I felt entitled. I felt so much entitlement.

I: To what?

P: To *everything*. Because I felt like, if I could get brought into this world, and such a thing could happen to me, I’m entitled to do whatever I want and nobody will tell me anything about it, because I did not ask to be in this world.

I: Because the world owes you?

P: Ja [nods]. It’s like, how does this happen and everyone be OK with it, so it might as well. They have their own rules so I might as well make up mine as I go along.

I: OK.

P: So that was my, my thinking. So I um, I had to also pretend like I was happy, that everything was going well. That everything was in check, that I can't be broken because you know, you would be – It's so funny how I had never known 'degenerate', what this meant, until I came to a place – not that its only bad, but most of it is – but a person gets laughed at for being raped. And, they are telling you, why didn't you get your own as well? And I am thinking, how do you do that? I felt, adapt or die. I adapted, and as much as I tried, it still was not working. So I became - The path began to run away from me. I did things in the bit excessive department [sic] [smiles].

I: Like?

P: After bottling this for so many years...

I: Is this now after you left high school?

P: No it was still in high school, after so many years. Um, I uh, I found out that I couldn't suppress it anymore and it kept on coming up so I would have periods of spacing out for like hours, where I wouldn't know what has happened or what I had been doing. And, time would run away from me and I would come back and I had lost maybe an hour or two.

I: Mm.

P: And I needed to be focused, I was writing exams and all those things, but I couldn't get over all those things. Sometimes they would come back in dreams, sometimes in nightmares, these guys chasing me and all those things. And I realised that these guys are going to get me one way or another.

I: Which guys?

P: My rapists and all those. So I became obsessed with trying to get them before they got me. So I would think of ways to kill them, and I would, fantasise that – Those were my ultimate dark fantasies, of making them hurt, the way they made me feel so hurt. And um, but after high school, after trying to do that for a bit, realising that I am going to be no better than them, um. Ja, the promiscuity was off the charts. I um, I was a serial dater, a serial man-eater and um, I was heartless, I was thoughtless. I couldn't care. Anything I touched, I soaked with pain, bitterness and anger. I wanted to let it feel what I was feeling, what I went through. And it was fermenting every year. It was becoming so contagious and so, so dangerous that it started becoming physical. The anger, the pain, I used to get sick all the time. I had kidney failure, I had haemorrhoids, I had bouts of - I had headaches. I had anything you could think of that was extreme, not your average illnesses, I had it. I even had a bout of - I nearly had a stroke once,

a heart attack of anger because that's how angry I used to get. My heart nearly stopped. And that's when I knew I needed to do something about it.

I: So tell me about that moment when you clicked, "I can't do what I am doing anymore. I need to do something about it." Tell me about that specific moment.

P: I think that time was always – that voice was always there but she wasn't loud enough. She was not loud enough. I think that in all her fighting she grew weary, and I think that all the demons she was busy running away from - I grew weary. They were more stronger [sic]. It's just that I [pause]. The time for me to – When my niece got raped. My niece got raped and she started exhibiting the same, um, patterns, behaviour that I did.

I: Mhmm. Did she tell you that she had been raped or..?

P: She did. She told my sister.

I: How old were you at this point?

P: I was um, about 22/23. I was 23 and I was working in town, ja, I was living in town. And, she had come to visit me and um, now I was – Her mother was explaining to me she's been getting into trouble, leaving home you know, doing all these things, she was worried because and she (my niece) was not at home. She (my sister) was throwing up from sheer panic. And it hit me how worried she was. And, I don't know, it must've been like this for them with me when they didn't even always know. But the saddest part was that, in matric because I was battling to concentrate or whatever, I actually at some point did tell (my family) that this is what happened. But because it was after so many years, instead of comfort, I got mixed emotions, mixed feelings, mixed reactions. And they only told me that "I must not worry, it was only five minutes." And I'm thinking, in those five minutes there were how many of them? And how many of them – it was how many times, because it was not just once. And I thought, you know, she is answering in the best way that she knows how. And my mother, she was so angry.

I: With you or what?

