SAFETY RITUALS:

HOW WOMEN COPE WITH THE FEAR OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

by

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(Under the Direction of David W. Wright)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative interview study focuses on women's fear of sexual violence, how it shapes women's views on sexual assault, its influence on women's use of safety strategies, and how safety strategies may restrict use of time and space. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. Participants also journaled on the topic of sexual violence for a week. Findings indicate women think about sexual violence as a widespread problem that affects women disproportionately more than it affects men; that women engage in precautionary behaviors in a ritualistic manner; and that the fear of sexual assault is restrictive, but that safety rituals help women feel powerful, in control, and less anxious.

INDEX WORDS: sexual assault, rape, fear, sexual violence, rituals, precautionary behaviors, women, feminist, feminism

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the strong, brave women who believed this study important enough to share their time generously with me. They have inspired and motivated me through the research process and beyond.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women's fear of sexual violence received much attention from researchers in the 1970's and 1980's (Gordon & Riger, 1981; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Holgate, 1989; Riger & Gordon, 1981; Valentine, 1989). It has been defined as "women's fear of rape [that keeps them] always on guard, vigilant and alert; a feeling that causes a woman to tighten with anxiety if someone is walking too closely behind her, especially at night. It is a fear that calls up admonitions that women have heard from childhood through adolescence and into maturity" (Gordon & Riger, 1989, p. 2). The term "female fear" has been coined to describe not only the prevalence of the fear of sexual violence among women, but also to bring attention to the fact this fear seems to affect only women (Gordon & Riger, 1989), indicating an underlying power imbalance between the genders. The female fear serves to enforce social control on women, since women will restrict themselves because of fear, leaving the public sphere, especially at night, to the free use of men (Day, 1994).

The present study is rooted in the feminist tradition which seeks to address and, ultimately, correct the devaluing or neglect of women's experience and "spheres of life" (Jaggar, 1991, p. 85). Feminism seeks to make women the part of the standard in our society—a role that has historically been attributed to men (Jaggar, 1991). To understand the role of sexual violence in society it is important to understand how rape has been conceptualized in feminist theory. Rape is a symptom of societies where patriarchal ideology is predominant (Sanday, 1998). Society's ambivalence toward rape, and a general acceptance of it as "normal" makes rape "an

act *and* a social institution which perpetuate patriarchal domination" (Humm, 1990, p. 185). Brownmiller (1975) was the first to propose that rape is used as a means of social control of women. Currently, feminists view rape as "a political act of terror against an oppressed group," which serves as a constant reminder of women's vulnerable condition (Humm, 1990, p. 185).

The present study investigates the effect of women's fear of sexual assault on women's everyday lives and their views on sexual violence. The purpose of this study is to better understand how sexual violence restricts women, and to apply the concept of rituals to women's precautionary behaviors in order to better explain it. To gain a better understanding of how women cope with the fear of sexual assault, it is beneficial to examine how this fear originated and how it has been perpetuated over the years. The behaviors that some women adopt to live with this fear will also be discussed, as well as the consequences of using such strategies. Finally, the concept of rituals and how it has been used in empirical research will be discussed and applied to the subject of fear of sexual violence as a way to conceptualize the phenomenon.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the Origin of Women's Fear

As already described, some feminists argue that rape is an institutionalized act of

violence (see Brownmiller, 1975). Women fear sexual assault because it is an undeniable reality

and it occurs much more often than anyone would like to think. According to the 2005 National

Crime Victimization Survey, there were 191,670 victims of sexual assault, rape, and attempted

rape. Although the rates of rape and sexual assault have dropped by more than half (64%) since

1993 (dropping 22% in the last four years), this kind of crime still occurs at an alarming rate

(Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, RAINN, 2006). It is estimated that an American is

sexually assaulted every two and a half minutes, and 1 in 6 American women has been the victim

of an attempted or completed rape (RAINN, 2006). Two thirds of sexual assaults are perpetrated

by someone known to the victim: 38% of reported sexual assaults is perpetrated by a friend or

acquaintance; 28% is perpetrated by an intimate partner, and 6% is perpetrated by other relatives

(RAINN, 2006). Sexual assault by a stranger only accounts for 26% of cases (RAINN, 2006). Of

course, sexual assault is still an underreported crime, making any statistics available only a

blurry snapshot of what is actually occurring everyday (RAINN, 2006). The discussion below

explains the origin of this kind of crime to elucidate why it has reached such proportions.

The historical shift in how the home and the workplace have been conceptualized and

separated in Western society provides a key to understanding how and why rape has come to

serve as a form of social control. Domosh and Seager (2001) explain how the separation of

public and private spheres has contributed to women's unequal use of public space. In the medieval era, the home was the site for both leisure and work, and division of labor by gender already existed at this time. Workers of both sexes worked side-by-side optimizing their time and efforts by dividing tasks between themselves. The rise of early capitalism in the 15th and 17th centuries, however, demanded a more rigid division of labor. Women stayed home and worked; men went outside the home for trading. Because of these changes, the private sphere (the home) was soon equated with femininity and the public sphere with masculinity.

The early capitalist venture could only succeed through this new separation of the public and private, which needed reinforcement (Domosh & Seager, 2001; Donat & D'Emilio, 1998; Janeway, 1971). Patriarchal ideology ensured continued workers for this industrialized society by normalizing and demanding women's work in the home, which provided the continued support workers (men) needed to do their jobs outside the home (Humm, 1990; Domosh & Seager, 2001; Donat & D'Emilio, 1998). In the Victorian era, keeping women in the home became a moral issue (Domosh & Seager, 2001). Even then, sexual harassment and assault were already used to keep women off public space (Donat & D'Emilio, 1998).

The historical separation of the public and private continues in today's society. Women's entry and acceptance into the workforce outside the home is still relatively recent (Humm, 1990). Women still associate urban public spaces with threats to physical safety (Domosh & Seager, 2001; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Valentine, 1989). These threats take the form of sexual harassment (unsolicited behavior on the part of men) in the streets, and women who experience harassment have increased fear of rape (Holgate, 1989).

How Women Learn to Fear Sexual Violence

Early socialization. Belief in rape myths start from young (Gordon & Riger, 1989). Rape myths are false beliefs regarding rape, the victim, or the perpetrator (Burt, 1998). The idea that all rapes occur at night, by strangers, in public places, is an example of a myth (although sexual assaults do indeed happen in such ways, by no means do *all* or even most assaults happen that way), and is also the most generally accepted myth about sexual assault (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Mantak, 1995). Although some myths are have a background of truth to them, widespread and staunch belief in rape myths, without well-balanced knowledge about how and why sexual assault occurs, undermines credibility in the occurrence of coercive sex and acquaintance rape (Burt, 1998). People acquire rape myths from families and friends, as well as the media, and these myths shape people's attitudes toward sexual violence and are also shaped by these same attitudes (Burt, 1980, 1998; Gordon & Riger, 1989).

The warnings about rape girls receive through their childhoods and adolescence also influence how they come to think about rape and their own safety later in their lives (Gordon & Riger, 1989). These warnings are often surrounded by an aura of mystery because the subject of sexual assault is taboo (Hadleigh-West, 1998). Family warnings are problematic because they are often unclear, and because they can support false ideas about rape prevention (Burt, 1998; Gordon & Riger, 1989). For example, if girls or women do not follow the safety precautions taught to them, and assault does occur, girls or women are to blame (Clay-Warner, 2003; Gordon & Riger, 1989). Rape myths are thus reinforced.

Personal experience and secondary victimization

There are contradictory findings regarding the influence of previous victimization on present fear of sexual assault. Some studies have found that previous victimization did not

predict fear of any offense or the relationship between these variables is not strong enough (Ferraro, 1996; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007). Others find that a history of sexual assault and harassment does increase fear of being assaulted again (Holgate, 1989; Culbertson, Vik, & Kooiman, 2001). Sexual assault also tends to be more harmful for the victim when the perpetrator is an acquaintance or a present partner (Temple, Weston, Rodriguez, & Marshall, 2007).

Whether a woman has been assaulted or not the experience of sexual intimidation when in public greatly increases women's fear of sexual violence (Domosh & Seager, 2001; Holgate, 1989). These are experiences such as being followed, stared at, being sexually solicited, being rubbed up against, seeing a flasher, and hearing sexual comments (Holgate, 1989). Women's sense of their own vulnerability to sexual violence increases when they encounter these incidents and so does their fear. Sexual harassment in the streets serves as a reminder that women do not belong in the public sphere (Domosh & Seager, 2001).

Secondary victimization also influences fear through various processes. Informal conversations about crime and crime prevention with friends, neighbors, and colleagues exacerbate women's fear of rape and sexual assault (Day, 1994). There is evidence that women often use others' experiences and behaviors to gauge their own safety and risk (Gordon & Riger, 1989). This type of social comparison occurs whether or not women know the victim of the crime (Day, 1994; Gordon & Riger, 1989).

Media's treatment of sexual assault cases

Women learn much of what they know about sexual assault from television or other types of media. Learning from the media is problematic because bizarre cases are usually most emphasized, and more representative cases of sexual assault, are largely ignored (Gordon &

Riger, 1989). This skewed representation reinforces rape myths (Burt, 1998; Gordon & Riger, 1989). For example, a rape that does occur in a deserted area of a college campus, at night, by a stranger is much more likely to be covered by the TV and newspapers, than the more common form of rape by acquaintances (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Koss, 1988), in the victim's own home.

The way the media treats sexual assault cases inflates women's perception of their own vulnerability (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Riger & Gordon, 1981) by making bizarre sexual assault cases seem widespread and common. The more women feel they have in common with victims in reported cases, the more they will fear (Gordon & Riger, 1989). The media's influence on public victim blaming and humiliation, not only in how they treat the circumstances of the assault itself but also how they treat the process of reporting and prosecuting the crime, contribute to higher fear of sexual assault (Madigan & Gamble, 1989). Victim blaming is fueled by widespread belief in rape myths (Burt, 1998). These myths, and society's acceptance of them, may influence how women view their role in avoiding rape.

<div align="center">How Women Cope With the Fear of Sexual Violence</div>

Research on women's fear of rape provides evidence that some women have very little fear of rape, if any, and do not adopt any self-protective strategies because they hardly ever think of sexual violence as a possible threat to themselves (Gordon & Riger, 1989). These women are certainly not a majority, however (Gordon & Riger, 1989). Some women do view their own vulnerability as real and these women cope with the fear of sexual violence by adopting precautionary behaviors—and they use these more than men do (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Riger & Gordon, 1981). These are the women the proposed study focuses on.

The fear of sexual violence often leads women to take certain precautions to feel safer. Whether these precautions actually increase one's real safety is difficult to know, especially

because fear-inducing circumstances vary widely. Sometimes the fear a person feels may be well-founded while at other times it may be a result of the erroneous assessment of one's environment, however, the subjective experience of fear is real in either case, which leads women to use precautionary behaviors. Two types of precautionary behaviors have been identified: avoidance behaviors and self-protective behaviors (Riger & Gordon, 1981). Avoidance behaviors are those used to isolate oneself from danger by limiting one's actions and routines (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Valentine, 1989). Use of avoidance tactics are related to women's beliefs regarding their own physical competence (Riger & Gordon, 1981). These do not protect against date and acquaintance rape, however. Avoidance behaviors probably restrict women's movement in time and space the most (Riger & Gordon, 1981) because it involves self-imposed limitations. Race and level of education significantly predict higher use of isolation strategies, with minority women with less formal education using more of these tactics (Riger & Gordon, 1981).

Self-protective behaviors have been called "'street savvy' tactics" and they may be used more frequently than avoidance tactics (Riger & Gordon, 1981, p. 71). Self-protective behaviors are precautions women take to minimize risk in the face of danger. Some women will spend an inordinate amount of money and time on these precautionary behaviors, just to feel safer. Use of self-protective behaviors appear to be related to women's assessment of the dangers in their neighborhood (Riger & Gordon, 1981). The most powerful predictor of the use of self-protective behaviors is fear of crime (Riger & Gordon, 1981).

Research on women's fear of sexual assault has served to problematize the use of precautionary tactics. Women's use of precautionary behaviors is said to be problematic for several reasons. These strategies force women into restricted use and occupation of public space.

Avoidance strategies, especially, has serious consequences for women and the community at large—businesses suffer, places and public resources acquire infamous histories that prevent women from taking advantage of them, and women's tax dollars continue to pay for public facilities they rarely use (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Langelan, 1999; Valentine, 1989). If a rape does happen, it is likely the victim might be blamed for not using precautionary measures, or not using them well. Such strategies coupled with our society's tendency to blame the victim allows women "to transfer their threat appraisal from men to certain public spaces where they may encounter attackers…[and] to adopt false assumptions about their security when in places falsely deemed safe for women, such as the home" (Valentine, 1989, p. 385). Men too suffer from the consequences of the female fear, after all not all men rape (Lisak, 1998), and many are used as women's "visas" into the public space—which further reinforces the idea that women do not have the right to be in those places by their own right (Hadleigh-West, 1998; Valentine, 1989).