P: With herself for not seeing it and she was actually, I think so helpless as well. And she said *lewena*, *lewena* which in our language¹³ it means, you – It's like, "You should've have known better." You know [pause]? "*Lewena*, what were you doing?" You know like, she made it sound like [sic] if I hadn't have been there it wouldn't have

¹³ The language referred to at this point is Pedi.

happened. And in my head it sounded like she said “It’s your fault.” And I Just lost it, I just – I lost it. I remember I started screaming and yelling and I remember, in that time, when all the energy had left me – It was still in the same house [indicates to the house we are sitting in], I was in that passage down there. I had this conversation, I was crumpled in that passage over there, and I thought, “Why am I expecting my mother to save me?” She, she couldn’t save herself. I looked at my mother’s life and how my father treated her, and I looked at a lot of things. On the same – On the New Year’s Eve when they raped me, I met my boyfriend that night, with those guys. My so-called boyfriend, the one who is supposed to love and protect you – He didn’t do anything. I looked at him and I told him to help me, I said, “Help.” And he just stood there [sucks teeth audibly and sighs]. And that was that, and funny enough [sic], I just knew that I was alone.

I: Mm.

P: I knew I was alone in this world.

I: And did you feel like even speaking out didn’t free you from –

P: It was useless, it was worse, and that’s when I knew, “Thank God” I didn’t go to the police station because can you just imagine what it would have been like [shakes head and smiles]. So, and I thought well, ag man.

I: So your turning point was when you knew your niece was going through the same thing?

P: JA. And I thought, it’s a cycle. If I don’t stop it then nobody else will.

I: So what did you do? What were your next steps?

P: Well it took a long time for me to actually do something about it.

I: OK, well let me put it that way, let me rephrase the question. Between then and now, clearly you are still on a healing process, and you are still on your journey of recovery...

P: Mhmm.

I: Um, I don’t think anyone could ever say after they have gone through something like you have, “Oh it’s a miracle, I’m fine, you know everything is just perfect”

P: You don’t.

I: You know? And um, but between then and now, have you experienced any healing or recovery at all?

P: Oh plenty [nods].

I: Really? Tell me about that a bit more, what are the factors that have helped you, or some big moments you remember where you felt some healing or recovery happening?

P: My turning point was my son.

I: Mhmm.

P: Um because I was on a warpath. Oh I was on a warpath. Something needed to slow me down. And um, I remember in my prayer session with God, I remember him telling me it was either him or death.

I: Him meaning your son?

P: Mm. Um, because I was – Even at the speed I was running on, I was running at the speed of light, you know. And when I became pregnant, I don't want to lie, I didn't want to have a baby. It was nowhere – it was not in my plans, not in my five-year plan, it was – It totally screwed everything up. JA, and the only thing that was in me was work, work, work, work. So I shut everything out, that's what you know, you really do.

I: And how old were you at this point?

P: I was 25/26.

I: OK, so between school and 26 you were just on a warpath? Studying, working, guys, partying...

P: Working, guys, partying, you know, all of the above. And um, some, something along the way would try and jolted me [sic] – Anything that made my heart feel, I was gone. It would be me running in the other direction. It would be here and I running that way [points to the door]. Any kind of relationship or anything. I have realised that I have hurt a lot of people who have tried to give me love and care for me. All who tried to heal me. And that is one of the things I will never, never get back. I wish that was one of the things I could go back and fix. But um, but my son, when he came I literally had to stop. And recheck myself. And he was – Because with him I couldn't run away from him, he was in my tummy [smiles], and it made me look at a lot of things about life and the way it was, and bringing him into this world. What kind of a mother would I be, what kind of a world would this be for him and my future children? And I thought, this needed a change, this – I don't know where I am going to start, where it was going to go and all, but this pattern needed to go away. Because even in my walking journey, every friend, most of my friends that I have connected with, were rape victims.

I: OK.

P: Ja.

I: And did you know that they were?

P: Later. We would find out later that they were when we were talking about past experiences, with our pain and our hurt. This is what bonded us, oh my God.

I: And were those also healing moments for you?

P: Yes they were, they were.

I: Can you explain how?

P: Because then I knew I wasn't the only one who was going through this, and that it wasn't my fault. And then I knew. OK, because I actually thought for others – but no, not me. "You're coming from a broken family", you do – this must be your fault. So I had to put all those things in check up in there, like no, no, this is my cage and I am not getting out of it.