<div align="center">Summary of Women's Fear of Sexual Assault</div>

The fear of sexual violence is real for many women. The real and justified fear of violence serves as a way to socially control women because it often keeps them from using public space in the same ways as men use it. The historical separation of the public and the private spheres was not only made possible by the use of rape and sexual harassment, but has also perpetuated these crimes as a means of oppression. Women's fear of sexual violence is perpetuated by widespread beliefs in rape myths, in the home and in the media. The "female fear," as it has been termed, is problematic because it keeps many women isolated and restricted in their activities and daily lives.

Rituals

In this study the concept of rituals has been used as a framework to understand and explain women's use of safety strategies or precautionary behaviors. What follows is a brief introduction to the concept of rituals, how it has been used in the empirical literature, and how it applies to the subject of women's fear of sexual assault. The concept of rituals guides the researcher's understanding of the literature on women's fear of sexual assault as well as her analysis of the data generated by this study.

Rituals have been called an "elusive concept" because their boundaries are hard to identify and define (Wolin & Bennett, 1984, p. 401). The concept of ritual can often be obscured by notions of simple patterned behavior (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Rituals seem to be more meaningful and intentional than behavioral patterns however, and they can be consciously created with specific needs and significance in mind (Beck & Metrick, 1990).

Societal level rituals have been studied by sociologists and anthropologists. Rituals are characterized by various rules and principles used to create particular experiences (Deegan, 1989; Beck & Metrick, 1990). Everyday rituals are characterized by specific behaviors, settings, and rules that are not sacred as is the case with more structured, less frequent rituals that are determined and controlled by social structures and institutions (Deegan, 1989). Rituals performed by people in the natural course of their everyday lives, whether alone or in a group, have been called "participatory rituals" (Deegan, 1989). These are the rituals used to frame the proposed study. Although people may enact certain ritual without much conscious thought, participatory rituals may serve to aid in the construction and acceptance of extraordinary experience in life (Beck & Metrick, 1990; Deegan, 1989).

Goffman (1977) noted that sex and gender are forces that create guidelines for social interactions. Thus they influence the self-concept of those engaging in these interactions. Deegan (1989) called these guidelines "sex codes" (p.21) and asserted these codes are fundamental to rituals of everyday life. The rituals enacted in daily routine serve to reinforce these sex codes because they often become associated with individual experience. The same can be said of rituals involving women's perceptions of sexual assault: women perform rituals to protect themselves because of sex codes that mandate women to take responsibility for the acts of men who rape, and these rituals then serve to reinforce the notion that women do not fully belong in the public space. Deegan (1989) states that "sexist rituals simultaneously generate ideas and emotions of belonging and not belonging" (p. 22). The enactment of safety strategies may indeed be a ritual designed to reclaim the public sphere, but its consequence is the further reinforcement that women do not belong there in their own right.

Rituals have been studied in the context of family research as well. Similarly to how rituals have been theorized in the sociological and anthropological literature, family rituals have been defined as acts and interactions within the family that are systematic, repetitious, and that hold special meaning to the group (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Couple rituals have been defined in the same way (Fiese, Tomcho, Douglas, Josephs, Poltrock, & Baker, 2002). Studies of ritual in family research have confirmed that rituals: can be large or small group enactments; are generally expressed in the context of relationships and groups because they are created from interactional patterns and shared experiences (Suter, Bergen, Daas, & Durham, 2006; Wolin & Bennett, 1984); and are rewarding activities or behaviors that get repeated with time. Over time and with repetition, individuals start ascribing special meaning to these behaviors (Doherty, 2001; Fiese et al., 2002).

Both the theoretical and the empirical literature define rituals as repetitive, patterned behaviors that hold special meaning and are repeated over time largely because they are rewarding behaviors. This conceptualization of rituals is useful in further understanding women's fear of sexual violence because the precautionary measures women take also take the form of repeated and patterned behaviors that are meaningful to these women in that it helps them feel safer. These behaviors are also rewarding because it helps the women who perform these decrease their anxiety over their perceived vulnerabilities.

In this study the concept of safety rituals is defined as women's use of precautionary behaviors, which are characterized by specific actions that are repeated, occur in specific settings, and follow certain rules. These behaviors are meaningful in that they are intended to protect the individual from sexual violence. Such precautionary behaviors are interactive with the environment. In this sense women's precautionary behaviors can be construed as rituals. American society, which establishes the social environment of these women, is inherently sexist. This structural sexism is clear in the "sex codes" that guide women's safety rituals. Safety rituals might reify these sex codes, thereby reinforcing sexual violence as a tool of patriarchy and gender oppression.

The origin of women's fear of sexual assault can be traced to the historical separation of the public and private spheres. Women learn to fear sexual violence through the messages they receive from young, from vicarious experience and personal victimization, and through the messages they receive from the media. Women often cope with the fear of sexual assault by enacting certain precautionary behaviors they feel make them safer. The focus of the present study is women's use of precautionary behaviors and its ritualistic nature.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to apply the concept of rituals to the precautionary behaviors women create and carry out to prevent sexual assault, so that we may understand more about women's fear of sexual violence and how it restricts these women in time and space. The research questions the present study seeks to answer are:

1)   What attitudes do participants have about sexual violence, and do these attitudes influence the rituals participants create and enact to feel safe from sexual violence?

2)   What are the processes involved in the creation of safety rituals and what are the intentions behind their enactment? What do women do repeatedly to protect themselves from sexual violence?

3)   Do women's safety rituals keep them constrained in time and space? If so, how?

4)   How do these safety rituals impact women's views of those who have been sexually assaulted and how do these rituals inform women's own perceived vulnerability to sexual violence?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The present study is a qualitative interview study (Patton, 2002) rooted in the social constructivist tradition, which views knowledge as "constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world". Five participants were interviewed twice and journaled for one week about their fear of sexual assault. Various triangulation strategies (Glesne, 1999) have been incorporated into the study's design to ensure transparency and trustworthiness in the process of research.

Epistemological Frameworks

Feminist epistemology

This study is grounded on feminist theory in that it seeks to make sense of women's experiences through women's ways of knowing. It is accepted that women can "theorize" knowing differently than men (Crotty, 1998); after all, different lived experiences lead to different knowledge of the world (Gilligan, 1982). In this sense, a feminist stance parallels the social constructivist "invitation to reinterpretation" of the world, one that invites new, richer meanings of women's and men's experience in society (Crotty, 1998, p. 51). Women are not a homogeneous group, however, so there are many "ways of knowing" (Reinharz, 1992). Although feminism seeks to give voice to each of these various ways of knowing, there are some tenets that hold true in all feminist research. For example, the "knower" is not objective or invisible. What has historically (in non-feminist research) been deemed "true" was a product of social power (Harding, 1986; Sherwin, 1998). Feminist epistemology not only guides the study of

social life as it is shaped by gender, but it also empowers women to act against observed injustice (Morawski, 2001; Sherwin, 1998).

This study is guided by feminist epistemology in that it accepts the view that women have less power than men in all areas of society, which results in oppression that is embedded in everyday life (Humm, 1995). One instance of this oppression and power imbalance is the use of rape and sexual violence as a means of controlling women (Humm, 1995; Jaggar, 1990; Sanday, 1981). This study seeks to give voice to women's understanding of their own experience of fear, thus empowering them to reclaim control of one aspect of their experience where they continue to be stripped of power. As a woman, the researcher joins with her participants to give voice to her own fear and to use it to guide her in exploring women's various experiences.

Interpretivism

This epistemological framework guides research that is grounded in cultural and historical context (Crotty, 1998), as feminist research is. Interpretivism aims at understanding first in order to explain (i.e. determine causality) later (Crotty, 1998). Scientific findings are social constructions and interpretations, firmly based on the situated knowledge of people in context (Crotty, 1998).

Symbolic interactionism has been presented as a "historical stream" of interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). It postulates that social behavior is a shared perspective created through our ability to read meaning into gestures (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism provides a foundation for the proposed study and its quest for a deeper understanding of women's fear of sexual assault and the rituals that are created to cope with it. This study operates from the tenet that women's precautionary behavior holds meaning to them and is constructed as interactions between self and context.

Subjectivity Statement

My personal investment in this study comes from the fact that I am a woman. I fear sexual violence and am very aware of my own safety rituals. Women in my circle of family and friends also seem to share my fear and coping mechanisms, which tells me I'm not the only one who thinks about this issue in very concrete terms. I work with survivors of sexual assault, I know women who have been assaulted, and so the issue of sexual victimization and how women cope with it is prominent in my life. After I started working with survivors of sexual violence, my own fear has greatly increased in spite of my knowledge of how most assaults happen. The present study is relevant to my personal life: as I shared in other women's experiences and thoughts on the topic, I analyzed and uncovered my own experiences and how these affect my identity and everyday life.

Researcher's Expectations

In the spirit of making the research process a transparent one, this section focuses on what the researcher expected to find before beginning data collection. These expectations were stated in the researcher's journal and memos during recruitment. They are included here to provide the reader with a basis with which to evaluate the author's treatment of her own biases through the research analysis and subsequent conclusion.

Given past research, I expected that every woman I interviewed would have specific thoughts to share on the meaning of sexual violence to her. I expected that some women would not think of sexual violence as a plausible event that might affect them, whereas others would be very conscious of instances when their fear increased and diminished, what they did at these times, and how they felt about it.

I expected that the more influential messages and warnings women hear throughout their lives, the more concrete the issue of sexual violence is to them, which may even influence how much they rely on safety strategies. I expected that the process involved in the creation of safety rituals would be one that takes into consideration these early messages and any past experiences of fear and secondary victimization, as well as how much control these women feel they have over their safety.

I expected that women's safety rituals do indeed restrain women's use of time and space, but this constraint would not be interpreted as a limitation simply because it is so rampant and ubiquitous. I thought it would be possible that women would also find different ways to cope and circumvent this limitation. Finally, I expected that women's safety rituals and the constraint they supposedly impose on women might backfire and actually contribute to increased fear, increased thoughts about one's own vulnerability, and increased pressure on the woman to keep herself safe and keep assault from happening. I also expected women would fall into the trap of blaming victims because they might not have used safety strategies.

<center>Participants</center>

In the beginning of this study, the participant selection criteria consisted of:

1. Single women

2. 18 years of age or older

3. No college education

4. Participant knows someone who has been sexually assaulted

As recruitment progressed it became necessary to change the sample selection criteria to include only single women, 18 years of age or older, who know someone who has been sexually assaulted. This change took into consideration the fact that there is little evidence that education

level actually influences level of fear among women, separate from housing location (Gordon & Riger, 1989). Furthermore, the first two participants, recruited under the original sample selection criteria, reported very low levels of fear, and stated they did not think much about sexual assault in their everyday lives. The third participant, also recruited under the original sample selection criteria, reported a high level of fear, and her opinions on the matter seemed well thought out and highly developed. Thus, it became necessary to use theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to select participants who report more moderate levels of fear.

Theoretical sampling can be regarded as a type of purposeful or criterion-based selection (Patton, 2002). It differs from other forms of purposeful sampling in that recruitment selections are made sequentially, taking into consideration what has been found in the previously analyzed data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this sense, theoretical sampling is considered a sequential selection strategy used to support ongoing data analysis and theory formulation (J. Preissle, personal communication, April 3, 2007). The present study has as a main purpose to build theory to explain women's use of precautionary behaviors and how it is influenced by their fear of sexual violence. The use of theoretical sampling is appropriate for this purpose because it ensures data from women with varying levels of fear and diverse opinions on the issue of sexual assault.

<div align="center">Recruitment</div>

Because the goal of qualitative research is not to generalize to the population, but to create in-depth understanding to inform future research, a purposive sample may be used (Glesne, 1999). Friends, colleagues, and acquaintances of the researcher were asked to provide contact information of any women they knew who fit the criteria described above. Furthermore, the researcher asked participants to identify anyone they knew who qualified for the study.

Flyers detailing the research topic and the participant selection criteria were placed in technical schools, neighborhood cafes, and university campus locations where potential participants would see them. Some of the participants were acquaintances to the researcher. Participants were given a $15 gift certificate for their participation in this study.

The five participants in this study range in age from 20 to 34. All participants are single and all but one are in committed, non-cohabiting relationships with men. One participant, Jane[1], is an emergency room nurse. Tina, another participant, works for a real-estate agency and is currently pursuing studies for her real-estate license. Ava, the third participant, works at a restaurant and is a student in paralegal studies in a small technical college. Isabelle and Sonia are graduate students in Psychology. All these women know at least one person who has been sexually assaulted. Tina and Isabelle are survivors of sexual assault, and Ava is an adult survivor of child sexual abuse. The participants differ widely in terms of their level of fear: Jane reports little or no fear; Tina reports little conscious fear accompanied by complex and detailed safety strategies; Isabelle and Sonia report moderate amounts of fear, and Ava reports the greatest amount of fear among the five participants.

Jane was referred to the researcher by an acquaintance, and had to be interviewed over the phone because she lives in another state. Tina is an acquaintance of the researcher, and Ava contacted the researcher after seeing a flier advertising the study (Appendix B). Isabelle is an acquaintance of the researcher, and she referred Sonia to the study after completing one interview.

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[1] All participant names used are pseudonyms.

Procedure

Five women were interviewed twice for this study. In addition, participants also kept a journal for about one week. Semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) were conducted in the first phase of the study (see interview guide in Appendix A).

After the first interview, participants kept a journal for seven days. Participants were to write about any thoughts, experiences, feelings, and concerns about the subject of the study and what was discussed in the first interview. Journaling is used as a triangulation method (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002), and as a way to get at thoughts the participants' might have after their first interview—sometimes one needs to be prompted to talk about a subject to start thinking about it more deeply (Glesne, 1999). Furthermore, participant journaling might be a way for the researcher to tap into additional (and untraditional) sources of data (St.Pierre, 1997). Documentary analysis also increases the quality of findings in two ways: by offering additional data, and by supplementing interviews and observations with additional points of inquiry (Patton, 2002). Thus, the second interview contains questions asked of all participants, as well as questions derived from each participant's first interview and journal data (Appendix A). At the end of the second interview, participants were given a $15 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time and collaboration.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is equivalent to validity in quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It can be established in many different ways (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is the use of different sources of data or different methods of inquiry to validate findings, but it can also mean having different coders analyze data (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002). Ensuring participants are portrayed in ways they feel are in line with how they see their own

experiences (Glesne, 1999) is also a way to ensure trustworthiness, and it can be achieved

through participant checks (Glesne, 1999). Maintaining complete and in-depth records of how

categories and their properties come about (Constas, 1992) is another way of ensuring

trustworthiness because it maintains transparency of the process of data analysis.

In the proposed study, trustworthiness was established in various ways. First, data were

triangulated through different methods of data collection, namely, two separate participant

interviews, participants' journals, and a field log reporting all the researcher's thoughts and ideas

pertinent to the study and its subject (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Glesne, 1999; St.

Pierre, 1997). Secondly, member checks were conducted. Once data were collected and analysis

was underway, participants were contacted and asked to comment on the researcher's use and

interpretation of data from interview and journals. Some of these participant checks were

conducted during the second interview and afterwards. Lastly, the study author's research

advisor served as an expert auditor who reviewed a random selection of the data and its coding

(Patton, 2002).

Furthermore, Constas' (1992) method of recording the theme development process in

tables has also been used as a way to increase transparency in this study (see next chapter).

Constas (1992) proposes that researchers should keep careful records of how themes and patterns

develop and are named—from participants' accounts, from the researcher's experiences, from

the literature, or as tentative developments over the course of data analysis. These records have

the purpose of making the data analysis more transparent to research consumers.

Ethics

Qualitative research frequently involves the participants' disclosure of very personal

information (Silverman, 2000). In an attempt to be as transparent as possible about the use of

such data, the consent form for the proposed study fully explained the research topic and my intent in conducting interviews on the subject (Appendices C and D). The consent form was used to acknowledge and emphasize the sensitive nature of the subject. Participants were assured their participation was voluntary and contingent on their judgment of their personal level of comfort with the subject at hand. The form also made it clear that participants retained the right to stop the interview and its recording at any time, without giving any explanation. Participants were also encouraged to refrain from answering any questions they were not comfortable with. The consent form also included information about counseling clinics and a sexual assault center the participants could contact if they decided they needed professional assistance at any time.

Participants were not asked whether they were survivors of sexual assault, but some participants did volunteer the information, at which point I reminded them the interview was being recorded and offered to stop the interview or its recording and strike the information from the records. None of the participants chose to have me do so. I was prepared to terminate the interview if participants became visibly distressed during the interviews, but that was not necessary at any point. Lastly, interview tapes will be erased after the study is complete.

The main risk of the proposed study is the distress some participants could have experienced as a result of talking about such a sensitive subject. Careful listening by the researcher may have benefited participants in the telling of their personal stories (Kvale, 1996), especially since the researcher is also a therapist trained in active listening.

Although I had to make my department and program of study known to my participants, I was careful to present myself only as a researcher toward my participants, and not as a therapist with experience in treating survivors of sexual assault, so as to prevent any role confusion or

conflict of interest. The researcher personally guided participants through the process of attaining consent, in order to make all these points clear.

Analysis

The grounded theory method was used to analyze the data in this study. It refers to the process of generating theory from data—theory that is inducted, so as to be applicable to the subject matter in explanatory yet flexible ways (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This type of analysis has four properties by which one must abide. First, the theory must closely fit the data. Secondly, it must be easily understandable to the people directly involved in the subject matter (either as researchers or laypersons). Thirdly, the theory must be generalizable to a wide variety of situations and experiences without becoming abstract. Finally, the theory must be controllable, meaning its variables and categories must be flexible enough to be used by various individuals under various contexts related to the subject matter (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study's small sample did not allow for theoretical saturation, however, which precludes this study from being considered a pure exercise in the grounded theory approach.

The constant comparative method is a strategy to build grounded theory, and it is composed of various steps of coding and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, the data must be divided into pieces, and these pieces placed into categories. As categorization continues, new data pieces are compared to pieces already in the category. Category properties and the relationship between categories emerge through this process. Meanwhile, the researcher may use memos detailing ideas related to how categories fit together. This strategy may help ease the conflict between theory construction and data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Once all categories and their properties become more solidified, some categories will be combined with others, thus achieving theory parsimony. Once "theoretical saturation" is achieved, analysis is

complete. The constant comparative method is yet another way of increasing trustworthiness

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The process of data analysis yielded themes and patterns referring to each research question. In this chapter these themes and patterns will be described and exemplified according to the research question to which they refer. Table 1 provides a tabular representation of each research question's themes and the smaller patterns that compose each theme. Themes are large, overarching topics composed of various smaller patterns, which refer to descriptive trends that complement each other and stand together in their reference to a particular phenomenon, characteristic, or subject (Patton, 2002). The discussion chapter will present a cohesive interpretation of how the various themes and patterns come together to provide an answer to each research question.

First Research Question

The first research question asks: "What attitudes do participants have about sexual violence, and do these attitudes influence the rituals participants create and enact to feel safe from sexual violence?" Three general themes and twelve patterns will be used to answer this question. What follows is a brief description of each theme and its patterns along with examples from the data.

Definition

Each participant has her own definition of the term "sexual violence." All definitions are broad and encompass more than just rape. The two patterns found in this theme

Table 1: Themes and Patterns by Research Question

Research Question	Themes	Patterns
Question 1: What attitudes do participants have about sexual violence, and do these attitudes influence the rituals participants create and enact to feel safe from sexual violence?	Definition	Threat as Part of Assault Actions or Behaviors as Assault
	Widespread Problem That Affects All	Sexual Assault as Devastating Event Internalized Responsibility for Safety Precautions Just in Case Women's Solidarity as a Safety Network
	Sexual Assault as Exertion of Power and Control	Sexual Assault Capitalizes on Physical Vulnerability Reliance on Men for Added Safety Fear of Men in General Men's Perceived Immunity
Question 2: What are the processes involved in the creation of safety rituals and what are the intentions behind their enactment? What do women do repeatedly to protect themselves from sexual violence?	Uncertain Origins of Safety Rituals	Indirect and Unclear Messages from Family Direct Warnings and Suggestions from Friends Influence of Media
	Precipitating Event	Immediate Precipitating Events Distant Precipitating Events
	Personal Risk Assessment	
	Safety Ritual Mode	Immediate Safety Rituals Distant Safety Rituals
Question 3: Do women's safety rituals keep them constrained in time and space? If so, how?	Constraint By Fear	
	No Perceived Constraint By Safety Rituals	
Question 4: How do these safety rituals impact women's views of those who have been sexually assaulted and how do these rituals inform women's own perceived vulnerability to sexual violence?	Increased Control and Empowerment	Safety Rituals Provide Peace of Mind
	The Victim is Blameless	

revolve around defining sexual violence only in terms of acts or including the threat of violence or abuse (through harassment or intimidation) in the definition of sexual violence as well. Jane's definition of sexual violence includes threat as part of assault. For Jane, "sexual violence is anything that would make a person feel threatened, I guess which would include verbal as well as physical actions." For Isabelle, however, "a sexual behavior or action upon another would have to be attempted or take place against the other person's will." Isabelle's comment exemplifies a definition that focuses on actual consummated acts.

Widespread problem that affects all

All participants view sexual assault as a serious problem that is widespread in society—a multifaceted issue that affects many lives, even if one has not been victimized personally. Many participants are aware that sexual assault is underreported, and they seem to connect this fact to victim-blaming. For example, when asked if she felt that sexual violence is a big problem in society, Tina seemed to say that it is probably underreported, especially because people tend to doubt the victim or dismiss her reports. Participants also seem to think sexual violence is an issue especially prominent in women. Ava says: "As a woman, sexual assault is something that we all risk. I mean, you know, it's a lot less for guys. But, for women, it's something that we, you know, you never know what's going to happen…If you've never known anybody personally that…it has happened to, or if you've never heard somebody's story or anything, you've at least seen something on TV. Or, you know, you've heard a story about somebody. So, I mean, I think most women at least have some fear, whether or not they realize it—whether or not they can even vocalize it. I think women, I mean, every woman has got to have thought about [it]."

Four main patterns come out of this theme. First, participants view sexual assault as a devastating event. Secondly, participants exhibit some internalized responsibility for their own

safety by how often they say they "should" do or think about something. Even participants who exhibit little fear in general or in a specific moment in time will take precautions "just in case" they are at risk, which is a third pattern. Finally, participants talk about women's solidarity as a safety network. These patterns are explained below.

Participants tend to think of sexual assault as a devastating, horrendous crime that evokes great fear and puts women on their guard all the time—or at least it "should". Participants talked about thinking about sexual violence often—especially as they make the connection between what has happened or continues to happen to other people and themselves. They feel they "should" do things to protect themselves not because they would be at fault if they were ever victimized, but because they fear the repercussions of a crime of that magnitude. They are also well aware of their own vulnerability to this kind of violence. Sonia expresses how devastating sexual assault seems to her when she says, "I just think it's awful. I don't have experience with it, but, you know, I have friends who have, and, um, it's always something [awful]. I just feel strongly negative about it, I guess. You know? It's something that really-, I just couldn't imagine…if that were to happen-, you know, to happen to me I don't know if I could handle it, so, I just try to avoid [situations that would put me at risk]."

The second pattern in this theme is entitled "Maybe I Should's: Internalized Responsibility for Safety." Often participants either opened or closed their statements by saying they "should" think about something related to sexual violence or they "should" do something about it (often involving enacting safety strategies for added protection). Participants seemed compelled to say they should be more responsible or accountable for feeling or doing certain things to protect themselves. I interpret these statements as coming from the historical tendency to hold women responsible for maintaining their own safety and for whatever is done to them

(through victim blaming). Women have in many ways internalized the notion that they need to be forever watchful, forever protective of themselves and this may show through participants' "should" statements. Women may know that if they were ever victimized the burden of proof would fall on their shoulders, and so they try to do everything they can to avoid this tragedy. An example of this theme occurs when Ava is asked if the possibility of sexual violence makes her more afraid of other crimes in general, and she answers, "[It's] not my biggest fear, but it probably should be."

The participants who reported little fear of sexual violence, or who stated they do not think about sexual violence in their everyday lives still report enacting safety rituals. Some say that these are general precautions against any kind of violence. Their language in talking about what exactly could happen to them at the moments when they find it necessary to enact these strategies hints at sexual violence, however. I call this pattern "Precautions Just in Case." For example, Tina reported not thinking about sexual violence very often but she frequently said things like, "I never feel scared in my own life. I try not to be at the [place where I study] until 1:00 [am] and then walk out to my car. There have probably only been a handful of times that I've actually thought in my mind, like in the middle of the night, or walking alone, 'Oh, what if someone's watching me.'" Something similar occurred with Jane, who reported very little fear in her first interview. After said interview, and during the journaling process, Jane wrote, "As I began this journal, I immediately realized I spend little to no time thinking about sexual violence. I also realized that is a subject I need to think about more often. It is important for a woman to protect herself and education and knowledge are the best tools someone can have." Participants who report thinking about sexual assault infrequently seem to engage in safety rituals anyway because they have a general sense of how vulnerable women in general are.