I: And hearing from them what they have gone through?

P: Ja. What they have gone through. And I would say it's so full of shame, and they would say it so 'matter of factly', you know? And I would think, "Oh my God." So it is that (realisation), when something bad happened to me, but it doesn't have to be bad to me for the rest of my life [voice raises]. And even with that they never actually healed. We would be talking about certain scenarios that we could only handle [sic] and I would tell them a bit of mine, then they would spill there's you know? And I would spill the rest of mine. And they would be like, "Oh my God, you are so strong." and I would be like, "No, no, no, you are." and those, even now, those are still my closest friends. And for them not being able to step into my life, I don't know what I would be without them as well [sic].

I: OK. So what other factors would you say? So it was being pregnant with your son, it was having to slow-down and reevaluate because you wanted better patterns for him, you wanted to be a better mom for him, you wanted a better world for him?

P: Yes.

I: And then it was your friends speaking out and you feeling like you finally had a space where you could say what happened and you weren't going to be judged for it, that it wouldn't be held against you?

P: Mhmm [nods].

I: What other factors would you say contributed to your pockets of healing?

P: This was not easy. Forgiving myself. That took years.

I: How? How did you find that you could forgive yourself?

P: Through prayer.

I: Would you say that belief has played a big role in your life?

P: It is the only thing that has ever made sense in my life. Because I went, I had a friend who was a psychiatrist¹⁴, he used to be my best friend. And I used to have these bouts of, I used to have these migraines from just thinking too much you know, and I would go off to him for a session, or he would give me an impromptu session in a car [smiles], in his car when we were from work or whatever [sic]. And my head would feel like it's exploding and I would feel much better for while you know. So I ended up having sessions with him that opened up, unlocked a whole lot of doors that I wouldn't have done for myself, and that I am immeasurably thankful for. And um, but it came to a point where it only could do so much. And I kept on thinking, "But there is a missing link."

I: Mhmm.

P: Yes. And he also kept on telling me that there was also a missing link, "From here on you need to do this yourself." And I'm like, "Huh, leaving me in the lurch. Again" you know? Some friend [smiles]. But at the time it was no longer as morbid and so heavy laden as it was you know, I was like, "Oh OK that's fine. Hopefully whatever it is will show itself in neon lighting", you know these billboards you know [smiles]?

I: And did it?

P: Actually, no [looks down and laughs]. No, it was – I had to go within. Which is hard because I was trying to run away from 'within'. And every time I got there it was hurtful, so I had to rush back out again and say, "Whoa that was hard. We'll come back after another week."

I: So there was a lot of avoidance?

P: Yes. And I realised that in my conversations with God that I was too hard on myself, even with my healing process. So I needed to slow my roll, to be more considerate. And I remember He said something to me, I laughed at it. He said, "Every time you feel like you want to panic and you want to move, move, move, move, just breathe". And I realised that when I did that, everything just went [uses hands to indicate slowly pushing down] "phew", everything just went slower and I didn't have the urge to run away, from myself anymore. And that actually helped (me) to face things.

I: OK.

¹⁴ At this point the participant is referring to a psychologist.

P: So a lot of, um, psycho healing and a lot of prayer. And after the forgiveness part, I had to forgive them and realise that we were all thrown in the same cycle of life, some worse off than others. And some things happen to us more than others. Whatever made them to turn out to be that way [sic], must have been a horrible experience for them as well. So I felt that it was silly for me to actually be angry at them, where I realised – Where God made me realise, that for them, they haven't even figured it out themselves.

I: OK. So that's how you made peace with that?

P: That's when I made peace with that and I started loving. I actually had to ask Him how to teach me how to love. And in my process of loving, that's where I got over all those things, and I also eventually even got to love myself. Because to love them, to love everybody, to love you, I have to love me. Without condition. Not the 'yes-but' [laughs], and I used to love saying the 'yes-but' you know? And I had to realise that that does not work [laughs].

I: Schjoe, that's powerful hey?

P: Ja. It took, it took so much of that. And I mean, like every day, every day is a new day. And every day I'm like, "Oh Lord I love life [smiles]."

I: So obviously you have a few difficult days sometimes?