Another pattern that emerged from women's thoughts on sexual violence has to do with women's reliance on each other for protection. I call this pattern "Women's Solidarity as a Safety Network." Throughout the study participants kept making reference to instances when they watched out for someone else's safety or a friend watched out for theirs—either through direct action (like accompanying someone somewhere) or through warning. These instances indicate a community of women that is observant of safety practices for everyone. Women are concerned with each other even if they don't know each other (although the concern for those who are in their immediate network of friends and family is greater). There are surprisingly few references to men as being a part of this "community watch." When asked if she worries about women in her life, Sonia states, "Oh, yeah! Yeah, probably more than they do, sometimes…I have a friend who sometimes she just lets guys she's just *met* or, you know,…sleep over at her house, in her bed. And I'm like, 'Come on, you know, be careful. How can you let them in your room like that—the door is locked and…' You know, or sometimes this friend calls me and says 'Oh, I'm walking downtown, I'm going home right now.' I'm like, 'Okay, be careful.' You know, 'Wait until you get there to hang up,' or something like that. Because they are doing something—maybe not the walking downtown—but maybe they're doing something that I wouldn't necessarily do, you know? Or…[I] obviously haven't done it for a reason, 'cause I think I'd feel uncomfortable or I'd feel it's dangerous."

Three main themes are used to answer the first research question, which asks how women's attitudes toward sexual violence influence the creation and enactment of safety rituals. The first theme—participant's definition of sexual violence—is divided into two patterns depending on whether participants view threat and intimidation as part of assault or whether they only include actions and consummated acts in their definition. The second theme just described

above refers to participants' view of sexual violence as a widespread problem that affects many people. The four patterns that compose this theme are: seeing sexual assault as a devastating event, internalized responsibility for safety, taking precautions "just in case," and women's solidarity as a safety network. The next theme to be described below adds to our understanding of how participants' conceptualize sexual violence and provides insight on why participants, in general, seem to fear sexual violence so much.

Sexual assault as exertion of power and control

Most participants have a feminist interpretation of sexual violence in the sense that it is about power. They view sexual assault as someone stripping someone else of personal agency and control. That is most likely why the participants all agree that sexual violence is a terrifying and devastating event. All participants take into consideration issues of control and power when talking about sexual violence and the fear it evokes. For example, Isabelle says, "I actually get frustrated that I have to feel [fear]. I get frustrated that the other wouldn't know that it's inappropriate and that I have as much power as them and they shouldn't be infringing on mine. So I think I get more angry than scared. I mean, I might be scared for moments, but I'm actually angry too that I have to feel uncomfortable."

This theme consists of four patterns. First, participants view sexual assault as capitalizing on women's physical vulnerability. Because women are generally physically weaker than men, participants tend to rely on men for added safety, which is a second pattern within the theme of power and control. Another pattern is that participants tend to fear all men in general, although they rely on some men for protection. The last pattern within this theme is participants' agreement that men perceive themselves to be immune to sexual violence victimization—a confidence that seems naïve to most participants but that might actually inspire more confidence

in men's ability to be the protectors of the women in their lives. A detailed explanation and examples of each pattern follows.

Participants view sexual violence as a crime that capitalizes on men's greater physical strength as compared to women. The women interviewed in this study view this physical disadvantage as a tool men use to strip women of control, thus making assault possible. Implied in these thoughts is that women feel physically vulnerable when it comes to the risk of sexual assault. Participants will often say they create and enact their safety rituals as way to compensate for their physical disadvantage. For example, when asked why she keeps a hammer by her bed, Sonia said, "No one strongly suggested it, but I think, I'm small, and if, you know, a bigger guy came in, there is no way I could overpower them unless I had something that I could, you know, hit him with...I'd say, yeah, I thought it through." Tina even made reference to the fact that she needs to enact her safety rituals more than other women who have skills in martial arts: "I know I'm 5 foot 4. What could I do if some six-foot man approached me and…? You know, I couldn't do too much. I hate to say it but I couldn't do shit [laughs]. I mean, I ran track in high school, but you know--. My cheerleading ability is not like I can do a back flip and anything will happen…I'm pretty useless…I've heard of girls who do kickboxing and I do yoga. That's not going to help me. I've heard of girls who do karate. It seems like I never really built up a defense physically."

Because participants view sexual assault as a crime of power that is aided by women's physical vulnerability, they report relying on men in their lives—men they know well and fully trust—to feel safer, especially in the public space. Participants often say they feel safer when they are around men in their lives with whom they have close relationships, even if they realize this is problematic. These men inspire trust in the participants not only because of their greater

physical strength but also because of their status as men. Jane exemplified this pattern when she stated, "I definitely feel safer when I am with my boyfriend. I hate saying it, but it's true. There's a presence that…men have, and if you are out somewhere and you are seen with another-, with a man, maybe guys, people will leave you alone. Not leave you alone, but they won't try and approach you."

Although participants will rely on men they know and trust to protect them, they are more apprehensive or fearful around strange men in general, whether these men do something that appears threatening or not. This is the third pattern within the theme of "Sexual Violence as Exertion of Power and Control." Because men *can* rape, strange men are usually seen with some level of suspiciousness. Certain groups of men can also be targeted as more risky to be around. When asked if there are some people she fears more than others, Tina says, "Men—of course…" and Sonia says, "Well, men." Tina goes on to explain particular groups of men she is apprehensive around: "I am definitely more so timid and apprehensive around black guys. I don't know why, I mean, I guess it's just stuff that's been--, pure ignorance. I mean I know that a lot of Mexicans or Hispanic people are not going to rape people. Probably, statistically—I don't know exactly what race is more predominant, but whatever, I guess it's because it's something that I am not used [to] that it scares me."

Participants' reliance on men for safety is especially surprising considering participants acknowledge men's vulnerability to sexual violence. All participants seem to be aware that men can be victims of sexual assault as well, but they all agree that men think about this issue a lot less than women do—both in terms of how it might affect themselves, and in terms of how it might affect the women in their lives. All participants acknowledge "Men's Perceived Immunity," the fourth and final pattern in the larger theme of sexual assault as power and

control. In some ways, participants believe men think they are somewhat immune to this kind of violence or abuse because it is a crime that exploits physical vulnerability, although men can also be vulnerable considering it is a crime of power. Additionally, participants often mention not getting many (if any) messages about sexual assault from the men in their lives, probably because it is not an issue men tend to think about very often or as much as women do. For example, Isabelle says, "The surprise element [in my voice] is not that [my male cousin] is aware, is that he is the *only one*, because I think that everyone, I would assume people should be aware [of sexual violence], but it's kind of surprising that, now that I do realize these distinctions, that a lot of men don't really want to talk about it….They don't-- if they really are fearful--they don't want to maybe address it because I'm their daughter, or I'm their sister, you know, it's more like a denial type thing….I think it's interesting that my cousin is the…first person to actually be that male friend, or that male voice." Jane adds to the pattern by stating she doesn't think men think about protecting themselves as much as women do. She says, "I think they think that they are much-, that they are prepared to handle almost anything that comes their way."

The three main themes that relate to the first research question have been described. Each participant has her own definition of sexual assault; they all think sexual violence is a widespread problem that affects many lives, and they all view sexual assault as exertion of power and control. This last theme, just described above, is composed of four patterns: the view that sexual assault capitalizes on women's physical vulnerability, reliance on men for added safety, fear of men in general, and men's perceived immunity. Now, I turn to the second research question and the themes and patterns that attempt to answer how safety strategies originate and what women do to keep themselves safe. Because participants view sexual violence as a

widespread problem that can potentially affect their lives, they find it necessary to enact safety rituals to protect themselves. Although the exact source of these safety rituals is uncertain, they tend to take into consideration the blurry messages participants have received from their families, since young, as well as the overt, direct messages from friends and the media.

<div align="center">Second Research Question</div>

The second research question asks, "What are the processes involved in the creation of safety rituals and what are the intentions behind their enactment? What do women do repeatedly to protect themselves from sexual violence?" One theme and three patterns refer to the processes involved in the creation of safety rituals, and three themes and four patterns refer to what women do repeatedly to protect themselves from sexual violence. Explanations for each theme and pattern follow.

Uncertain origin of safety rituals

Participants most often could not concretely specify the source of their precautions when asked how they came to think of the specific safety rituals they enact. Women may not be sure how their safety strategies originate. They remember general warnings from family who told them to be careful and keep safe at all times. They can also remember overt conversations or suggestions from friends that led them to do one thing or another at specific points in time, but participants generally cannot say where exactly their safety rituals originated, when they started doing them, or how they got in the habit of enacting these rituals over time. Isabelle explains this idea when she says, "I think that those [safety strategies] are just real, real general precautions. They're not real [specific]…they didn't originate from a specific source. I think I just accumulated them." Sonia also brings up the role of positive reinforcement in the process of

creating and enacting safety rituals: "I guess what's worked to make me feel better in the past, you know. Not opening the door, I felt safer, so I'm not going to open it next time, you know?"

When asked about the origins of their safety strategies most participants will cite the unclear messages they received from family, the direct, overt messages they received from friends, and the media. These three sources of warnings make up the three patterns within the larger theme of the uncertain origins of women's safety strategies described above. Each pattern is described and exemplified below.

All participants talked about receiving unclear messages about sexual assault from parents and family members when they were young. Participants often said that as children and adolescents they received messages about violence in general and how to keep safe from general things. Even if these warnings or suggestions for what to do could keep them safe from sexual assault in particular, sexual violence was never openly explained or directly talked about, although its possibility was at times alluded to. Even Ava, whose mom was herself sexually assaulted, and who tried to protect Ava from experiencing the same, recalls: "Definitely my mom would give me references to, like, I wasn't supposed to sit on people's laps and very strange things that I never understood until my mom explained--, you know, told me things when I was older. But she would tell me how to sit on people's laps, and she would tell me to, you know, of course, I guess a lot of moms say this, but you know, guys are only there to get in your pants, and, you know, things like that. It's about all I can really think of." When asked if her parents gave her any warnings or urged her to do certain things to protect herself when she was young, Jane asserts her parents taught her precautions to protect herself in general—from any form of crime, or for crimes of property. In regards to sexual violence, however, she says, "I don't remember being taught that at all."

When it came to friends, however, participants recalled receiving clear and direct messages regarding sexual assault and how to protect oneself. It seems that the subject of sexual assault is less taboo among friends. Friends will share stories that will make sexual assault more salient in their friends' minds (perhaps that is the intention), and get the friend more aware of the risks around her and what she must do to keep herself safe. At times, friends will also put pressure on a woman to enact certain safety rituals. For example, Tina says, "I feel as though it's pretty much at this stage in my life a topic that is perhaps more frequent among my girlfriends—stories about other women or other college-aged girls-- and pretty much just giving precautions to each other or warning each other."

Participants agree that much of their knowledge about sexual violence comes from the media. The media (news, movies, magazines, the Internet) influence not only how women think of sexual violence—as something that happens at night, in public spaces, by older men of a minority group—but it often serves as a precipitating event that makes the issue more salient in women's minds. The media also "teaches" women how to protect themselves—which often times involves the creation and enactment of specific safety rituals. Jane provides a good example of learning from TV. She says, "If I learned anything it was from television. I don't remember anyone ever, ever sitting me down and explaining what [sexual assault] was and how-, what to do." When asked how she learned to do the things she does to protect herself, Isabelle answered, "[These safety strategies came] probably mainly from lists that I've read, whether it be a media or e-mails or general precautions that they – they meaning the media – tell people to take, or maybe it's, some kind of organization that does these types of things." A good example of the warnings found in television was when the reporter covering a recent news story about a peeping tom loose on Emory University's campus, urged women to avoid dark areas (although

the peeping tom was found in the dorms, in student's bedrooms and showers) and keep all doors

locked (Duffield, 2007).

One main theme refers directly to the process of creating safety rituals. This theme is

called "Uncertain origins of safety rituals," in an attempt to connote participants' uncertainty and

difficulty when talking about how the safety strategies they use originated. Three main patterns

within this theme have been described: indirect and unclear messages from family, direct

warnings and suggestions from friends, and the influence of the media in teaching women who,

what, and how to fear sexual assault. Now, I turn to the process of safety ritual enactment—the

process by which the enactment of safety strategies in isolation actually become ritualized and

performed for a purpose. While women's safety rituals may not have a clear origin, they are

certainly well defined and articulated. Participants really had no trouble when it came to talking

about what they do repeatedly to protect themselves, why they do it, and what it accomplishes.

Precipitating event

A precipitating event can be any trigger that makes a woman think about her safety or

lack of safety. It can be personal experience as well as vicarious experience. A precipitating even

can also be situational. Precipitating events make the thought of sexual violence more salient in

women, which leads them to assess their own risk, and take action if they find it necessary.