P: Yes, all days are not the same, definitely. There are days when – I actually picked up some picture "Today is cancelled, go back to bed" - I feel like it actually explains the days that I don't feel like [laughs], like you know I'm on top of things, you know?

I: Ja.

P: Ja but, even in those days I am still thankful. I always remember to be thankful that, "Oh my God," and especially when I think – and I play back all the things that have happened in my life, my life feels like a story book made up. If I hadn't lived it myself I would say that I was making it up.

I: Mm.

P: So on those worst days, I sit back and I thank you – Today is shitty, it is crappy, I don't have money in my pocket, it's one two three, but "Oh my God, thank you I am alive. I would have been dead." Because in New Year's Eve [sic] those guys tried to kill me. In some other scenario, in some bullying phases somewhere along the line, some guy tried to hack me with a machete, um, some other time someone tried to shoot me and it didn't go off. And I am like, "Oh daddy [turns palms up, raises palms and face to the ceiling], Oh, I love life. At least it's miserable today but tomorrow I get

to do it all over again.” When I get to have those small moments that you get to appreciate what you have [sic].

I: So what else would you say, along with appreciating those small moments, um, what other life experiences have you had up until this point that have contributed to you finding healing and recovery?

P: Give love. It doesn't matter if they want it, they are receiving it, they are accepting it. They are in gratitude of it.

I: And anything specific that you can recall?

P: I – Because – I used to be that person, full of anger. Always angry and I had a chip on my shoulder the size of Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Everest all rolled up in one. And even though to people, my exterior attracted them, my interior repelled them. And I remember this friend of mine, Nyanga, was one of the worst people - He was one of the people that I thought had one of the worst experiences in life by the time I met him. He was (from an African country) and he was living in _____ for a couple of years. We shared the same star-sign, Touraine. I think he was the same month, so I think that's why we were also so close, from the day we met. This guy was the most humble person I have ever met in my entire life. He was a gentle giant, even in his speech and his demeanour – He had a very deep voice. But just the way he spoke to people, he was respectful to even a beggar in the street [sic], a security guard, I mean everybody was equal, he treated them the same way. And I remember it was in the softness of his voice, he sounded like a teddy-bear. I mean if you closed your eyes and stood next to him and he started speaking, you would just want to cuddle him and squeeze him all over [smiles], you know? And, and I remember he tried to explain to me his past [sic], about how he lost his parents. And I'm sure it was to a civil war, you know, because of then and those times. But here was this man still full of respect, still full of love and still giving it despite what the world threw at him. He didn't turn out to be what life was trying to make him, he turned out better than that. So I had a lot of examples that I could pick up on along the way. God was already just throwing, you know, these life-lines along the way even though I was just not picking them up you know, but I would take from them – And I wasn't even aware that I was picking up anything from them until later on.

I: What would you say affected your recovery negatively? Or got in the way, still gets in the way?

P: What gets in the way is people who still talk about that, that past. You know they want to keep bringing it up like, like the other day somebody was telling me “I heard everything about you” the dates, names, times. And I’m like, “Huh? What are you talking about?” And he’s like, “Everything about you, about your past” and one two three, “and I sort of don’t care, and I love you.” And I am like, “Bra¹⁵, I don’t even know who is everything and what are the dates and what [sic]. Let’s go back to this, it being the operative word here, *my life*. It’s mine. You don’t even know the half of it.” So why am I - And he is talking about the same guy who raped me. Let me get a glass quick. I need a glass of water.

I: OK.

P: So, I’m saying to this person, he is telling me he knows everything. He is best friends with the guy who pretended to be my boyfriend and ended up, you know? And funniest thing is that this guy apologised to me, but he is going through his motions, I understand him [laughs].

I: What, the rapist?

P: Yes, his name is Vuyo. So I don’t know what’s going on with them. But he keeps on reminding people about the past. I don’t know what he wants to do.

I: And that gets in the way of your recovery?

P: Not as such. It kind of hurts, but it no longer has an effect over me. Because as cheesy as it sounds, and now - I never understood it then – now, love does conquer all. It doesn’t take it away, it won’t stop anybody being a jerk if they want to, but what it does is it makes to more understanding [sic], and that’s healing in a way. It’s a permanent healing and that makes it more thorough, that even though when these things come up [sic], I don’t break down and fall into pieces.