Precipitating events can be immediate or distant depending on whether the woman experiences

the trigger first-hand, or hears about someone's experience. Precipitating events evoke

premonitions and warnings participants have heard throughout their lives. When asked when she

knows it's time to use her safety strategies, Isabelle says, "Just when something…seems

different to me. Or when someone's around or following me or if I'm alone and I'm walking to

my car and there it's dark and there's no one around. So, I mean, it has to be primed by either

context and lack of people or a specific person that I don't know that's around me and there's no one else around."

Immediate precipitating events tend to be more situational in nature. Certain contextual cues raise women's anxiety and get them assessing their personal risk and safety. Ava talked about some situations that evoke fear or anxiety in her when she said, "I get, I guess, the fear, if you will, if I ever walk around by myself. Even during the daytime, you never know what's going to happen. And I guess I have had plenty of aggressive people in my life. Just a stranger on the street…you never know. It's like, I don't even necessarily like riding in the car with somebody I don't know too well."

Distant precipitating events are those more removed from the participant's immediate context. Stories women hear about other women who have been assaulted generally bring up concerns over safety but not necessarily in one's immediate environment. Distant precipitating events will generally lead to distant safety strategies, which will be explained later in more detailed. When asked what makes some locations more unsafe than others, Tina states, "I guess the hearsay. I know particularly off [a street due North of town]—that's not nearly as safe as if you were to be on [another street in town], by [a particular neighborhood]. You know there is different locations, different statistics, different types of people, different incomes…In working in real estate, I know specifically what areas are more—the crime is higher than others. There are particular houses my boss will *never* let me go and show or inspect or take photos of—he always sends a guy, opposed to me just riding by, even if it is just down the road from me."

"Precipitating Event" is the first main theme that refers to the process of safety ritual enactment. There are two kinds of precipitating events, which constitute the two patterns within the theme: immediate and distant precipitating events. These events make sexual violence more

salient in women's minds, which then lead to a process of safety assessment that often involves a

certain level of social comparison. This safety assessment process and where it leads is described

below.

Personal risk assessment

After a precipitating event, a woman will assess her own safety and whether she should

do something to make herself safer. If the precipitating event is hearing about a case of sexual

violence, there will usually be an element of social comparison to the victim of the crime in order

to assess whether one is likely to get victimized in the same way. Personal risk assessment is

often a split-second decision. Participants often equate this assessment with a "feeling," or a

"premonition," that all is *not* right, and they need to do something to either get out of the

situation or to protect themselves. Depending on whether the Precipitating Event is immediate or

distant, the assessment process can be longer or shorter—more or less salient to the woman.

Sonia says, "I guess it depends…with other people, feeling that I have to use, you know, some

precaution. I think it's the feeling I get about…You know, an alarmed, threatened feeling maybe.

I think that's it." Isabelle explains the thought process that led her to enact some safety rituals in

a particular situation: "I mean that's why I did lock the doors. But it was just a cautious feeling.

It's not a hyper-anxious feeling. Just a cautiousness and an acknowledgement that this is a more

risky situation." Tina, on the other hand, talks about the process of personal risk assessment

following a distant precipitating event: "I don't know that I took very strong action once I heard

that story, but I did at least think about it. And I thought to myself, what little things could I do?

And so I took my address off [this particular website] at least." If a woman concludes she's

indeed at risk or less safe than she would like to be in any particular situation, she will enter

safety ritual mode after concluding the process of personal risk assessment.

Safety ritual mode

If at any point a woman feels unsafe or not safe enough, she is likely to enact safety strategies to lower her anxiety or make her feel safer, if nothing else. Assessment is so quick it is sometimes difficult to separate its process from safety ritual enactment. Safety strategies are indeed repeated over time, every time there is a need for it: they become habitual and rewarding because they provide peace of mind to present and future selves (when one looks back on the threatening situation). When participants were asked to provide a check on rituals as a framework for understanding safety strategies, they agreed the concept seemed fitting. In explaining when she knows it is time to enact her safety rituals, Ava asserts, "When you get that gut feeling, you gotta go, you gotta use [the safety strategies] or else you're gonna-, you know, you may just end up regretting it later." Tina talked about why she enacts safety rituals in situations she feels unsafe: "I think I do a lot of these things completely subconsciously. I think I do a lot of them because I've programmed myself that if anything bad were to happen, if a man were trying to hurt me, there would be three things that could happen. Obviously I can't kickbox, and I can't run, I don't have a gun, but I have my cell phone out, I have my keys out, and I am walking a little faster than normal, so maybe I can resist or go faster, or whatever. I guess these are the three built-in mechanisms I have developed that seem to work for me to make me feel comfortable." Although she says these acts are largely subconscious for her, she seems to be very aware of these safety rituals, why she chooses to enact them, and the effect they have on her.

Immediate safety rituals are safety strategies that are repeatedly enacted in the moment the woman feels unsafe—after an immediate precipitating event. They are immediate actions that are enacted with the goal of fending off someone, getting oneself out of a situation, or preparing

for a possible attack. Safety rituals are also dynamic, not static: they change as circumstances change, and they are repeated when similar situations are experienced. Their purpose is to lower anxiety and to prepare for whatever may come, and participants often report feeling more in control when they enact their immediate safety rituals. Immediate safety rituals fall into five categories: use of weapons, image management, gathering environmental cues, seeking attention, and leaving the situation or isolating oneself.

The first type of immediate safety rituals involves using either real or make-shift weapons for self-defense in case of an attack. Only two participants mentioned using this specific form of safety ritual, but both participants talked about using these weapons often, and were very pointed in how they talked about it. Ava reported carrying a police baton or a butterfly knife every time she had to walk somewhere by herself. Sonia talked about carrying mace in her keychain at one point in time, and keeping a hammer next to her bed at night in case of an intruder. She also reported keeping a Swiss-army knife in her office desk drawer, something that makes her feel safer when she has to work late. Sonia also talked about one particular experience in her own home in which she relied on the use of another weapon: "A few weeks ago one night I had some people over and invited the boy I've been talking about [someone she had mentioned not knowing well, in a previous conversation]. He stayed at my house even after everyone left. When he was in the bathroom I unlocked the back door and sat near it with a knife between the couch cushions. That was the first time I felt threatened by him. It's because he was lingering when I was trying to make hints about him leaving. Finally, I told him to leave because I was tired and planning on going to bed." Both participants talked about feeling scared their weapons might be used against them in a possible confrontation, but they feel the weapons give them enough assurance to continue using them.

A second type of safety strategy has to do with image management. These are safety rituals designed to purposefully change or manipulate one's behavior and image in order to portray a certain reality that might actually be different from the truth. All the manipulation is intended to make one safer or less of a target to a potential assailant. Tina explains this concept when she says, "I'd probably just have my phone out…I guess that's my way of-, If I were to see a predator, him thinking, 'Oh, she's not entering into her own house, so she's letting people know that she's coming.' As where if I have my keys out maybe he would think, 'Oh, she lives alone,' or 'She's probably going into her own place, and they might be studying or they might be asleep—it's ten o'clock!' I guess I don't know if that has a significance at all, but I-, to me it makes sense. It's definitely so that you can kind of misconstrue anything if you want someone to believe something….you know, I could portray, oh, well, I am assertive and I have out my phone, and I might even act like I'm on the phone, you know, and even say something like, 'Oh yeah, I'm outside! Go ahead, you all can meet me.' If I were that uncomfortable, I could definitely see myself doing something like that. Kind of like a role play to exhibit a situation that is not true but that could perhaps get me out of a situation that I wouldn't want to be in." Isabelle and Ava also talk about consciously modifying their body language in order to appear more assertive, more aggressive, and less available to others. In her second interview, Jane adds as a matter of fact, "I don't know if this counts, but I always give a fake name at the bar [laughter]."

Gathering environmental cues is another type of safety ritual that all participants enact. These safety rituals involve relying on one's senses to know exactly what is going on around oneself at all times, so that a quick escape or a quick come-back might be possible in case of an assault. This type of ritual is perhaps the most varied. It includes strategies such as always watching one's drink, as Jane does, not listening to headphones when walking, which Ava

avoids, and checking that doors do indeed lock behind oneself, as Isabelle reports doing. Sonia talks about this safety ritual more generally when she explains trying to "just [be] aware of who is around, and, yeah, whoever is around and where I am. And where is-, you know, where can I go if I, you know, if I feel unsafe."

Seeking attention is the fourth type of safety ritual designed to let someone know one's location and to get help if needed. The enactment of these rituals often centers on being aware of the proximity of others, or building in strategies to call attention to oneself in the case of an assault. For example, Jane says, "On my key ring I have one of those alarm horns, I guess, that…I use to find my car in a parking lot, but you can turn it on and maybe it will draw attention to you if something is happening or if you feel unsafe."

Leaving the situation or isolating oneself is the fifth and last type of safety ritual participants talked about. This is the most common type of ritual and it focuses on oneself as an agent of protection instead of relying on an object, someone else, or some other form of self-defense. These safety rituals involve being pro-active about one's context and environment and anticipating one's next steps so that one can avoid risky situations entirely or leave these more quickly. For example Tina says, "I walk a little faster [laughter]. I'll get out my key…because I know I'll want to go ahead and unlock my door." Isabelle puts this type of ritual in context with other types of safety rituals: "I wouldn't necessarily try to protect myself unless it got that bad. Like, I would just use…behaviors that were more focused on getting out of a situation, not necessarily defense behaviors." From her comment one can conclude that leaving a situation or isolating oneself is viewed as a more mild kind of ritual, perhaps used first, before trying anything else.

Distant safety rituals are rituals participants enact to become less vulnerable in the long run. These are precautions over time and tend to be more future-oriented. Participants usually enact these safety rituals after experiencing a distant precipitating event, as they are safety strategies aimed at one's general level of safety instead of one's immediate environment and its immediate risks. Distant safety rituals often involve avoiding certain situations and abiding by certain general rules that remain true every time a participant finds herself in a particular type of situation. For example, Jane says, "I try not to put myself in the situation where something could happen. Meaning, if you do go out with girls to a bar you never go out-, I try not to go to the bathroom by myself, I try not to go outside by myself if I wanna, you know, smoke a cigarette maybe or something like that. I try always travel in pairs just to be on the safer side. Not that I really think that something is going to happen, but you never know." Isabelle also talks about her choice to live on the third floor of her apartment building: "Now I live on the third floor for that reason, because in my mind I always have my mom's real message of-, she gets nervous about the first floors and windows on the first floor."

The theme entitled "Safety Ritual Mode" is perhaps the longest, most complex theme found in data analysis. It refers to what women do after they have become more aware of their surroundings and the dangers there, after they have assessed their own level of safety and concluded themselves to be unsafe. This theme is composed of two patterns—immediate safety rituals and distant safety rituals. Immediate safety rituals can be any or all of five types of rituals: using weapons for self-defense, image management, gathering environmental cues, seeking attention, and leaving the situation or isolating oneself. Now, I turn to the purpose of safety rituals and the effect they have on the women who enact them.

Third Research Question

The third research question asks, "Do women's safety rituals keep them constrained in time and space? If so, how?" Two main themes from the data refer directly to this question. The first theme, entitled "Constraint by Fear" relates to participants' views on the limiting role of fear in their lives. The second theme, "No Perceived Constraint by Safety Rituals," relates to participants' attitudes toward their safety rituals and their enactment.

Constraint by fear

Participants tend to point to the fear of sexual assault as the real limiting or constraining force in their lives. Participants find it unfair that they need to live with fear, which points to their keen awareness of the gender inequalities at play in the workings of sexual assault victimization. They seem to separate the fear and its effects from the safety rituals and their effects. The fear limits participants by serving as the small voice in their minds always warning against what they want or *have* to do because it might be unsafe. Ava points out and questions the role of fear in her life in one of her journal entries: "I have believed for a long time that allowing something or someone to have control over me is a negative thing. Recently it occurred to me that fear can be a type of control. So why do I allow fear to affect me? Protection? Stupidity? Intelligence? Tradition? Or is it something else?" In this passage she alludes to the idea of letting fear dictate what she does or does not do. She explains in her second interview that it is not the safety strategies themselves that make her feel more afraid but the fact that she needs to use them at any particular time.

No perceived constraint by safety rituals

As mentioned above, participants do not view their safety rituals as constraining—much to the contrary they report feeling more limited by fear if they *do not* enact these safety rituals.

The safety rituals seem to give them the empowerment, assurance, and composure they need to offset the tendency to let fear completely limit them in what they want to do. Furthermore, participants report safety rituals do not interrupt their everyday lives or routines—in other words, they are not inconvenient. Tina, for example, spoke directly to this idea when she said, "[The safety rituals] don't disturb my life if that's what you are asking. It's definitely not like a similarity or any sort of characteristic of any sort of OCD or anxiety-related concern I would have. It's more so just habit. I mean, it doesn't disturb me. I mean, it's easy for me to get out my cell phone. I know if my cell phone is dead I certainly get more uncomfortable…Or if I don't have my phone definitely I feel more uncomfortable but you know, it's not like it restricts my life to any significant-…You know, I mean, I pull out my keys…that takes no effort really." Sonia adds, "You know, the reason I do some of the things I do is because is right for me, and if I don't do it for myself in that situation immediately I feel [anxious]…I just wouldn't feel okay about it. I'd sit down and I'd be uncomfortable the whole time, so what's the point in that? So, I go do it more to relieve my own [anxiety], and you know, [other women] might do things to alleviate their own anxiety."