I: So you embrace the love inside?

P: Yes, because - Yes, It’s one of those (thing).

I: Well Lomé, can you tell me about your journey to anti-rape activism? Tell me about that road and how you got busy on it, and how you started?

P: I have been always, always obsessed with giving back. Even when I was modelling in school, I think the idea of giving back to the community hit me then because with every show, community show, that we used to have, something must be given back to the community. So when I won my contest, I was – I was, I joined a community

¹⁵ This is a slang term that means ‘brother’.

group that would help out with modelling and dancing and reading for children, for younger children in school.

I: So it already started in high school?

P: So it already started in high school then and along the way of course, and when finding myself. But I knew I have always had this thing when I was a young I'd - I don't know if every kid has that? I don't know if its going to make sense [smiles], that it would make me special in that way? I would sit down, the way I am sitting down now, alone and I would picture the whole world and the way that it is. And one by one I would start deleting things, like "What if there were no animals?" Deleting the animals. "What if there are no cars?", and I would take out the cars, and at some point the day I added up to, "What if there is nothing left?", it was a morbid experience.

I: Mm.

P: I felt that that would mean there was no future. So I have always had that in the back of my mind that a future, a better one at that, the one that we find, must be there. I think maybe that's what I felt for generational continuity, and race itself. So I have always had that and I just - And um, I remember there was a time I was praying, and God said something, you know? I used to find it so exciting when I would hear his voice for the first time back then, when I first - I would hear him and I'd go, "Huh! [sharp intake of breath], I can hear you." But he said something profound like, "There is always healing when you are sharing your experiences". So I thought, if I am going to share mine, I'm not exactly looking for healing, but if I could heal someone out there that would actually look at it the way that I am seeing it, then I made it that much better.

I: Mm.

P: But getting - Looking for a platform was not easy, and also the idea of being stigmatised all over again, you know? Going out and saying this was also not easy. But I felt that the more I shied away from it, the more the urge to want to do it became more than the urge for self-preservation, and I decided, you know what, it doesn't matter who says what. I don't care. So first I thought, maybe I would embarrass my family or one two three, but then I remembered something. That I would be doing myself and whoever has gone through what we have gone through some serious injustice, because the devil hides himself in secrecy. So if we put these things out there, the more people are aware of it, the more people would put their consciousness into it, "If I do this to this woman she is a daughter, she is a sister, what if it was my sister?" I want to get to that level at some point of - Or to get to that point where a guy

says, “I want to love this woman like they have never been loved, I want to love them like they are the only important thing in this world.” So I thought “Ah, insanely enough it might just work”.

I: And then?

P: And then I was sitting at home and it was two days without TV. I was in deep prayer for two days without watching TV and I kept asking God, even out loud, “What am I supposed to do? From here, what next, what next, what next?” And he told me to come switch on the TV, I sat here, switched on the TV and it was SABC3 at that time, and I never used to like watching 3Talk, but Noleen was interviewing, um, Mara¹⁶ and, what’s that lady, I forgot her name, the one who looks boyish, that black girl from Soweto?

I: I know who you are talking about but I just can’t find the name.

P: I’ve forgotten the name as well [laughs]. But they were there and they were talking about their experiences – And I was like “Ha! [Cups face with hands and has wide eyes and smile] This is it!” and I said, “Yes! Thank you Daddy.” And I was like [makes the sound of a slot machine], and I said, “Please, um, give me the address, give me the address, give me the information.” So after the program, I got the information, I googled. I went on line and I checked the website¹⁷, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I: Tell me about ‘the rest’. So you were involved with the LifeBoard which was educating the kids, and you also did a lot of public speaking, so can you just tell me a bit about being involved in those activities, what that did for you?

P: Hm. You know I have never really had to understand what they mean when they say “It’s not about receiving it’s about giving.”

I: Ja.

P: It was like I had a million bucks in my pocket. You know seeing, seeing a child opening up, and being able to speak to you on a level where they feel they can trust and they can be themselves. Because the irony is that we are growing up as children, we are told to be individuals, to stand up and not be afraid to be yourself, then when you become yourself you are ridiculed and told why you are not like the rest of us. So it becomes quite confusing. So I love, especially the LifeBoard, it’s so spectacular, it

¹⁶ Mara Glennie is a domestic abuse survivor who founded TEARS Foundation, a foundation that assists all those affected by rape and abuse through intervention and education.

¹⁷ For TEARS Foundation

opens up each and every child in their own space and yet they still get to identify with each other in their own way, a holistic kind of space. And if I had that when I was young, I think I would have been president [smiles].

I: [Laughs]

P: That's for sure. It, it makes you – I love the fact that it's very engaging, and not only is it a game, but it's conscious. I always tell people that I get tired of just talking, there is nothing as mundane or a waste of time and energy as talking, nothing that takes up space like chitter chatter. We need to be conscious, we need to be - We need to make a difference. Every minute counts, every second.

I: So you felt like that engagement was meaningful?

P: One hundred percent [smiles].

I: And when you shared your story? What does that do for you?

P: Getting up and sharing my story, first of all, in the beginning is quite daunting. It's really scary. And I noticed that people relate to it more than you actually anticipate.

I: And how did that feel?

P: That actually saddens me because it shows me that the world is full of pain. And, we need to change it because we are failing it. Because we are supposed to leave it better than how we found it, and yet this concept, it's not working out. So clearly there is something that we are missing, something that we should be doing that we are not doing. And another thing, if, if, I could help scratch this mentality of, "We found the world this way, we are going to leave it the way it is. Our forefathers did the same thing." If I could eliminate that from five people's vocabulary, that would be awesome,

I: So that's what you see as your calling? So please correct me, your true activism is not in reaching out to those who have already been affected by rape, but is more so reaching out to those who are the future generations and want to protect our world from what it could be?

P: Yes [nods].

I: So reaching out to the perpetrators...

P: As well.

I: Reaching out to younger generations to teach them more so about what it should be, more so than those who have already been affected. Is that fair to say?

P: Exactly [nods]. On the money [laughs].

I: So could you tell me, if at all, I am not saying it has, but how has your activism helped with your healing?

P: I would say, it um, it has made me to [sic] – Huh, how should I put this. It has made me to [sic] embrace life more. Like I love – I am more alive. I know it sounds funny, but I was dead for a long time even though I was living.

I: I hear you.

P: And it makes me so alive. And it makes me very, uh [pauses], it helps me to not be too hard on myself.

I: In what way? How does activism help you to not be too hard on yourself?

P: Um, it makes me not to put too much pressure on me [sic]. Because as people we tend to – You are your worst critic, and it has helped me to understand that this is not a popularity contest.

I: How?

P: Like, when I am there I am speaking to the people. How they respond to me, some cry, some get shocked, some jaws drop and some look at you with this empty stare. And I realised one thing, that it's not for me to sugar coat things, or to scare them. I need to tell them, this is the world we are living in and we need to change it if we want something better for our children. And children, if they are the ones that are listening, we have to be the ones to change this and it can't be anybody else. And it's not OK to blame anybody else anymore for things that we do to ourselves, or things that happen to us.

I: So how has that helped you to be less self critical?

P: It has helped me to be less self-critical because I would say that when I am standing there and looking at them and listening to my life, I realise, "God I've been through so much", and I still have my limbs, and my sanity, and my wits and the one thing I can say, is that I still have my sense of humour [smiles]. And then I laugh, like heartedly, and the people would be like, surprised. But I am really genuinely happy that I have healed, and I am here, and life needs to be so embraced because we can't waste any moment. Because we never know when it will be our last because there is no retake.

I: Can you tell me, because a lot of people who have gone through what you have gone through, probably by now may have been addicts, um, may be dead through suicide, be very depressed, whatever else it is - What has gotten you to the place where I find you in right now and today, versus somebody who may be in one of those

other places I've just mentioned. What sets you apart and has allowed you to get to where you are today?

P: God. Funny, in my anger and everything else, my prayer has never subsided. Because every time I am angry and I can't talk to any person, I go to the main source. So I would argue with God all the time, I didn't even know that was prayer [laughs]. You know, it was a conversation and that's what kept me floating every time. And I know with drugs, when I dabbled into drugs [sic], I had friends who did not make it, and for me, taking drugs and not being addicted to them and not relying on them, that in itself would be – No, people would say it's my resilience, I'm resilient to being an addict. I don't buy it. I just feel like there's, like there is a higher energy that is connected to that than anything [sic]. And, I mean, I passed through a bout of drugs, passed through a bout of those reckless parties where you didn't even know the people in this place. Just trapped in situations. And I know I had something to do with getting out of those situations without being harmed, but it had everything to do with God because I don't have muscles [smiles].