Two main themes refer to the effects and purpose of safety rituals: the themes entitled "Constraint by Fear" and "No Perceived Constraint by Safety Rituals," both of which are described in detail above. Because women view the fear of sexual violence as the real enemy, and because they find solace in their safety rituals, women become empowered when they enact their safety rituals, which is not to say they feel immune to the risk of sexual assault. In fact, they are well aware that no woman is immune to it, no matter what she does or does not do.

Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question asks, "How do these safety rituals impact women's views of those who have been sexually assaulted and how do these rituals inform women's own perceived vulnerability to sexual violence?" One theme and one pattern refer to how safety rituals influence women's views of their own vulnerability, and one main theme refers to women's views of those who have been victimized by sexual violence. Themes and pattern are explained below, starting with the theme and pattern that relate to women's views of their own vulnerability.

Increased control and empowerment

Women tend to generally see their safety rituals as empowering and as a relief to anxiety. Safety rituals are viewed in a positive light. This theme suggests that fear of assault is constraining, not safety rituals themselves. Sonia explains the empowerment that comes from enacting a safety strategy when she states: "Why do I choose those things? I don't really know…It's all about it makes me feel safe, I guess. Maybe have some control over where the situation [leads], like—something I-, you know, something I can do." Ava alludes to the idea of separating the fear of sexual assault from the precautions one takes when she says, "I think there can be a productive thing [about the fear of sexual violence], definitely…Like I said, you know, I hope that while the fear may have, you know, it may have wasted a bunch of time from me-- walking out of my way sometimes, or to avoid situations…it has also helped me—and I know this, so I think it can be productive too. Yeah, it's just kind of a mental thing and balancing it out and working things out, you know, in your person."

The idea that safety rituals provide peace of mind to the women who enact them is a pattern that comes out of the main theme of empowerment. Participants will often say they feel relieved knowing they did something to protect themselves in the times they felt afraid or unsafe.

Participants trust their rituals have actually kept them safe and sound in the past, which only makes them continue using them in the present and in the future. Isabelle relayed a particular instance when she felt especially vulnerable and especially thankful for having enacted a safety strategy: "I came home really late one night and there was a car in front of me going into my complex. He stopped and got out of the car and was, like, trying to talk to me…It was like three thirty in the morning. And I thought it was the strangest thing. And I was like, 'I'm not stopping this car.' And my parking place was only, you know, within walking distance of where he was stopped…So what I did was I drove around the whole complex and left and then came back later….I drove around for a little bit and then I was thankful that I did that, because I thought 'no way am I going to get out of my car and then he sees where I'm going…' That was a specific instance I remember thinking 'I'm so glad that I didn't-…there's no way I'm going to get out of my car.' So I was proud that I had made that decision." In a journal entry, Sonia provides an insightful explanation for enacting safety rituals. She wrote: "I never regret trusting my instincts and have never been harmed by someone who didn't raise a red flag. Maybe if someone makes me feel uncomfortable, then there's a good reason for it."

The theme of increased control and empowerment provided by safety rituals refers to the idea that women feel safer and less constrained *because* they enact their safety rituals. No woman is completely safe from sexual assault, however, and participants acknowledge this reality—after all, this is why the fear exists in the first place. Because no amount of safety ritual enactment can ever completely and totally protect a woman from the risk of being sexually assaulted, participants do not view the victimization of women as justifiable—not even if the woman has not enacted any safety rituals.

The victim is blameless

This is the only theme observable in the data when it comes to how participants view those who have been victimized by sexual violence. There is not one instance of victim blaming in the data. All participants agree that women are not to blame if they do get assaulted. Safety rituals are a good source of protection, but in the end sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of what they do (or don't do) to protect themselves. Participants worry at times about women who do not enact safety strategies—or the same safety strategies they do—but not because *they are putting themselves at risk* but because participants do not want to see them have to suffer through the devastating event that sexual assault seems to be. Isabelle says, "I believe that there are a lot of unsafe situations, and I think it's easy to become a victim of a situation very quickly, where you wouldn't necessarily--, mentally you think 'oh, that's not going to happen.' But I think that's what happens all the time to people, and that's why it's not their fault…They're in a situation and then something happens where they are perpetrated, and so I think that it's so easy to become that victim." Sonia adds that she herself is still vulnerable, despite all she does. Sonia states, "No [I don't think a woman is to blame if she doesn't take precautions]. Absolutely not. I think it could really happen to anyone and that's why, you know, I think so many women are always constantly afraid and not opening doors, and not-, you know, staying away from people and trying to protect themselves, because, you know, I know that even if I do that I could still-, something still happens, so…It doesn't mean it's not going to happen to me."

Conclusion

Themes and patterns that relate to each research question asked in this study have emerged from the data in the process of analysis. Table 2 outlines how each theme and pattern

emerged and where authority for their names resides (a method proposed by Constas, 1992).

These themes and patterns have been explained and exemplified in this chapter as a way to

demonstrate to the reader how the author has come to draw the conclusions about to be discussed

in the next chapter. Although the themes and patterns described in this chapter are drawn from

participants' own words and ideas, the role of the author as a discussant is to bring together all

themes and patterns and extrapolate the application of these to the rest of the population.

Table 2: Development of Themes

Component of Categorization	*Temporal Designation*		
Origination (where authority for creating category resides)	**A priori**	**A posteriori**	**Iterative** (developed gradually and tentatively throughout research)
-participants		r	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 f, g, j, l, n, o, p, q
-investigative (researcher's views & experiences)		a, b, c, e	7 d, i
-literature			3 h, k, m
Nomination (source of the name to describe category)			
-participants			
-investigative		1 – 11 a – r	
-literature			

Category label key:

Themes:

1. definition
2. widespread Problem
3. sexual assault as exertion of power
4. uncertain origins of safety rituals
5. precipitating event
6. personal risk assessment
7. safety ritual mode
8. constraint by fear
9. no perceived constraint by safety rituals
10. increased control and empowerment
11. the victim is blameless

Patterns:

a. threat as part of assault
b. actions or behaviors as assault
c. sexual assault as devastating
d. internalized responsibility for safety
e. precautions just in case
f. women's solidarity
g. capitalization on physical vulnerability
h. reliance on men for safety
i. fear of men in general
j. men's perceived immunity
k. indirect messages from family
l. direct warnings from friends
m. influence of media
n. immediate precipitating event
o. distant precipitating event
p. immediate safety rituals
q. distant safety rituals
r. safety rituals for peace of mind

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will connect the themes and patterns explained in the previous chapter, thus providing coherent answers to the research questions. Another goal to be accomplished in this chapter is to link the findings of this study to what is found in the literature on women's fear of sexual violence. Because participants' level of fear fell on a continuum from little to no reported fear all the way to high reported fear, the themes and patterns found in this study hold more credibility, and it is with confidence that one can extrapolate to the attitudes of many groups of women in the general population from what these participants had to say about the subject. What follows is an in-depth discussion of how the researcher makes sense of the data.

Attitudes about Sexual Violence and Their Influence on Safety Rituals

All participants reported thinking about sexual violence at least at times, when they encountered a situation that reminded them of the problem. Even participants who reported not thinking about sexual violence very much in their day to day lives, still had well thought-out opinions about the subject, and often reported complex safety rituals. Perhaps women find themselves thinking about their own risk and safety so frequently because they view sexual violence as a widespread problem and a devastating event. Participants in this study were well aware they run the risk of being sexually victimized simply because they are women. They see themselves as similar to other women who have been victimized and they understand that nothing guarantees that it will not happen to them. The fact that participants in this study all believe other women think about sexual violence in much the same way they do indicates that

participants view all women in general as vulnerable to sexual assault, simply because they are women. This idea has indeed been proposed by Gordon and Riger (1989) when explaining why the "female fear" is widespread.

Women enact safety rituals because they must live with the real risk of sexual assault. Even participants who reported little worry about their own safety, enacted safety rituals to keep themselves safe "just in case." This incongruence speaks to a sense of vulnerability women have even if they do not consciously admit it. Admitting vulnerability may be difficult because it is anxiety provoking, and it may also go against a woman's personal beliefs regarding what should be an appropriate and just power balance between men and women. In any case, this often acknowledged vulnerability, compounded by the fact these women were born and raised in a victim-blaming society, seems to lead women to internalize responsibility for maintaining their own safety.

Women's fear of rape is not only fueled by their own sense of vulnerability, but also because they view sexual violence as a devastating event with serious and debilitating consequences. Women may enact safety rituals also because they know their entire lives will be affected if they get raped—they are likely to be humiliated by law enforcement agents who may ask them what they were wearing at the time of the assault; they are likely to be stripped of their dignity when in court testifying against a perpetrator, at which time the defense will scrutinize every aspect of their personal and sexual lives; they might suffer from various psychological disorders as a result of the attack; and they might even be ostracized from friends and family who may pass judgments on their actions (Madigan & Gamble, 1989). Society's tendency to blame the victim if she does not follow certain precautions or to dismiss her report by suggesting "she was asking for it" or that she was trying to cover up a bad decision, all contribute to

women's real fear of being raped. In fact, Madigan and Gamble (1989) call the stress, humiliation, and trauma that women go through when reporting and prosecuting their rapists "the second rape" (1989).

All participants view sexual violence as a crime of power, not passion. Women's safety rituals may actually be enacted as a way to become more empowered and to maintain control in the face of various threats to one's personal agency. Women acknowledge and accept to a large extent that women are generally physically weaker than men, which contributes to their sense of vulnerability. Because they feel they might not be able to fight men physically, they may rely on their safety rituals as a way to mentally and emotionally outsmart assailants who have physical strength on their side. Women's use of precautionary tactics have indeed been called "'street-savvy' tactics" (Riger & Gordon, 1981, p. 71).

Like many women in general, participants in this study rely on the men in their lives for protection and safety (Hadleigh-West, 1998; Valentine, 1989) because they view sexual assault as a crime that takes advantage of women's lower status as compared to men. As Valentine (1989) has noted, this is problematic for several reasons: first, this practice serves to reinforce that women do not have a right to be respected and welcomed into the public space in their own right; secondly, it serves to reinforce the idea that men are immune to sexual violence or to having sexual assault happen to women they accompany; and finally, it reinforces the idea that familiar men are always safe havens and strange men are always dangerous, a belief that does not take into consideration the fact that acquaintance rape is the most common type of rape (Gordon & Riger, 1989). One of the most surprising findings of this study is that women often do realize for themselves these problematic meanings of their own reliance on men.

In short, participant's views of sexual violence are feminist in nature. Like many women today, they realize the power inequality that contributes to this kind of crime and they find it unfair—no matter what their own sense of safety tells them. Participants often even resent feeling fearful. These findings may demonstrate a trend toward less traditional, more feminist views of sexual assault among women today—almost thirty years after sexual assault began to be researched and theorized. It may certainly be that the seminal works of the likes of Susan Brownmiller (1975) and Peggy Sanday (1998) have had real influences on how women today, particularly younger, more educated, less traditional women view sexual violence.

The Processes Involved in Creating and Enacting Safety Rituals

The origins of safety rituals may well be uncertain to those actually enacting them. The participants in this study were not very aware of verbalizing how they came to do what they do to protect themselves, and I believe other women would also have a difficulty with this task, not only because memory may fail them, but because direct warnings about sexual violence in particular seem to be few and far in between. Participants often remembered general warnings, or general messages about what to do in different scenarios, but these messages were often superficial and left them puzzled, as indicated in the literature on women's fear of sexual violence (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Hadleigh-West, 1998). Parents and family members warned participants about general forms of crime and taught them tactics to keep safe in the face of these crimes. Sexual violence was never talked about directly or very clearly, however. Only one participant remembered being warned about familiar men or people around her, and how they may also do her harm. Most often, however, families will abide by the taboo surrounding all topics related to the larger subject of sexuality, leaving much about sexual assault simply unsaid. The pattern in this study's data also suggests that women learn about sexual violence from

friends, something alluded to in past research (Day, 1994). In fact, friends are the source of the most direct, overt, and clear warnings and recommendations for safety upkeep. The taboo surrounding sexuality may not be as strong between friends.

Participants in this study confirmed that women most often learn about sexual assault from the media (Gordon & Riger, 1989). This is problematic because the information presented in the media is often erroneous. The fact that the most bizarre and cruel cases are usually the ones reported contributes to the belief in certain myths about sexual assault—for example, that most assaults happen at night, in isolated areas, by strange men; that women are safer at home around people they know; and that rapists are usually Black or Hispanic males who are crazy. Unfortunately, some participants did demonstrate falling in the trap of believing these myths, even against their better judgment. They enacted more safety rituals when out in public, and when asked directly they always said they felt much safer at home.