I: Do you think of yourself as a resilient person?

P: No, no.

I: Not only drug resilient, but resilient in everyday life?

P: No, Not really.

I: So surviving through everything, what do you call that?

P: I call that 'I don't have a choice' [laughs]. It's either sink or swim, so I don't like to call it resilience.

I: What do you think is resilience?

P: I think resilience for me is, um, I'm still not there yet. Because in my head, I kick and scream until - I still don't have a choice but to do it, so for me that's not resilience.

I: So what is resilience for you?

P: Resilience is someone who actually says, "This it tough but I'm going to do it anyway with a straight face." I cry, I kick, I scream, I throw up a tantrum [sic].

I: So you think that that disqualifies you?

P: Ja, I don't think I'm there yet. I don't think I am there yet. I think it's for those people who be like [sic] you know, smile and say yes.

I: Alright, and then just two more (questions to cover).

P: Mhmm.

I: So how do you experience yourself as both a rape-victim and an anti-rape activist?

P: I don't. I am all in one.

I: Explain that?

P: For me I will never stop being that. Because every time I think about the rape and the whole scenario, I go back to it. So I say I will always be there, and yet whatever it is they were trying to get out of me, it's there. It's all in one, I don't know how to explain it. I can't separate the two, because whatever it is they wanted, they wanted from me, came from me personally, and uh, even though it had nothing to do with me. But um, it's still a part of me.

I: And how do you experience that with the anti-rape activism?

P: I um, I guess um, I would say, experiencing it first hand is also wonderful to try and spread healing by, you know, these campaigns that we do, the talks. But mostly what I would love to do, is - I have had a conversation with someone recently who made me aware of something I have always been missing out on. A victim becomes a victim because you get to stay in that um, that place that your attackers have put you in, and you stay there and you believe them because at that point they are telling you and they are doing that to you, because at that point it's hard to just brush it off and say it was nothing. So, finding your "you-ness" again, it becomes a struggle and what you like, what you are good at becomes so much of a struggle because you don't trust what you know about yourself anymore.

P: OK.

I: Yes. And you – This young man was telling me about, you know it would be nice if all the speeches and campaigns that we do, not only if we do that but we also get to do stuff that scouts for talent you know? Draw, paintings, you know, singing or whatever. To celebrate someone's uniqueness through the bouts of pain that they are going through.

P: OK. Mm.

I: So that they can – Because so in that way it's a creative way to express their pain and to heal. And I was like, "You are so on the money [smiles]."

I: So that's your next plan?

P: Yes, that's what we are working on right now.

I: And that will bring more of the healing?

P: Yes, that will bring more of the healing, because in all honesty – Even I sometimes, I sit there and I think, I love photography, click, click, click, click [imitates taking a

picture] and something else tomorrow and, you know, and people don't understand. My parents grew up thinking you must have one talent and it's a problem when you have five and people tell you to hone it down [sic]. So ja, as much as a child is expected to be the best they can be, and dare to be different, I want them to grow up to not be afraid of who they are, you know? And know that they are loved regardless. That's what unconditional love is about, and that's what God is all about, and that's what I had to learn to go through all this.

I: And just to finish off, is there anything we haven't spoken about that you want to share or you feel like you want to add?

P: Hm, let me see. I would say, you know one thing I have learned about – We get to, we like to hide things quickly and pull the wool over situating, especially in communities, in black – not only in black cultures – but mostly in black cultures, we prefer “what you don't know won't kill you”. But that (is) totally the opposite of it because what you don't know can sneak up on you and kill you dead you know, without any precautions. I have noticed that we would rather hide something as painful as this in shame, than to put it out there and shame the sickness itself. So that's one thing that I would also like to...

I: That's one thing that you want to challenge?

P: Mhmm.

I: And that's what you are doing [smiles].

P: Yes [smiles and looks down.]

I: Thank you Lomé.

P: Thank you.

Recording ends at 1:34:35