Whatever the origin of safety strategies may be, women enact safety rituals to feel safer. Women also believe these rituals actually make them safer, but the fact these rituals subdue their subjective feelings of anxiety may actually be more important in the endurance of rituals than its real effects on the environment. Women hope these rituals protect them in the present and the future, and they firmly believe they may have protected them in certain situations in the past. The intention behind the enactment of safety rituals is to lower anxiety when the context is anxiety inducing, to maintain control, and to prevent their own fear from restricting them in time and space—something that will be discussed more in depth later.

Women do indeed enact safety strategies or precautionary behaviors (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Langelan, 1999; Valentine, 1989) in ritualistic ways. During participant checks built into their second interviews, all participants agreed their safety strategies can be viewed as

meaningful actions that are repeated, and that occur in specific settings, following certain rules. When asked, Isabelle said that she feels other women she knows, such as her mother, are more ritualistic than she is in their enactment of safety strategies. After some follow-up questions, I realized Isabelle was referring to the fact that she enacts different safety strategies under different circumstances. Although I respect her view of her own safety practices--as evidenced by my displaying our disagreement here--I still hold that her enactment of safety strategies is ritualistic. Isabelle has an arsenal of behaviors that she picks and chooses from according to the situations she encounters, but all variables being equal, given the same situation twice (or two very similar situations, which is more likely to occur) she would enact the same (or some slight variation of the same) safety strategies. At a later time, while conducting an impromptu participant check, when I explained this point of view to her she confirmed my assumption. Safety ritual enactment is a dynamic process, and the fact that one changes strategies to fit the circumstances, only makes the ritualistic use of safety rituals even more apparent.

Not only did participants agree the concept of rituals is fitting to the topic of women's use of precautionary behaviors, they were able to apply all facets of the concept to the topic at hand themselves. All participants agreed their enactment of safety strategies is repeated over time and that its meaning comes from their feeling safer or less vulnerable in any given situation. They also said the reward came in the form of actual protection afforded by the enactment of these rituals during risky situations they have encountered in the past. I would add that there is also a tangible reward in feeling more empowered and in control of one's environment. The reward may well be the fact that safety strategies help women fight back their own fear and the constraint it causes—something that Sonia herself verbalized and explained to me during a participant check meeting.

The themes and patterns that refer to the types of safety strategies participants enact are clear and concise enough to show exactly what women do repeatedly to protect themselves. Women do different things to protect themselves under different circumstances, but all these strategies are repeated or continued over time. Safety rituals may be distant or immediate, and if they are immediate they fall into the five predictable categories described in the last chapter—use of weapons, image management, gathering environmental cues, seeking attention of others, and leaving the situation or isolating oneself. This categorization goes beyond the distinction between avoidance and self-protective tactics (Riger & Gordon, 1981), in a way that is more descriptive and more helpful in understanding just how complex and thought-out women's use of safety rituals really is. This categorization may even prove itself helpful in larger studies aimed at finding out which safety rituals provide more constraint.

The present study also contributes to the literature by providing a model for how exactly safety rituals are enacted. Safety rituals do not just happen. Women seem to go through a process by which the idea or risk of sexual violence becomes salient in their minds through a precipitating event. This precipitating event, then, serves to launch women into a process in which they assess their personal risk, and decide whether it is time to enter safety ritual mode or not. If women assess their personal risk to be high—either in a specific, immediate situation, or in general—they will enter safety ritual mode, thus picking and choosing from their arsenal of safety rituals the ones most appropriate for the situation at hand. The enactment of these safety rituals will get them feeling empowered and in control enough to do what they want or need to do in the public or private space.

Women fear sexual violence because they view it as a widespread problem and a crime capable of being personally devastating. They enact safety rituals to help them counteract this

fear whenever it becomes salient in their minds and they fear for their own safety. Thus, it can be said that "the female fear" (Gordon & Riger, 1989) is the real limiting force in women's lives, not the enactment of safety strategies themselves.

Constraint in Time and Space

Much to the surprise of the researcher, women's safety rituals do not seem to restrict them. When asked directly, participants all agreed their safety rituals provided them peace of mind and made them feel relieved and in control in situations that were particularly anxiety-provoking. Isabelle, Ava, and Sonia even mentioned feeling proud of themselves for being disciplined and thoughtful enough to avoid potentially risky courses of action by enacting their safety strategies. Therefore, it is safe to say participants seem to take pride in their safety rituals. In fact, women may view these practices as their way to fight the fear of sexual violence—a fear they view as unfair and limiting. The fear of sexual assault maintains the status quo of power and gender inequality in our society, can be interpreted as a personal, everyday protest against these power differentials. Safety rituals may or may not actually increase one's objective safety, but it alleviates anxiety enough to empower the individual to do what she wants, and prevent making decisions about when and where to go simply out of fear.

Perhaps because women have a positive view of the enactment of safety rituals, these are not viewed as cumbersome. When asked if safety rituals were difficult to enact or restricting in some way, all participants said their rituals did not take much effort to enact. There was no mention of anything negative having happened because of the enactment of a safety ritual. In fact, participants seem to view these as especially comforting. For example, Sonia recommends that women follow their instinct and do what they feel they need to do to protect themselves in any given situation—after all, protecting oneself is not going to hurt anyone.

It may be that women purposefully design their safety rituals to be subtle and to go unnoticed most of the time. This may be why rituals are not more cumbersome. Women often report consciously trying to look confident and assertive when out and about in the public space—a safety strategy I have categorized as image management. If safety rituals were not subtle one might project the image of fearfulness, which would not only put the woman more at risk, but would also defeat the purpose of enacting a safety ritual. Thus, it may be that in their efforts to make their safety rituals subtle women have actually made them unobtrusive to themselves. Furthermore, if certain safety rituals were more noticeable to observers women could project being inordinately tough, which could be socially problematic as well.

While safety rituals do not seem to restrict women, the fear of sexual assault seems to be the real limiting force in a woman's life—and all participants agree. Perhaps the biggest surprise to this researcher was to see how efficiently women separate their fear from the enactment of their safety strategies. Participants not only view the acts involved in sexual assault as stripping one of power and control, they also view the fear of sexual assault as being a powerful tool to subjugate women and control them. In fact, they resent feeling fearful because they see it as a form of victimization in and of itself. Fear restricts women by making them more likely to avoid doing certain things in their own time, in their own pace, and in their own ways, an idea already discussed in depth by others who have researched this subject (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Langellan, 1999; Riger and Gordon, 1981; & Valentine, 1989). All participants mention their safety rituals as ways out of this restriction, however. These rituals may provide women with just enough courage to face their fears and go forth with their plans—a unique and possibly new view of safety rituals.

One problematic consequence of safety ritual enactment remains, however. Safety rituals may foster a false sense of security. If a woman feels she is doing everything she can to avoid being assaulted, she may not pay attention to a potential risk she may not look for. Given that most sexual assault is perpetrated by an acquaintance of the victim, women are most likely to get assaulted when they do not feel the need to enact any safety strategies because they happen to be around people they trust.

<div align="center">Women's own perceived vulnerability to sexual violence</div>

Many, if not most, women view themselves as vulnerable to sexual violence. They acknowledge sexual assault as a crime of power made possible by women's lower status and power in society. Thus, women know they are vulnerable simply *because* they are women. Women do, however, rely on their safety rituals to feel more empowered and more in control. They believe their safety rituals actually protect them or make them safer time and time again. In fact, safety rituals provide peace of mind to women's present, future, and past selves. This means that when women look back at particular scary situations in their pasts, they feel grateful they enacted their safety strategies. The relief they felt in the situation is still felt when they look back on it and reassess the risk they faced. When women think about the future they also imagine how their safety strategies might fit into them—both in terms of planning their day-to-day lives, and in terms of imagining (in order to avoid) situations that might evoke fear or that might make them more vulnerable.

Women do not expect their safety rituals will make them invulnerable or immune to sexual violence. Although all participants mentioned feeling more in control when enacting their safety rituals, they were fully aware that these only help decrease their risk of being assaulted. Many participants admitted not knowing for sure, with 100% confidence, that these rituals

helped them get out of risky situations, but they hope they did. Given these views, I surmise that the enactment of safety strategies is an act or course of action designed and intended as much for oneself as for anybody else. The enactment of safety rituals may be empowering because it soothes one's anxiety, whether it actually protects the individual or not. And because participants are aware of this reality, they do not place blame or guilt on women who choose not to engage in safety precautions or enact the same safety rituals as themselves. Participants are fully aware that one's failure to enact safety rituals does not justify a possible assault.

Women's Views of Those Who Have Been Assaulted

As the data indicate, participants do not view survivors of sexual assault as very different from themselves. They realize victims might have indeed enacted safety rituals that did not protect them from an assault. There was not one single instance of victim blaming in all the data gathered for this study. Even if participants mentioned disagreeing with certain behaviors on the part of women in their lives they never suggested that these actions were justification for a possible assault. In fact, many participants seemed slightly surprised that I would even ask whether they felt women were ever at fault for being assaulted if they did not enact any safety rituals. Women may warn and look out for each other in hopes they may protect other women from being devastated by such a horrendous crime, not because they think their loved ones may be "asking for it," to use a common expression pointing at rape myth adherence. This is another aspect of this study's findings that is surprising to the author.

Strengths and Limitations of This Study

The present study has its own unique set of strengths and limitations. The use of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) as the recruitment strategy increased the chances each participant contributed an unique view of the topic, which

aided the researcher in her task of building theory. This methodological choice also strengthened study findings, by including views of the subject that in many cases were very different from the researcher's own views. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, participants' levels of fear of sexual assault fell on a well-defined and detailed continuum, thus increasing the chances the conclusions drawn from this study may actually be applicable to many different women. Furthermore, researcher's expectations were clearly formed and stated in the beginning of the study. This allowed the researcher to be surprised by divergent findings, which indicates some level of objectivity and increases trustworthiness. The use of various triangulation methods is also a strength of this study. Triangulation was achieved through different sources of data (interviews, journals, and researcher's journal), expert auditing by the author's advisor during the process of data analysis, and finally, through participant checks on researcher's interpretation of their own words, and on the researcher's analysis.

One of the main (and most regretful) limitations of this study is its small participant sample, which is the trademark of most qualitative studies. This limitation was counterbalanced by careful sampling that ensured a wide variety of opinions and experiences on the part of participants. One cannot help but wonder, however, how much more could have been found had circumstances allowed for a larger study. In fact, a sixth participant was recruited and actually started the first phase of the study, but had to stop participation for personal reasons. Unfortunately, her data and all she had to contribute are lost to this study. Another limitation lies in the fact that participants are young, educated women, moderate or liberal in their political views. All except one are White. Their acceptance of feminist views on the subject of sexual assault is certainly influenced by these social characteristics (Burt, 1980). Furthermore, they are accustomed to thinking about this issue, and they have more financial resources to cope with

their fears, whereas many women in the general population may not be. The sensitive subject of this study made many women approached by the researcher decline to participate—no matter how much the researcher tried to explain participants would not be asked to share their personal experiences. This problem indicates that the women who actually agreed to participate in the study were self-selected, forming a biased sample perhaps.

Future Research

The area of study encompassing women's fear of sexual violence would benefit from more research on women's use of safety rituals. It would be of interest to researchers, therapists, and other practitioners to know how survivors of sexual assault view their own safety rituals, and how these views have helped or hindered their healing process. Although some participants in this study are survivors of sexual assault, their healing process was not a focus here. Identity construction may also have a role on women's level of fear and how they cope (or do not cope) with it. Because the women in this study expressed such strong reliance and fear of men, it would be interesting to investigate how men think about sexual violence, including whether they fear for the women in their lives, whether they are aware women rely on them for protection (and if they feel apt to provide such protection), and whether they are aware of the risk they pose to strange women in their everyday lives. Furthermore, if a wife, daughter, or other female relative is victimized, do men blame themselves? These are all questions that could be answered through careful empirical research.

Conclusion

This study has helped elucidate the process women go through when they create and enact precautionary behaviors. It is clear from the findings of this study that women's use of safety strategies is indeed ritualistic and, contrary to what the author previously believed, a way

women have to reclaim power over their activities and environments in and outside the home. Women may rely on their safety rituals because they think they do not have a good chance to protect themselves physically, and that ultimately the responsibility for remaining safe still falls on their shoulders. The fear of sexual assault is viewed by these women as limiting and this limitation is viewed as unfair, yet their safety rituals may just be their way to neutralize this limitation imposed in their lives.

It is fitting to end on a note of hope for how this project may contribute to the larger literature on women's fear of sexual violence. This study has the potential to help therapists who work with sexual assault survivors and with women in general. A better understanding of the time, effort, and pervasiveness of fully developed scripts to attempt to control one's environment might help therapists gain a better understanding of the guilt and shame associated with rape victimization. Therapists who work within a feminist framework can use this study to help women in various walks of life confront the social pressures and constraints to conform to patriarchal ideology. Crisis center workers can use this type of research in their efforts to further educate the general public, especially some men who might not be sensitive or aware of how prominent this issue is for many women. Scholars who focus on sexual assault victimization will benefit from this study because it examines more profoundly the issue of self-protective behaviors, in a way that, to the researcher's knowledge, has not been done in the past. This study will also provide a new conceptual framework for the understanding of women's self-protective behaviors. It may be through these focused efforts that we may one day raise the power and status of women to the same level as that of men, and thus eliminate the problem of sexual violence from our society. This is the author's sincere hope.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Guide for First and Second Interviews

Before we start I would like to remind you that we will be talking about your thoughts, experiences, and attitudes regarding sexual violence. This is a sensitive subject for many people, and you might experience some distress from talking about it at length. I would like to remind you that you can stop this interview or its recording at any time, and that should you want help dealing with any distress you may call:

Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia: (706) 353-1912 (Hotline)

McPhaul Family Therapy Clinic: (706) 542-4486

(For individual, couple and family counseling)

Advantage Behavioral Health:

Samaritan Counseling:

Sexual violence is an undeniable reality in our society—one that often scares many women into presenting themselves a certain way or conducting certain routines that they think make them less vulnerable to the threat of sexual assault. Women often hear various messages about how to keep themselves safe from sexual assault. These messages, many times, become or develop into little habits or practices that women in general will carry out to keep themselves safe. I would like to talk to you today about how you cope with the possibility of sexual violence—how you keep yourself safe, when you feel most vulnerable, and how you think women can confront this issue. You are free to stop the recording of this interview or simply to stop the interview and/or your participation in this study at any time for any reason.

1) What does the term sexual violence mean to you?

2) Do you think about sexual violence? When? How?

3) Who has impacted your thinking about sexual violence?

4) Were you given any messages about violence throughout your life? What were those? Who warned you about this?

5) How clear were these warnings? Did you follow them?

6) How did you come to learn specifically about rape and sexual harassment?

7) Do you ever fear you might be victimized by sexual violence? Why?

8) When/where do you feel most threatened? What is it about these places and times that make you feel unsafe? Who are you with when you feel threatened?

9) When/where do you feel the safest?

10) Do you do anything to keep yourself safe from sexual assault? (If "no," why not?) What do you do? Why do you do these specific things? **(I will get details about their self-protective behaviors, if any, here).**

11) How did you come to think of these safety practices?

12) Do you ever avoid any activities you think might put you at risk? What activities are these?

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk to me about this issue. You have given me such wonderful information! I am sure that once I listen to these tapes and read over the transcript of the interview I will have more questions to ask you. Would it be ok for me to contact you with these questions and meet you again for another interview?

Instructions for Journaling Follow:

Write about (in any way you would like to) any thoughts, comments, experiences, feelings, etc, you may have in the next week about the things we have talked about. Please think more about the subject of sexual violence and how you deal with it in your everyday life, and jot down anything that you think or experience regarding this subject. Please write in your journal every day at least once a day, even if you first think you may not have anything to write about.

Interview Guide for Second Interview

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me once again about your thoughts on sexual violence. I want to take the time to remind you once again that you are free to stop this interview, its recording, or your participation in this study at any time, without giving any reason. Because of the delicate nature of the subject of sexual violence, you may experience some distress. Should you want to talk to someone about any discomfort you experience you may contact (give them a paper with the following information numbers):

Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia: (706) 353-1912 (Hotline)

McPhaul Family Therapy Clinic: (706) 542-4486

(For individual, couple and family counseling)

Advantage Behavioral Health:

Samaritan Counseling:

Today I will be asking you some questions I ask of all the participants in this study, but I will also ask you some things specific to our first interview and from your journal, so that I can better understand all that you told me.

Start with specific questions coming from participants' own interview and journal.

General questions asked of all participants:

1) You stated that sometimes you become more concerned or aware of your surroundings. Can you describe the last time you were afraid for your safety?

2) What is the experience of fear/anxiety/apprehension about safety like for you? Do you ever feel it in connection to the idea of sexual assault? How do you express this fear/anxiety?

3) In the last interview you told me about some things you do to keep yourself safe. How do these influence your everyday life—your activities, your choices, your time, etc.?

4) What do you feel like when you enact these safety strategies? Do you feel safer, or more in control, or paranoid?

5) How do you know it's time to use your safety strategies? Do you use them every time you feel unsafe? How do you choose between them?

6) I would like check something with you. The concept of rituals is one that I am using to guide me in understanding and explaining how women use safety strategies to feel safer. A ritual is defined as "repetitive, patterned behaviors that hold special meaning and is repeated over time largely because they are rewarding behaviors." Do you think the use of safety strategies by people like yourself could be viewed as a ritual?

7) Do you ever worry about the safety of other women in your life? Why?

8) How do you think other women keep themselves safe? How do you think they view sexual assault? How do you think you compare to them in your own views on the subject?

9) What would you advise other women to do when they find themselves in unsafe situations?

10) How do you think men view the threat of sexual violence?

11) Do you think sexual violence is a big problem in our society? Why or why not?

12) [Maybe do a brief check of my analysis if time permits?]

Thank you so much for agreeing to this second interview, and for all the time you have devoted to helping me out in this project. As a token of my appreciation I would like to give you this gift certificate. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments, or thoughts regarding this study and all that we have talked about. With your permission I will contact you in the next few weeks to show you my interpretations of what you have said, so that you can check to see if I have understood you correctly.

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Flier

I would like to hear your THOUGHTS on SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

IF YOU ARE A SINGLE WOMAN,
18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER,
WITH A PROFESSIONAL/TECHNICAL DEGREE
(or with no degree at all),
BUT NO 4-YR COLLEGE DEGREE,

Please contact *Luciana Silva at (678) 778-0886 or at lsilva@uga.edu* for more information.

A $15 dollar Target gift certificate will be offered for completing this research study.

Appendix C: Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled "How Women Think About Sexual Violence," which is being conducted by Ms. Luciana C. Silva, from the Department of Child and Family Development at The University of Georgia (Ms. Silva can be contacted at 678-778-0886 or 706-542-3072), under the direction of Dr. David Wright also from the Department of Child and Family Development at The University of Georgia (Dr. Wright can be contacted at 706-542-4825). My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of women's fear of sexual violence and how this fear may influence how women view themselves and their lives, the issue of sexual violence, and their power to avoid or protect themselves from this type of crime. The primary focus of this study is on things women do to protect themselves from rape and sexual violence in general and how these strategies affect women's fear of sexual assault.

I will not benefit directly from this research. I understand that the findings of this study will be used to improve researchers, therapists, and other professionals' knowledge about how sexual assault affect women's lives.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1. *Be interviewed twice on the subject of sexual violence and how I think it relates to myself. Both interviews will occur over the course of approximately one month and both interviews will be audio taped. Interviews will last between one hour and one and a half hours.*
2. *Keep a journal for one week (seven days) about all my thoughts, experiences, feelings, comments, etc, relating to sexual violence and the topics I talked about in my first interview. The researcher will contact me after seven days to make arrangements to get the journal from me.*
3. *To read over the researcher's thoughts and interpretations of what I told her during my interviews and in my journal, and discuss with the researcher any disagreements I may have with her interpretations or any thoughts and comments regarding how to improve her work.*

If I complete all interviews and keep a journal for a total of seven days, I will receive a $15 gift certificate to Target. Should I stop participating in the study before all interviews and journal are completed, I will not receive any part of this gift certificate.

The researchers do not foresee any risks to me for participating in this study, but I may experience some discomfort over the course of this study. I may face discomfort or stress regarding talking and thinking extensively about sexual violence, what I think of it, how I think it may affect my life, and how I deal with this fear. There are no expected risks from participation in this study. Should I experience any discomfort or stress and would like to talk to a professional, I may call McPhaul Family Therapy Clinic at (706) 542-4486 or Samaritan Counseling at (706) 369-7911. I understand these agencies provide individual and family therapy for the community. If I need immediate attention I can call Advantage Behavioral Health at 1-800-715-4225 or The Sexual Assault Center of Northeast Georgia at (706) 353-1912. Should I have any questions or concerns regarding this study or any part of it I may contact Ms. Silva at (678) 778-0886 or (706) 542-3072. I may also contact Dr. David Wright, Ms. Silva's advisor, at (706) 542-4825.

Any individually-identifiable information about me and/or other participants will be kept confidential. An exception to confidentiality involves information revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse which must be reported as required by law or if the researchers are

required to provide information by a judge. While interviews will be audiotaped, these tapes will remain locked away and the researchers named above will be the only ones who will have access to these tapes. All identifying information will be removed from the transcript of these tapes. The tapes and a master list with all participants' names and contact information will be kept through the end of this research study, after which these materials will be destroyed. No identifying information will be used in the manuscript of this research project.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (678) 778-0886 or 706-542-3072.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Researcher: Luciana C. Silva

Telephone: (678) 778-0886 or (706) 542-3072

Email: lsilva@uga.edu

Luciana Silva
Researcher Name   *Researcher Signature*   *Date*

Participant Name   *Participant Signature*   *Date*

Appendix D: Consent Form for Phone Interviews

You agree to take part in a research study titled "How Women Think About Sexual Violence," which is being conducted by Ms. Luciana C. Silva, from the Department of Child and Family Development at The University of Georgia (Ms. Silva can be contacted at 678-778-0886 or 706-542-3072), under the direction of Dr. David Wright also from the Department of Child and Family Development at The University of Georgia (Dr. Wright can be contacted at 706-542-4825). Your participation is voluntary; you can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. You can ask to have information related to you returned to yourself, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of women's fear of sexual violence and how this fear may influence how women view themselves and their lives, the issue of sexual violence, and their power to avoid or protect themselves from this type of crime. The primary focus of this study is on things women do to protect themselves from rape and sexual violence in general and how these strategies affect women's fear of sexual assault.

Your will not benefit directly from this research. Your understand that the findings of this study will be used to improve researchers, therapists, and other professionals' knowledge about how sexual assault affect women's lives.

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

4. *Be interviewed twice on the subject of sexual violence and how you think it relates to yourself. Both interviews will occur over the course of approximately one month and both interviews will be audio taped. Interviews will last between one hour and one and a half hours.*
5. *Keep a journal for one week (seven days) about all your thoughts, experiences, feelings, comments, etc, relating to sexual violence and the topics you talked about in your first interview. The researcher will contact you after seven days to make arrangements to get the journal from you.*
6. *To read over the researcher's thoughts and interpretations of what you told her during your interviews and in your journal, and discuss with the researcher any disagreements you may have with her interpretations or any thoughts and comments regarding how to improve her work.*

If you complete all interviews and keep a journal for a total of seven days, you will receive a $15 gift certificate to Target. Should you stop participating in the study before all interviews and journal are completed, you will not receive any part of this gift certificate.

The researchers do not foresee any risks to you for participating in this study, but you may experience some discomfort over the course of this study. You may face discomfort or stress regarding talking and thinking extensively about sexual violence, what you think of it, how you think it may affect your life, and how you deal with this fear. There are no expected risks from participation in this study. Should you experience any discomfort or stress and would like to talk to a professional, you may find a certified individual or family therapist in your area on the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy website at **www.aamft.org**. *If you need immediate attention you can call your local hospital, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK, or you may call The National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or any part of it you may contact Ms. Silva at (678) 778-0886 or (706) 542-3072. You may also contact Dr. David Wright, Ms. Silva's advisor, at (706) 542-4825.*

Any individually-identifiable information about you and/or other participants will be kept confidential. An exception to confidentiality involves information revealed concerning suicide,

homicide, or child abuse which must be reported as required by law or if the researchers are required to provide information by a judge. While interviews will be audiotaped, these tapes will remain locked away and the researchers named above will be the only ones who will have access to these tapes. All identifying information will be removed from the transcript of these tapes. The tapes and a master list with all participants' names and contact information will be kept through the end of this research study, after which these materials will be destroyed. No identifying information will be used in the manuscript of this research project.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (678) 778-0886 or 706-542-3072.

Do you have any questions for the researchers? [Answer any questions] Your verbal consent indicates that the researchers have answered all of your questions to your satisfaction and that you consent to volunteer for this study.

Name of Researcher: Luciana C. Silva

Telephone: (678) 778-0886 or (706) 542-3072

Email: lsilva@uga.edu

Participant _____'s verbal consent attained over the telephone, on _____2007 by Luciana Silva.

_____
Witness Signature (Interviewer)

Additional questions regarding your rights as a research participant or in the event of a research related injury should be addressed to The IRB Chairperson, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu