



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

“I feel more like a superhero”

A Narrative Analysis of Victimization and Agency in Relation
to Experiences of Sexual Assaults

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Author: Frida Stjernholm

Supervisor: Elin Lundsten

Abstract

Rape is in many contexts considered being the worst thing that can ever happen to a person and is supposed to result in a life-long trauma. But there is a gap between those who are constructing this discourse and the ones that are being victimized. In this thesis I have interviewed four women who have experienced sexual assaults. We have had conversations about how they negotiate this victimization. For all of the women the assaults lie several years back in time. For my analysis, I have used narrative theory and method in relation to the concepts of victimization, agency and identity. By using this framework I have analysed the storytelling of the informants' experiences in the specific interview situation. The narratives show that several years after the assaults the informants do not consider the assaults being the worst thing that have happened to them. They have all developed different strategies in order to dis-identify with this victimization. The informants request an understanding of the victim concept that gives an opportunity to be considered both active and passive at the same time. This understanding can be enabled by the concept of agency. One way of making resistance to the contemporary discourse and to challenge the victimization of people who have experienced sexual assaults can be to reclaim the socio-structural understanding of being a victim.

Keywords: Sexual assaults, Rape, Victim, Victimization, Agency, Identity, Narrative Analysis

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Introduction

Own experiences of rape are rarely given room in the debate. However, the experiences of others are often described. The lack of rape survivors in the rape debate is probably saying something about the stigma. Rape should be about them, not about us. (Svensson & Chamberland; 2015, my translation)

The words above come from the introduction to a newly published book in Sweden called *Allt som är mitt: Våldtäkt, Stigmatisering, Upprättelse* (*Everything that is mine: Rape, Stigmatization, Redress*: Chamberland & Svensson 2015). In this book, the contemporary preconceptions of rape victims are discussed and the lifelong victimization of people who have these experiences is problematized. The aim with this book is to open up for a new way of discussing post-rape lives.

The authors are in the quote above highlighting a norm that is prominent in the discourse of rape – that people without experiences of rape talk on behalf of people who have these experiences. A researcher within Cultural Studies, Carine Mardorossian, is confirming this norm (2002). She argues that there is a gap between incapacitated rape victims and politicized feminists who speak for them. This gap leads to an oppositional view of victimization and agency (Mardorossian 2002).

The release of *Allt som är mitt* (Svensson & Chamberland 2015) signifies that the discussion about agency connected to rape victims is progressive in Sweden right now. A newly published article written by a researcher within Modern Language, Kathryn Robson, that advocates rape trauma as a kind of resistance, is showing that within feminist research these questions are also really up to date (Robson 2015). My interest is therefor raised to investigate a within academia highly requested theoretical approach concerning the discourse of rape – agency and resistance against victimization – and I want to do it in a Swedish context. (Mardorossian 2002, Robson 2015) My method for this investigation will be by analyzing narratives of people's storytelling of their own experiences of sexual assaults.

My curiosity regarding these questions was raised because of my own experiences of rape. Because of these experiences I, together with my informants, can get prevail to our own storytelling and by this very study contribute to a resistance against victimization of people who share these experiences (Mardorossian 2002).

People who, as myself, want to challenge the view of victims of rape inspire me. For example, I fell in love with the book *King Kong Theory* by Virginie

Despentes (2009). Despentes is questioning the demonization of the persecutors as well as the victimization of the exposed subjects. She argues that the demonization of the persecutors results in a misidentification from someone who have raped. Because men condemn rape and despise rapists. What they do is always something else.

Despentes writes:

So, how shall we explain the fact that you hardly hear the other side of the story: “I raped so and so, on this day, in these circumstance”? Because men are still doing what women learned to do centuries ago: call it something else, euphemise, beautify it; above all not using *that* word to describe what they’ve done.”

This phenomenon of not using the word is something Despentes argues also is common among exposed subjects. She takes her own experience as an example – it took several years before she started to use the term about her own experience. It was when someone she knew was raped she started to think about her own experiences as rape as well.

One reason for this, Despentes argues, is that as soon as the concept of rape is brought into the discourse there are a lot women-controlling mechanisms starting to sweep in to your mind. These mechanisms are for example understandings of rape as the worst thing that can ever happen to you (Helliwell 2000). Rape is supposed to lead to a lifelong trauma, fear of men and disgust for sex. It’s one of the most stigmatized crimes that you can both commit and be exposed to (Despentes 2009). This is, according to Despentes, why neither perpetrators nor survivors of rape are talking about their experiences - it’s something shameful and horrifying.

Another important contribute to the challenging of dichotomies considering rape crime is the twitter campaign *#prataomdet* (*#talkaboutit*) which was started by the Swedish writer and journalist Johanna Koljonen in the end of 2010. This campaign put focus on the so called grey zones when it comes to sexual assaults and was an answer to the discussion that circulated in the autumn 2010 about the accusations of sex crime against Julian Assange. In the campaign Koljonen told her story about sex in the grey zone, followed by a wave of other stories and media attention. All these stories from the grey zone challenge the dichotomization between those who are considered victims of sexual assaults and those who are not. It also challenges the preconception of who can be a perpetrator.

My aim with this thesis is to contribute to this feminist attempts both inside and outside of academia to challenge dichotomies concerning rape crimes. My research questions are: How do the informants negotiate their experiences of victimization in relation to the contemporary discourse of rape? How do these experiences affect their identification/dis-identification with being a victim of sexual assaults?

These research questions are highly relevant for Gender Studies. Mardorossian is claiming that sexual violence has become the taboo subject of feminist theory today (Mardorossian 2002). There are also several researchers within feminist theory that argues for the need of mediating theoretical frameworks when understanding rape (Lamb 2009, Gavey & Schmidt 2011), something that I will give an account to when discussing previous research and my theoretical approaches. There is also a gap between incapacitated rape victims and politicized feminists who speak for them within feminist research (Mardorossian 2002).

What I can contribute with, that is relevant for the field of Gender Studies is to reduce this gap between rape victims and who's speaking for them by giving an account to my own experiences of rape and the ones of my informants. I will also continue the ongoing attempts to use mediating concepts for understanding rape by examining what happens when I use the concept of agency in narrative analyses and to bring the subject of rape into the feminist theoretical discussion.

Structure of the Thesis

I will start this thesis by giving an account to the Swedish context of how health care is organized regarding people who have experienced sexual assaults. The reason for this account is to understand what the dominating discourse concerning rape victims is within the organizational structures that rape victims are referred to and depending on when in need of help. This discourse is an important part of how people with experiences of sexual assaults are treated. This treatment can contribute to their understanding of the assaults (Robson 2015).

After this account to the Swedish context I will dig deeper into previous research about sexuality and rape. My focus in this review will be on research that is discussing the challenging of dichotomies in relation to this field of study. My aim with this demarcation is to enable this thesis to get into dialogue with previous research and be a contribution that is topical.

In relation to previous research I will argue for my theoretical approach and the methodology that I choose to use in this thesis. Then I will present the narratives of my informants. These narratives will be followed by an analysis grounded in the theoretical frameworks. Finally I will make an overall discussion about my research process and discuss possible continual development of the field.

Organized Support to Rape Victims in Sweden

If you experience sexual assault in Sweden there are several help centers you can turn to, most of them tied to the umbrella organizations Unizon and ROKS (Riksorganisationen för kvinnojourer och tjejjourer i Sverige). The most prominent organization that provides a lot of information on the subject of sexuality in Sweden is RFSU (Riksorganisationen för sexuell upplysning) I choose to examine these organizations' material both for self-help and for their guidance to staff that meet people who have experienced sexual assaults.

Help to Self-help

The support that is provided by Unizon and ROKS are shelters for people who have experienced any kind of violence in a close relationship. On their webpages all information is therefore mainly focusing on this kind of violence in general, not specifically sexual violence. On Unizon's webpage there is a little text about sexual violence (<http://unizon.se/mans-vald-mot-kvinnor/sexuellt-vald>). This text however contains statistics and definition of what sexual violence is. Here is no information about how you can feel after an assault. On ROKS's webpage I can't find anything specifically about sexual violence (<http://www.roks.se>). There might be information of this type on specific shelter's own webpages but my time doesn't allow me to search through everyone of these.

On RFSU's webpage there's a section of information about rape (<http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Sex--relationer/Vald-och-overgrepp/Valdtakt>). In this section there is a little part about reactions after rape. Here it's described that fear, shock and confusion are very common feelings. It's also stated that it's important to talk about what has happened and that you have right to help and support if you have experienced rape. The sentence before the part about reactions is pointing out that you have the right to your own body and that when you have sex it's supposed to feel

good and that you always have the right to change your mind. In the text that is focusing on before the rape you are hence given agency and described as an active subject that have the right to your own body – you can say yes and you can say no. But as soon as the rape is a fact you have become a non-sexual being and all focus is taken away from sexuality to your supposed mental illness and your need of support and help. These formulations seem to be based upon the expectations that you're not supposed to want to have sex after you have experienced rape. Fear, shock and confusion are all feelings that might occur after assaults and are important to highlight. But what about those who doesn't react in this way? And what about possible concerns about sexuality? Where is the sexual agency for people who have experienced sexual assault?

On these organizations' webpages there are not much guidance about sex after assaults and when it comes to physiological help you are recommended a physical contact with someone from the organization or a therapist. People who have experienced sexual assaults are hence primarily referred to treating personnel, perhaps mainly psychologists. Therefore it's interesting to see what guidance this personnel gets in order to meet their patients' needs.

Guidance to Treating Personnel

National center for protection of women gave in 2008, on behalf of the Swedish Government, out a national action program for health care treatment of victims of sexual abuse (NCK 2008). In this manual, the course an exposed person should be able to expect in their meeting with the Swedish health care is carefully described. This both from their own health needs but not least, based on a legal perspective since healthcare should ensure the forensic findings and write the forensic medical reports, which may help police in their investigation and prosecution in a trial. The chapter related to crisis counseling and psychosocial follow-up is very short, only two pages of totally 100. Besides stressing the importance of providing crisis management and therapy support is referred to from the private sector and voluntary organizations such as RFSU the Red Cross or shelters offered by Unizon or ROKS.

It is also from the voluntary sector there is produced other materials for guidance within psychosocial care. *Våldtagen – en handbok I att möta utsatta kvinnor (Raped - a handbook in meeting vulnerable women)* is published by RFSU

(Hedlund & Bleicher 2005). *Jag kallade det aldrig för våldtäkt (I never called it rape)* is published by ROKS (Grände 2005). It is in these texts there is a possibility for support for therapists how to work with raped women. I write women here, because in the material it's constantly the pronoun that is used, with a short passage that men are also exposed, but that the reactions regardless sex are basically the same.

In RFSU's text sexuality is mentioned shortly under a heading of possible reactions in the longer term. It's stated that some women can have sexual difficulties. The major space under this heading, however, is focusing on any feelings of sexual inadequacy or discomfort within a *partner* to the person who has experienced sexual assaults – not the exposed person (Hedlund & Bleicher 2005). In the material from ROKS, sexuality is given larger space, containing examples of how the therapist can ask questions about it (Grände 2005).

In a national survey conducted in 2006 it was stated that there are significant differences in the health- and medical treatment of people who has experienced sexual assaults (Öberg et al. 2010). The treatment is usually based in local guidelines “which left it open for the health center, and therefore individuals, to interpret the patient's need of investigation, documentation and securing evidence” (Öberg et al. 2010, my translation). Although the text appears to refer mainly to the medical treatment it may be assumed that the same type of difference in treatment can be found in the psychosocial part of the care process.

As a summary of the documents highlighted for psychosocial treatment of people who have experienced rape one can say that what's central in this material is emergency treatment and treatment of PTSD symptoms (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Sexuality is mentioned in lower grade and sexological competence within the treating personnel is not mentioned at all.

This means that people who have experienced sexual assaults in Sweden is basically left on their own to handle any internal conflict regarding sexuality and sexual practices - or are dependent on the individual skills of the staff they encounter in healthcare or with NGOs.

Review of Research on Sexuality and Rape

I have chosen to highlight previous research that in different ways relates to the theoretical approach I have chosen to bring into this thesis. Therefor all of the

research presented below is qualitative studies that concern victimization and sexual agency in relation to the contemporary discourse of sexuality and rape. By doing so I hope to get an understanding of what preconceptions victims of sexual assaults meet every day. I also bring into this chapter research that criticize the contemporary discourse and is asking for another way of understanding rape, without current dichotomies.

A lot of quantitative research has been done about rape and it's psychological consequences during the first years after the assaults. The psychologists van Berlo and Ensink have for example made a review of research relating to sexual functioning the first year after sexual violence (2000). This is very interesting and important research relating to the field of sexuality. In order to delineate what I bring up regarding previous research within the field, I will however focus on research related to qualitative research with a theoretical approach that is connected to the ones I will use in this thesis.

Sexual Agency Framed by Socio-structural Contexts

A study made by two researchers within the field of law, justice and social change - Melissa Burkett and Karine Hamilton – is interesting concerning sexual agency (2012). According to their study standard models of sexual consent in sexual violence prevention campaigns suppose that women, as free and autonomous agents, are in control of their sexuality and are able to 'just say no' to unwanted sex. The writers criticize this liberal, easy-going discourse in the prevention campaigns. They do this in the light of socio-structural constraints of young women's sexual decision-making and point out that sexual agency is framed by socio-structural contexts.

In interviews with young women in Western Australia the researchers found that the informants' sexual encounters are influenced by gendered discourses and norms, which generate implicit pressures that disrupt their negotiations of consent (Burkett & Hamilton 2012). The informants struggle with the contradiction between their perceptions of women's natural rights to sexual agency and their vilification of their own and other women's inability to control their everyday sexual encounters with men. The researchers interpret this as a mixture of feminist and anti-feminist elements in women's view of themselves - they are at one hand empowered and on the other hand they continue to reproduce the terms of sexuality set by

heteronormative discourses.

The conclusion made in the article is that although the blatant denigration of women is no longer acceptable, somehow it is women themselves who are freely choosing to partake in practices that conform to traditional gender stereotypes. This is very interesting concerning sexual victimization and agency. This reveals that women are seen as agents concerning their own sexuality, yet experiencing themselves as a kind of victims for socio-structural contexts (Burkett & Hamilton 2012). This conforms with my analysis of material produced by Unizon, ROKS and RFSU in Sweden. They address people who have not experienced sexual assault agency, but it's an agency that in the material is taken away at the same moment the assaults are taking place (Grände 2005, Hedlund & Bleicher 2005).

A Need for a Wider Range of Terms

Nicola Gavey and Johanna Schmidt, both researchers within the field of psychology, made a study in New Zealand about the discourse around rape trauma (2011). The participants should preferably not have experienced rape themselves. The aim was instead to get an understanding of shared public understandings of rape through focus group conversations. Gavey and Schmidt are arguing that the current discourse of rape is constructed in opposition to the previous discourse that supported the idea that rape was harmless. The current discourse is surrounding ideas that rape results in a unique harm with a particular traumatic impact that will leave a person fearful, affect the ability to trust and to have good relationships, affect functioning in all areas of the person's life and to leave lifelong lasting vulnerabilities. However, research findings show that not all women who are raped experience these negative psychological consequences of rape, and for most of those who do, the distress will decrease over time (Frazier 2003, Koss & Figueredo 2004, referred to by Gavey & Schmidt 2011). These assumptions of consequences of rape, Gavey and Schmidt argues, leads to the universalizing normative discourse of rape as the worst thing that can happen to a person (Gavey & Schmidt 2011). This discourse can however, they argue, lead to victimization, stigmatization and othering of people who have experienced rape. Instead they advocate a logic that allows us to fully acknowledge the traumatizing potential of rape but not assume that everyone that has this experience gets a particular set of predictable psychological consequences (Gavey & Schmidt 2011).

They advocate a wider range of terms to talk about different kinds of harm that a rape can reveal. Especially since rape is a concept that itself contains a quite diverse range of experiences.

Is Rape Really Universal?

The Social Anthropologist Christine Helliwell questions the universalization of rape among western feminists (2000). She started question this when she realized that she took the occurrence of rape for granted in a social and cultural context profoundly different from her own and then noticed that women in that context did not fear rape. Helliwell points out two main reasons for this universalization.

The first reason is the understanding of the practice as horrific by most western feminists. Rape is in this context seen upon as a fate worse than death (Helliwell 2000). The sexuality is in many ways intermeshed with one's personal identity and we are being learned that for women this is the worst thing that can happen to you. As a subject to this fear, we tend to universalize rape as the worst thing that can happen to you.

The second reason, Helliwell argues is "Western feminism's emphasis on difference between men and women and from its consequent linking of rape and difference" (Helliwell 2000). It's the women who are frightened with the fate of being raped. Rape is regarded as a tool of signaling power and control, and as representatives of the dominant sex this is something men do towards the subdued sex, women. Rape is also very associated with penetration and tied to the heterosexualization of desire (Butler 1990). The masculine body is associated with hard, penetrative and aggressive sexuality – in contrast to the feminine sexuality, which is soft and vulnerable. There's a western tendency to distinguish between subject (man) and object (woman) as two dichotomies. A person is very seldom described as both a subject and an object at the same time. This is however challenged by the concept of agency (McNay 2004).

What Helliwell noticed was that in the society of Gerai in Indonesian Borneo there were no fear of rape as a phenomenon. In Gerai sameness between men and women are stressed more than difference. This includes sexuality. Women's sexuality and bodies are no less aggressive or vulnerable than men's (Helliwell 2000). Helliwell argues that in Gerai the dominant sex is expressing power in other ways than sexually,

in ways where difference between the sexes are more distinct. Therefore, other things than rape are frightening the women in this context.

Rape is hence something that might not exist as a threat in every society around the world. The thought that this is the worst thing that can happen to a female body is connected to western ideas of sexual difference between the sexes and the frequency of it's appearance. By challenging the universalization of rape western feminists can start to think about rape in other terms and with other perspectives and the victimization of people who have experienced sexual assault might be nuanced.

Critique of the Dichotomy of Subject/Object

In western feminist research there have been a resistance against the historically discourse of female sexuality as passive and the female body as an object that is a constant potential victim for abuse and victimization, claims Sharon Lamb, an American psychologist (Lamb 2009). In response to this the current ideals feminists and researchers, according to Lamb, emphasize desire, pleasure and subjectivity (Lamb 2009). Sharon Lamb is however criticizing these new ideals of female sexuality.

One of the critiques lifted is that the dichotomy between subject and object is reproduced. This dichotomy encourage women to be more "male" in order to the way male sexuality is understood in western culture. However, this dichotomy has not served men so well either, as they are supposed to always be ready and active (Matthew 2005, referred to by Lamb 2009). Also, the reproduction of these binary roles is presuming a heterosexual sexuality (Butler 1990).

What really should be done, Lamb argues, is to provide many different possible "roles one can take within a complex and changing sexual relationship that is mutual and respectful" (Lamb 2009). These many different roles provide the opportunity to be both a subject and an object, both active and passive, in different situations and perhaps with different partners. The ideals of desire, pleasure and subjectivity in resistance to female sexuality seen as passive are directed to a white, middleclass, and heterosexual femininity. This must be understood in opposition to for example how women of color and working class women historically have been considered sexually uncontrollable, dirty and bestial (Skeggs 1997). In my thesis I want to continue the critique that Lamb has started concerning the dichotomies of subject and object,

focusing on the target group people who have experienced sexual assaults.

Summary and Looking Ahead

The dominant discourse in Sweden about sexuality and rape is, as we for example can see from the material of RFSU and ROKS, to describe individuals either as victims or as agents (Hedlund & Bleicher 2005, Grände 2005). This way of understanding sexuality and rape is also confirmed by international studies discussed above completed by Gavey and Schmidt (2011) and Burkett and Hamilton (2012). But, as Lamb (2009) is arguing, individuals might struggle with internal conflicts and tensions that need another theoretical framework than these dichotomies. Helliwell also questions the western universalization of rape and the understanding of rape as the worst thing that can happen to you (Helliwell 2000).

The need within feminist research to understand rape in the frames of mediating concepts is something that I will examine the possibilities for in this thesis. I will do this by presenting narratives of people who have experienced sexual assaults and analyze them through the concepts of victimization, agency and relational identity.

Theoretical Frames

In this master's thesis I will contribute to the feminist research about sexuality and rape by using mediating theories, grounded in the concepts of victimization and agency. I will also contribute to the feminist research about post-rape life and how individuals understand themselves in relation to these experiences. I will do this by using narrative analyses.

Analysis of Narratives

I am interested in the storytelling about experiences of sexual assaults in relation to the social context in which they appear. Therefore I choose to use narrative theory and method when presenting my interviews. This way of presenting the material is crucial for the way understanding of how individuals construct their identities in relation to their experiences (Chase 2011). Working with narratives in this way means that my theoretical approach is very closely related to my methodology and is integrating with one another through the whole thesis.

The narrative researcher Susan Chase split the studying of narratives into three different forms of analyses (2011). The first form is focusing on the relation between the story and the experience, often without applying theoretical frameworks and analysis or relates to the local context – the basis here is that the material speaks for itself. The second form is focusing on the way people tell things, with an interest on communicative mechanisms and strategies in a local context – the analysis is more about the way things are told than the content. The third form is focusing on storytelling as a social practice in which the storyteller is constructing identities and experiences – often contradictory and changing. In this form of studying a narrative there are possibilities of both identifying and explore resistance against dominant cultural understandings (Chase; 2011). This third form of studying narratives is the one I will use by analyzing the narratives in relation to my specific theoretical framework.

What I will examine is stories about individual's experiences of victimization in relation to sexual assaults. The understanding of the concept of experiences can be understood in three different levels: life, experience and storytelling (Johansson 2014). A person's life is what actually happens to a person. Experience is what the person brings with them from this life, colored by subjective interpretations, feelings and thoughts about what happened. The third level is the storytelling of the experiences. These stories are constructed by the interaction between the storyteller and the listener and the context in which the story is being told (Johansson 2014). It's therefor impossible to capture people's experiences as they occurred, but nor is it the purpose. The purpose in my thesis is to analyze the storytelling of the experiences of victimization in relation to sexual assaults.

But there is also a fourth and fifth level to the narrative in this thesis. The fourth is the material that is shaped when I as a researcher transform the oral stories to written text and the way I choose to edit the quotes to make them readable, which I will describe in the chapter below. The fifth level in the understanding of my informants' experiences is when I translate the referred material and the quotes to English, even though they are told in Swedish.

All of these five levels of understanding experiences will be present in the way I write each narrative and when I'm analyzing them thematically in relation to the theoretical concepts that are presented above.

When using narrative analysis I will begin to present my interviews as

separate narratives. My aim with this is to be transparent about the interview situation and my part of the conversation as an interviewer, how my presence affects the conversation and what's being said. It's in the meeting between the informant and me they decide what experiences they want to share. With another researcher interviewing, asking the questions in different ways and with different pre-understandings of sexual assault, the things the informant would choose to share would be different – and also interpreted in a different way (Haraway 1988).

I will go through three phases in relation to the stories that will be my material for analysis. These phases are:

Phase One - Preparing

The analyzing work I have made has gone through three stages.

The first phase is preparation for the interviews. In the light of my research question I chose three themes from which the interview should be based in. I asked the informants to read three articles based upon this theme. This phase is also during the interview conversation when I'm asking different following questions based upon how I interpret the situation and what the informant is telling me.

Phase Two - Transcribing

The second phase is during the transcribing. I made the transcribing work very carefully, writing down every pause and words that expressed thinking and insecurity within the informant. I also wrote down situations where either the informant or me started to laugh or when we laughed together. I did this because while transcribing I did not know what I later on in the analyzing process would find interesting or not. By being very careful in this second phase I could have more options in my interpreting phase. The quotes that I finally chose to write into the thesis are edited in order to make them easily readable and understandable.

Phase Three – Interpreting

This phase is the most comprehensive one. This is where I interpret the material in relation to my theoretical framework, previous research and my research questions. This is where I format the narratives and compare the content of the interviews with each other. I chose to focus on these questions:

1. What are the themes in the storytelling? What is the informant telling me

about?

2. What is pointed out as particularly important for the informant?
3. Are there any contradictions in the narrative? Which are those, and what do they mean?
4. Are there any surprises or turning points in the narrative? Which are those and what do they mean?
5. What is the context of the narrative? Both the context of when the informants got the experiences they are talking about, but also the context in which they are telling them. How have the person changed since they got the experiences and how does this affect the narrative?

Mediating Concepts

When analyzing the narratives I will use three main concepts for understanding the material. These three concepts are victimization, agency and identity.

Victimization

Sharon Lamb is, as is presented above, arguing that the current feminist ideals of desire, pleasure and subjectivity is an antithesis to the second wave radical feminist standpoint that rape is an instrument of oppression (Lamb 2009) Nicola Gavey is in her book *Just Sex? The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape* making a description of how radical feminists argued that there could be no mutuality in heterosexual sex and the alternative must be political lesbianism (Gavey 2005). All men were considered potential rapists and rape was primarily connected to violence, power and dominance of the female sex. But if we acknowledge that women also can rape men, we are challenging the dominant gender stereotypes that undermine this view upon heterosexuality. If we, on the other hand do *not* consider it to be a possibility for women to be perpetrators, we are reproducing the stereotyped cultural understanding of women's sexuality as vulnerable and men's sexuality as aggressive (Gavey 2005). This makes the radical feminist view upon rape problematic.

The professor in English Carine Mardorossian however claims that there is a great potential for resistance within the second wave feminism. She argues that sexual violence has become the taboo subject of feminist theory in contemporary feminist research (2002). She claims that this has to do with how we understand victimization.

According to Mardorossian, the contemporary interpretation of the concept of victim is that it's someone who is passive, incapacitated and powerless. However, she argues, this was not the case in the 1970's during the second wave. Instead of being passive, women started demonstrating in mass against rape and battery. Being a victim of rape at this time meant being a determined and angry agent of change (Mardorossian 2002). Mardorossian claims that since then, feminist anger and activism has been radically disarticulated from the victimization that started such a reaction in the first place. Instead there has been a development of an oppositional view of victimization and agency. Also in the media, the picture of a woman who has experienced sexual violence is simply victimizing, erasing their visible agency (Mardorossian 2002). In contemporary discourse, victims are represented as irremediably shaped by the traumatic experience of rape and hence incapable of dealing with anything else. There is a gap between incapacitated victims and politicized feminists who speak for them. Mardorossian claims that the second wave showed us that victims had the capacity to act and organize despite dealing with any psychological effects of rape. It's hence only when the concept of victim is associated with passivity that identifying oneself as a victim leads to a contradiction.

What Mardorossian is aiming for, she explains, is not to promote a standpoint theory, but to advocate "collective sites of democratic enunciation" (Mardorossian 2002). She claims that the discourse of victimization in relation to rape today seem to have more to do with the person's inner self than the criminal act that brought it about. A victim is now someone who needs to be helped, taken care of, counseled, talked about and spoken for rather than assured decision-making power and opportunities. Mardorossian hence advocate a reconceptualization of the concept of victimization and it's meaning, without an opposition between passivity and agency.

Lamb, Gavey and Mardorossian are all criticizing dichotomies in understanding of female sexuality – either as autonomous subjects or as passive objects and constant potential victims (Lamb 2009, Gavey 2005, Mardorossian 2002). Even if they have different ways of understanding the second wave's view upon rape and sexuality, I see potential in bringing their critique into a common theoretical approach that enable a mediating understanding of individuals as both subjects and object, active and passive, at the same time. Reclaiming the concept of victimization as a source to resistance against passivation can do this.

Agency

I will in this thesis use the concept agency as the mediating concept between dichotomies such as passive/active. When giving an account to the concept of agency I will use the expression of experience as I have presented it above in relation to narrative analysis – as something a person brings with them, colored by subjective interpretations, feelings and thoughts about what happened (Johansson 2014). A professor in Theory of Politics, Lois McNay, understands agency as something that is developed by what we experience through the body (Chase 2011, McNay 2004). She argues that an idea of experience is essential to an account of agency, but that it must be understood in relational terms between identity and social structures.

McNay claims that structural forces only reveal themselves in the experience of social relations. Individuals are never situated in only one social structure but several, such as gender, racial or ethnic oppression (McNay 2004). Agency is a mediating category through which the experiences of the connections and conflicts between these structures can be understood in relation to identity formations. The idea of agency can enable an understanding of why some individuals act in some circumstances rather than others and why some individuals rather than others act in the same circumstances. Agency refers to an individual's capacity for action in relation to their identity formations as well as experiences of social structures. This necessarily involves negotiations of inner conflicts and tensions (McNay 2004)

Agency is a concept that enables an insight to how you understand yourself as a subject in relation to social structures. It can be seen as a form of resistance to being a victim of structures (McNay 2004). McNay argues that the concept of agency can be used for examining the way individuals make sense of the inner conflicts that structures their lives. This is hence a concept that I will use together with victimization when I analyze the narratives of my informants. I will do it when talking with my informants about their experiences in relation to the contemporary discourse of victimization of people who have experienced sexual assaults.

Identity

I will in my thesis also use the concept of identity when discussing how the informants understand themselves in relation to victimization and agency. Kathryn Robson, researcher within Modern Languages, inspires my understanding of the concept of identity. As an opposition to the autonomous identity that Burkett and

Hamilton discovered in sexual violence prevention campaigns (2012) Robson promote a view of identity as something relational (Robson 2015). In a newly published article she is discussing the contemporary feminist discourses of rape in France (2015). Robson is basing her discussion in Luce Irigaray's argument that rape should be considered not a crime, as if it concerned an entity or a possession, but an attack on an embodied subject ((Irigaray 2000, referred to by Robson 2015). This recognition of the subject, Robson argues, opens up for a shift from a focus on the individual as autonomous to an identity that can be seen as relational, created in relation with other people (Robson 2015). By doing this, we can get a new understanding of the importance of sharing stories of trauma, for example during therapy. Instead of trying to be autonomous, and at the same time viewing victims of rape as silent and speaking on their behalf, we can see traumas, such as rape, as a scar (Robson 2015). A scar that in many ways is covered up, but not completely healed and forgotten, with constant possibilities of future rupture. A scar is something that in everyday life doesn't hurt or that we don't think about. The scar from a rape trauma can be respected as a sign of vulnerability but also a potential source of resistance and transformation. Viewing traumas, such as rape, as a scar allows persons to reject the likelihood of complete healing but still refuse to define themselves as timeless victims. In this way we can see resistance to rape not only as something defensive, but also as something relational – a person with experiences of rape can support others in a relationship that emerges from the common experiences (Robson 2015).

In relation to this view of identity as relational, I will use Beverly Skeggs, professor in Sociology, way of talking about dis-identification. Skeggs has examined how working class women in England position themselves and are positioned by dominant conceptions of femininity (Skeggs 1997). She argues that these women are positioned as the Other by the stereotypes of working class femininity and sexuality. To deal with this the women strive against respectability in the eyes of the middle class - to pass as middle class. But at the same time they retain a strong sense of injustice of their social and economic positioning. This means that the women both identify and dis-identify with their class position and this lead to both insider- and bodily experienced conflicts and tensions. I argue that this identification and dis-identification with the position of the Other are relevant not only regarding class but also regarding sexuality. I would like to use the theory of identification and dis-identification in the light of how individuals who have been victims of sexual assault

understand themselves in relation to victimization and agency.

Relating the Theories to This Study

The research questions to this thesis are how the informants negotiate their experiences of victimization in relation to the contemporary discourse of rape and how this affects their identity of being a victim of sexual assaults.

The connection between the understanding of experiences and storytelling in relation to victimization, agency and identity is central in my analysis. I will use all of these concepts as developed in relation to socio-structural contexts. The context, which I discuss with my informants, is the Swedish contemporary discourse of rape.

I will now give an account to my course of action when writing this thesis.

Methodological and Ethical Concerns and Possibilities

Situating Myself

One of the main reasons for writing this thesis is my own experience of sexual assaults. These experiences position me as one inside the target group for my research, but since I'm in the power position of the researcher I'm at the same time an outsider (Zavos & Biglia 2009). This double position offers problematic aspects as well as unique opportunities.

Some of the problems with this position are that my pre-understandings of the subject are influencing the way I interpret things, as well as the way I'm asking questions on. But on the other hand, a researcher's pre-understanding of a subject is always coloring the research process and the results (Haraway 1988). The most important thing is that I as a researcher am transparent in my approach to the field of study and towards my informants, as well as with the methods I am using while writing this thesis.

The possibilities with my experiences are that the conversation between my informants and me can result in them telling things that might not be told otherwise. This was made very clear in some situations during the interviews, where the conversation turned into new understandings for both the informant and me. My aim is to highlight these possibilities in the narratives of the interview situations.

Material and Selection

Since I am a white, middleclass, well-educated woman living in Sweden's second greatest city, I'm aware that this influences my possibilities and limits in finding informants. I have been thinking a lot about this during the process. I'm sure that this is one reason to why all of my informants share all of these identities. My efforts in finding diversity among my informants were mostly focusing on different gender identities. In order to find this, I spread the word on social media in different communities specifically for LGBTQ-persons. I also asked RFSL (National Association of the rights for homosexuals, bisexuals, transgenders and queers) for help, who advertised in several of their social media channels as well as in newsletters. I also asked some of my friends who are transgender to spread the information in different transgender communities. Despite my efforts, all of the individuals that contacted me defined themselves as cis-women. With cis-women I mean women who have been assigned the sex female, are gendered as female and also identify themselves as female. I have been thinking a lot about why my efforts of finding people with different gender identities still resulted in four cis-women, and I think that this could be the case for several reasons. One reason might be my own identity as a cis-woman and that I'm therefore expressing myself in a way that attracts other cis-women. Another possible reason can be that the stereotype for people who have experiences of sexual assaults are cis-women, and therefore they might be more comfortable with participating in this kind of study.

I was very worried that it would be difficult finding participants to my study, because of the sensitive subjects I wanted to talk about. I decided to start by advertising for informants on social media and in different networks upon social media, such as Facebook groups directed to people with special interests and/or identities. I also contacted people who I figured could help me spread the words in different networks where I had no access. My aim was, as I mentioned above, to have participants with different gender identities. My goal was to have four participants who identified themselves as people who had experienced sexual assaults, in different ways. However, I wanted the assaults to have taken place several years back in time. My advertisements at different social media networks resulted in three participants. I also had contact with two more persons who later on decided not to participate. I repeated my advertisements in some of the networks and then finally the last

participant contacted me. All of these identified themselves as women. This was not what I had wanted from the beginning, but I realized that I had to rethink and do the best I could with the informants I had succeeded gathering.

Since I advertised on social media I realize that some people are excluded from my invitation of joining the focus group. People who don't use social media such as Facebook are excluded from my thesis. I imagine that this primarily affects the age range of my participants. I chose to use this method anyway, since I needed to find participants quite fast and it also gave the possibility to quickly reach out to different networks using social media.

My efforts to find participants hence resulted in four people in the age between 25 and 36. The assaults lie several years back in time for all of the informants, which was my aim. The time range that has passed for the informants since the assaults is between five and 30 years. The participants are quite homogeneous. All of them define themselves as women. All of them have higher education from a university. All of them have white skin. Three of them have a heterosexual identity and one of them identify herself as a lesbian. All of them are visibly able bodied. All of my participants are hence very like me in many ways. I'm aware that this affects the results in this study in many ways. It means that the only group I can say anything about is white, well educated, able bodied women in their twenties. Still – I think this in many ways is representative for the people represented in the media as rape victims (Svensson & Chamberland 2015) So I think that if these women get the possibility to talk about their experiences and feelings of identity, it will be a good start that can be developed over time.

Interviews as a Method

My first idea was to use a focus group for my interviews. By using a focus group I imagined that I could be able to discuss things in a different way than in a one to one interview. I believed that discussing in a safe space in a little group could give more back to the participants than an ordinary one to one interview (Montell 1999). In a group the participants could get the chance to interact with each other, which can provide a more complex data and at the same time give me as a researcher the possibility to observe the interactions of the participants. This means I did not need a straight answer to specific questions but that I could use open-ended questions and the

participants could build their answers upon each other's responses. This means my own expectations on the answers did not have to be so clear, imposing my own definitions or subtly directing the answers based on my own expectations (Montell 1999).

I noticed however that it was impossible for all my informants to gather at the same time. This made me reconsider my method and think about how I could gain the most from a one to one interview instead. There were nothing in my aim and research question that hindered me from doing one to one interviews – it was just I thought it would be a dynamic way of getting a conversation flowing without too much of me directing what's being said.

I decided to do interpretative reflexive interviews instead. My premises for these interviews are that knowledge is not something that exists but something that is being created in processes where different thoughts clashes and are confronted with each other (Thomsson 2002). This means that I as a researcher have the aim to interpret what happens in the interview situation in a critical way and also that my aim is to let thoughts clash between the informant and me in the actual interview. In this way I want to make it possible for us to talk about different ways of approaching the subject and how our own experiences color these approaches.

In reflexive investigations the transparency and clarity is crucial (Thomsson 2002). Reflexivity is a scientific requirement of complete insight in the research process and the methodological approaches – such as my own pre-understanding, my course of action and my way of giving account to the analysis. Since I as a researcher am a part of the knowledge production process I have to constantly situate myself, my role, my intentions and my own significance in relation to the study (Thomsson 2002).

My decision to do individual interviews opened up for the possibility of bringing narrative theory and method into the analysis. This is something that during the process of writing has come to be very central for my understanding of the interviews and my gathered material. My theoretical approach to the understanding of storytelling and experiences are crucial for my way of approaching the analysis (Johansson 2014).

My aim with this investigation is to have a critical approach to the reality that at first might seem obvious (Alvesson & Deetz 2000). I want to examine different ways of understanding and changing social conditions characterized by power hierarchies. I

hope that my interview material, the interpretative approach and a continuous self reflexivity will lead to deepened reasoning and understandings together with my informants (Thomsson 2002).

Talking About Sensitive Subjects in Research

To accomplish this study was for me both exciting and frightening. I was aware that by doing this, I would bring to life memories and strategies of coping with things in our lives that have been hard to deal with. I didn't know how this would impact either my informants or me. Would I be able to face my informants' experiences in relation to my own memories?

By participating in my study the informants were willing to take a risk. A risk of re-traumatization, vulnerability, loss of anonymity, feelings of shame and embarrassment. I wanted to in every way try to avoid any harm considering my participants. I found an article focusing on interviews concerning sensitive subjects (Beck & Britto 2006). This was very inspiring to me and I decided to try to use a kind of method in my interviews based upon the findings in this article.

First of all I wanted the interviews to take place in a for my informant safe place - for example in their own home. I wanted to create a confident and calm place for our dialogue. I also wanted the participants to feel safe with me as an interviewer and researcher and for them to be sure that their anonymity would be kept and that they were free to interrupt their participation at any time they wished.

I decided to make a checklist for each interview to make sure my interviews were held in an ethical way, inspired by Beck & Britto (2006). This checklist is the one following below:

- The interview will take place in one for the participant safe place. I will therefor let the informant choose place for the interview.
- The interview will be held as a kind of dialogue where we share experiences, feelings and thoughts. In this way the participant will hopefully feel empowered and not alone in their struggle.
- I strive to show empathy with my participants and their experiences.
- I will open up for a possibility for the participant to meet me before the interview and before they decide to participate in the study. I will also explain what the participants can expect out of the interview and what kind of

questions that will be discussed.

- I will strive to be nonjudgemental and reflexive listener in my role as interviewer.
- I will provide a sheet for further contact both to me and help centers for people who have experienced sexual assaults.
- After we have turned off the tape, we will have a short debrief about the interview, allowing the participants to talk about their feelings about the interview.
- I will make sure that I never leave my participants in a distressed state.
- My goal is to laugh with the participants before I leave them.
- A week after the interview I will contact the participant again to see how they're doing.

Even though I want to use this technique to reduce possibilities of harm I still must remember the power relations between my informants and me (Kvale 2006). Even though I want the interviews to be formatted more as a dialogue about certain topics than structured with questions and answers, I as a writer have the power to interpret and set the frames for the dialogue (Kvale 2006). I have been thinking a lot about how much I can involve the participants into the process of writing the thesis. One main reason for the difficulties of letting them have a major part in this is the participants' lack of time – as well as my lack of time as a researcher. I decided to ask each informant what participation they wanted after the interview but they all said that all they wanted was to read the thesis when it was done. I realized that they felt that they had completed their task after participating in the interview and that they considered the rest being up to me.

Strategies Used With All the Informants

Before each interview I had e-mail contact with the informants. I asked them if they wanted to meet up before the interview to see who I was, so that they would feel more confident with sharing deeply personal things with me. They all said that this was not necessary. One informant however, Sara, asked for some time before the recorded interview to tell things she might not feel comfortable doing in the actual interview but that might be important for me to know. Of course I agreed to this and I think that

this connection we made before starting recording was very important for her participation.

I started off each interview by telling the informant a bit about my own background of rape as well as my intentions with this study. I told the informant that I have experienced rape from one man during several years, but that this is now some years ago.

Before the interview I also handed a paper to the informants containing information about the study and that the informants are free to end the interview at any time and also contact information to an organization that offers help to people who have experienced sexual assault.

Some hours after the interview I contacted each informant either by sms or by e-mail and thanked them for their participation. I got a response from everyone where they all wrote that they have found the interview inspiring and interesting and thanked me for the conversation. One of the informants, Amanda, said that a lot of thoughts had started to come up and asked if she could email some additions if she felt that she wanted to. I said that she of course was welcome to do this! Amanda is hence the one that I have had most contact with after the interview.

Around one week after the interview I contacted each one of the informants again, this time asking if everything felt good about the interview situation, if they had any thoughts or feelings about it and also once again thanked them for their participation. All of the informants said that they were glad that they had participated and that they had gained new thoughts and perspectives after the interview that enriched them in several ways. This was very important for me to know, since I had been worried about bringing back tough memories for them. It was very important for me to make sure that my informants did not in any way feel distressed after the participation in the study.

Introduction to the Interview Situations

The interview context and the framings around it are affecting the storytelling and the narratives (Johansson 2014). I will therefor give an account to the structure of the interviews.

As a discussion basis for my interviews I chose three articles that I consider signifies the three themes I want to talk about with the participants in the study. The themes are:

- Recognition
- Shame and guilt
- Identity

The article I have chosen to the theme of recognition is aiming to be an example of how people who have experienced sexual assaults are portrayed in newspapers. *Lisa blev våldtagen av sin pojkvän* (Lisa was raped by her boyfriend) is taken from the independent liberal Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN). This article is about a twenty year old girl who got together with a guy in a relationship where the violence started gradually. The violence was both connected to rape as well as other situations. She reported him to the police and he got convicted. In the article Lisa describes it as if her life took a pause. She was diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression. Almost the whole article is about the violent situation in the relationship and the trial process. In the last paragraph of the article her life after the so-called pause in her life that these experiences resulted in for Lisa, is described – she now has a job and also work with spreading knowledge about rape. She also emphasizes that she's not a victim but that she has moved on. The article ends with a footnote that the newspaper has anonymized Lisa whose real name is something else.

The article I chose for the theme of shame and guilt is from a Swedish political blog called *Politism*. It's a left wing blog and I'm aware of this impact on how it's read and how this affects the conversations with the participants. I chose to use it because I wanted to discuss one specific argument the writer points out. The left wing arguments thus are a specific discussion subject for the conversation. The name of the blog post is *Vi beväpnar våldtäktsmännen* (We arm the rapists). It starts off in the documentary called *Indiens dotter* (The daughter of India) and combine the rape in the documentary with rape culture in a Swedish context. The Swedish example that is brought up is about young girls who were manipulated to send naked photos of themselves to a man who then continued to take advantage of the girls by threatening them to spread their photos. The writer makes the interpretation that just by threatening the girls; the abuses can go on, since girls are so afraid of the ambient condemnations and to be considered being branded as whores.

The third article used as a base for the interviews is called *Att vara våldtäktsoffer är inte en livslång identitet* (Being a rape victim is not a lifelong identity). This is a debate article written by two persons who themselves have experienced sexual assaults. The authors question the image that rape is the worst thing that can happen to a girl or a woman. They also question that someone who's been raped are supposed to act in a special way – if the behaviour doesn't follow a certain template the rape may be questioned or belittled. I used this article as a starting point for a conversation with my informants about both general identity as someone who has experienced sexual assault and about sexual identity. Since the writers of the article have a very specific opinion we also talked about if we agree or disagree with this.

Translating Narratives Into Another Language

This thesis is written in English. The interviews however were held in Swedish. This means that translations of our conversations must be done. During these translations there are room for interpretations and distortion based upon what words I use while translating. Language difficulties are prominent during the whole processes of transcribing, translating and analyzing. An interesting thing that I have noticed is that in the Swedish language it's very common to integrate English words into Swedish sentences. This is something that is relevant for the storytelling and how the informants understand their narratives. However, this way of telling something is not visible after a translation of all the material to English. When I use quotes where this has been the case I have therefor chosen to write this into the analysis. I have also chosen to write in other things that I found problematic considering working with two languages while writing the thesis.

One thing that I have found generally problematic and disturbing is that English is not my first language. This has in many ways affected my writing and the process of analyzing the material. I have stumbled over words and felt insecure in my role as a researcher and writer associated with language questions. To feel more secure in this matter I have asked friends who are better than me on the English language to read and comment my writing during the process. My aim with the transparency regarding the language challenges I have faced while writing this thesis is to increase my credibility as a researcher and to examine what these challenges

does with the narratives.

Central Words and the Using of Them

In the thesis I am using expressions and concepts concerning the experiences of my informants and me and also regarding people who have these experiences in general. I feel urged to explain why I choose to use some of these and not others.

Victim of sexual assaults – I choose to use the concept of victim since I feel that this is a concept in need for reclaiming, in accordance with Mardorossian (2002). This is also something my informants expressed a need of and a longing for. The possibility of being a victim but still considered as an active subject. I will also use the concept of being a victim when I refer to the actual crime situation, in the meaning of someone being a crime victim.

A person who has experienced sexual assault – I use this expression since this is the way my informants often talk about themselves in. They were not comfortable with the connotations of the concept victim and they also find that when time passes the sexual assaults are being integrated in their lives just as experiences, not their whole identity. This is also the way I am talking about my experiences of rape in everyday life. Since we all felt comfortable with this way of expressing ourselves I will mainly use this expression in the thesis.

Survivor – I will not use the expression rape survivor. I choose to leave this out since no one of the informants, nor me as a researcher, feel comfortable with this way of viewing ourselves in relation to the experiences of sexual assaults.

Narratives

I have had conversations about victimization in relation to sexual assaults with four women. In this part of the thesis I am presenting the narratives of each interview. The storytelling of my informants will hence be framed by the context in which our meeting took place and the interaction between the informants and me as a researcher. The women I have met are Amanda, Sara, Molly and Rebecka. All of the names are however fictive.

Amanda is 30 years old and experienced sexual assaults between the age of 16 and 20. First one man in her home village committed them. These assaults were repeated about once a week for about between one and a half or two years. After she had moved to another town a stranger outdoors assaulted her. After this she started working with selling sex for some months, and was sometimes beaten by the customers.

Sara is 36 years old. She was sexually assaulted when she was around the age of seven, by another child. This happened several times and has affected her in many ways, especially sexually. She has just recently started to negotiate the impact of the assaults in her life after many years of denial.

Molly is 25 years old. When she was between 16 and 19 years old she was in a relationship with a man who was violent, threatening and controlling. After this a man she lived with in a collective sexually assaulted her on a toilet. Some time after this assault she got together with a man who was both violent and sexually assaulted her. This man also spread naked photos of her on the Internet.

Rebecka is 33 years old and was violently raped when she was 18. The rape contained a lot of violence and even gun threat. Rebecka lost a lot of blood and had to stay at a hospital for some time afterwards and got several blood transfusions. Rebecka is the only one of my informants who has gone through a trial process.

Interview with Amanda:

My first interview is held with Amanda. For the interview, we have decided to meet up at my place. Before she comes over we have had mail contact several times. I have asked her if everything feels ok about the interview, if she has any questions or if she wants to meet me before the interview to feel safer when talking about sensitive subjects such as rape. She has responded that she doesn't have much feelings of insecurity, that it's no big deal to talk about these issues for her and that she in fact is looking forward to the interview.

My own feelings towards the interview are very mixed. I feel very nervous about letting a person I've never met before come over to my place. This is also the first interview, which makes the occasion very special and of course affects my behaviours. I have prepared for coffee and grapes and pieces of dark chocolate are put on the kitchen table. When Amanda arrives we start small talking, mostly about

specialty coffee, which proves to be a common interest. We also talk about other things, such as our backgrounds, where we live, etcetera. When we start the interview we already have made a connection through small talk and a feeling that we like each other.

We start the interview by talking about the article about Lisa and if Amanda recognizes herself in the description of someone who has experienced sexual assaults. She is very clear about that she in general does not recognize herself in stories about rape victims that are provided in the media. She also often reacts upon pictures shown in these circumstances. For example she refers to a picture she has seen of a flower with some flower petals missing. As if persons who have these experiences are fragile as flowers and have been wounded in a non-repairable way, signified by the missing flower petals. Her reaction to these kinds of pictures is very distinct; she says that she feels insulted and gets really provoked by these kinds of images. She claims that she doesn't at all feel like a wounded flower. Instead she says, "I feel more like a superhero".

Even though Amanda does not recognize herself in these stories in the newspaper, role models with shared experiences of sexual violence seems to be very important for her. She talks about writers and musicians who have impacted her a lot. What these artists have in common, Amanda says, is that they are people she considers being very strong and where the experiences of rape is only a part of their art and when it's expressed it's very hands on, without fragility or trying to hide it's ugliness. The expression and description is on the contrary very raw and, in Amanda's eyes, very honest. She describes how she gathers strength from really raw stories of rape and assaults. And just the knowledge of shared experiences with an artist who Amanda is considering strong and tough is making her feel a commitment to these artists.

During the time the assaults went on, Amanda felt very alone with her experiences and longed for some kind of fellowship. And when she didn't find it in real life she turned to music and literature. She describes this very explicit while talking about a book that comforted her a lot in this period of her life. The book is called *En kvinna i Berlin* (*A woman in Berlin*) and describes the life of women in war occupied Berlin during the Second World War.

I had it as such a comfort. And this sounds completely crazy, but I longed to be there, because there she was, along with a lot of women and they shared experiences. (...) I don't mean that I longed for such a situation, but there was something that I almost became a little envious of. Such a strong connection between the women, and to be a part of that ... like, you laugh at it, you make jokes about it, there is a kind of gallows humour about the totally sick things happening to these women every day. And something strong inside of me longed for that kind of connection. For so extreme was it in me, but so extreme was it in me alone. So just that, you don't need someone to comfort you and pat you on the cheek and say poor little you, but I had kind of needed a strong person who knew what I had gone through. The book was probably the one where I kind of found most comfort and it sounds absolutely absurd because what it does is just describing horrific abuses.

This quote describes very well the loneliness Amanda felt in her struggling with handling the assaults and the longing she felt for some kind of belonging and fellowship regarding her experiences.

We continue the interview by talking about the article related to shame and guilt. Amanda reflects over the fact that she still has not told her closest family about the sexual assaults she has experienced. At the time when the assaults started she was living at home and was about sixteen-seventeen years old. She is determined that not telling them has nothing to do with shame or as it is described in the related article – fear of being seen upon as a whore. Instead she defines this withholding of information as something else: she doesn't want them to picture her as someone who has experienced this. She doesn't want them to change the way they look upon her. She doesn't want them to feel the pain of knowing. She says that this is depending on that you hear stories about that the worst thing that can ever happen to a parent is that one's child has been raped. She says that what the withholding of information is about is both protecting them from this sorrow, but also protecting herself from their reactions and concern.

Some time after the assaults Amanda started working with selling sex. She was “walking the streets” as she also formulates it. She describes that she felt no sexual fear during this period. On the contrary – she describes it as she felt that she was in a power position in relation to her clients. She felt contempt against the customers instead of fear even if some customers were violent and hit her.

When I walked the street, when I was a prostitute, that's the word for it, then I felt no powerlessness, but I felt that I was stronger and better than the people who took advantage of my body. I just figured, you're so fucking stupid, you're so pathetic. (...) I felt some kind of contempt, poor stupid you, what a dull life you must have. (...) So I have not had it that way sexually that I have felt vulnerable and scared. Rather then, if I was to go home with a guy so maybe it would be more sorry for him, because I was having lots of weird thoughts.

The feeling of contempt against men in sexual contexts is, as we can see in this quote, not something that Amanda considers was limited to the experiences during prostitution. This is a feeling that she says has followed her in many situations while having sex with men after the assaults. She says that she sometimes thinks, "At least, it's a relief that I'm a lesbian!" I interpret this as for Amanda, sex with men produces more connotations to both the assaults but also the experiences of selling sex, than sex with women does. I understand that Amanda feels a great strength and resistance in her sexual identity as a lesbian.

We move on talking about identification as someone who has the experiences of sexual assaults, and if this is something she has felt comfortable with or not. Amanda describes that at the time for the assaults and for some years after, she felt that her experiences of this was whole her identity. Even though she didn't tell anyone. She says that in all situations she was thinking about it. She expresses it like this:

Whether people knew about it or not, I felt like that person, but then in a greater or lesser degree of mendacity... here I am, *not* telling you about the biggest thing in the whole world or here I am, telling you about the biggest thing in the whole world.

As years have gone by, this has changed. The experiences are now just a part of her – as other experiences that have shaped her identity. In many ways she feels that the experiences make her stronger, she uses the word capital – the experiences are like capital that makes her richer:

So, frankly, it may sound very ugly against those who do not feel like this, but to me it almost feels like a capital now. I think that this experience makes me stronger somehow. I mean, I know something that someone else does not know. I mean, it feels more like strength than a weakness.

In this passage, Amanda is using one English word – frankly – in the otherwise Swedish context. I interpret this way of using the English word as a way for Amanda to soften what she is about to say. The sentence shows that she feels a bit ashamed for feeling like this, for feeling the strength in her experiences of sexual violence, since she remarks that this might sound very ugly regarding people who doesn't feel this way. But still, it is something she feels she want to make a statement about. By using the English word “frankly” the statement gets a softer frame than if she would had said it all in Swedish. Using another language is a kind of alienation from what you're about to say. This is also enhanced by the fact that she after the statement is trying to explain in what way this is the case, starting off two sentences with the words “I mean”. I interpret this as Amanda feels it a bit shameful to say that her experiences of sexual violence now have transformed to something positive and strengthening for her instead of something that has destroyed her life.

This change inside of Amanda, from her experiences being all of her identity to become just a part of her identity that feels like strength, affects her relations to other people. She describes that some people have had a role in her life that might be outplayed – she doesn't need them in that way anymore. She experiences that she has changed and sometimes the relations to people who have been close are not changing in the wished direction. She says that she might have gotten to know someone in a period when she was feeling very vulnerable, or have had a sexual relation with someone in a period when she felt the need to have a very empathetic and careful partner. And then as time has gone by and Amanda has felt that she has grown stronger, she says that she can feel almost disgust by the thought that these persons should view upon her as a victim. She doesn't want to acknowledge such feelings at all anymore. In that sense, she would wish for these people's roles in her life to change as well, but she think this is difficult – she imagine that some will always see her as a victim in need of help and support and therefore some people that for one period in her life was very important to her might now be people reminding her of an Amanda she doesn't want to acknowledge anymore.

I ask Amanda how she feels about the concept of rape survivor. She says that she finds it being a tricky concept and that she finds it difficult to take it into her mouth because it sounds like one have been threatened to life. She feels that it reinforces the experiences. That it's a problematic word because it signifies that this really is the big, shattering thing that totally changed your life. Still, Amanda argues,

it is for her one out of many other experiences that is comprehensive and does not disappear out from the body. It will always remain in her memories. But the word survivor is not a comfortable one for Amanda, she prefer to talk about the assaults as life experiences.

After the interview Amanda and me have some e-mail conversation. She sends over some artwork and poems that have been important for her in relation to the assaults. She also expresses a concern about that it might sound mockingly that she didn't feel much guilt and fear and can speak about these experiences with such simplicity. She writes that she's aware of that time changes things and that it might not be like this for everyone – for some it might be the worst thing ever happened. And that she doesn't have the intention of in any way reducing their experiences. At the same time, she confirms that when it comes to her, the assaults now are integrated to her life as strengthening experiences.

Interview with Sara:

The interview with Sara is held a sunny day in the beginning of April. We meet up for a coffee in the garden outside my house. Sara has asked me for some time before the interview to talk about her experiences in a more informal and private way. It turns out that I'm one out of only two people that she has ever mentioned these experiences to. When she was a child at the age of around seven years old she experienced sexual assaults and she has never talked to anyone about these things until just recently. She has kept them inside of herself, trying not to acknowledge them at all. Yet, she feels that it has affected her sexuality in many ways and prevented her from setting limits in sexual contexts.

The things that Sara shared with me in confidence will be kept out of this thesis. Still I wanted to mention that this kind of conversation took place because it surely effected the way the interview later on was held in terms of respect for her feelings and the fact that the acknowledgment of the actions are opening up a lot of emotional knots inside of her right now.

When Sara had told me the things she wanted to in private, we went inside my place and started the recorded interview. I could really notice, in comparison to the other interviews, that Sara was not used to talk about these matters. This interview was much more of a dialogue with short answers, while in the other interviews the

informants sometimes gave very long and informative answers, almost like monologues. This interview was also the shortest one.

We started of the recorded interview by talking about recognition in media. Sara does not recognize herself at all in the media image of someone who has experienced sexual assault. One reason she mentions is that people who have experienced these assaults when they were children are almost not represented at all. Another reason she points out is that she experiences that the stories being lifted are stories of people to whom the experiences have affected their life in a very broad sense. Often their whole life got ruined. As in the article with Lisa, where she describes that the life was put on pause for some years. Sara says that for her, life has just moved on, she is outwardly a very functional person, with husband and children and a good job.

Yes but they are just terribly tragic stories. And I don't recognize myself at all in that, because I am not at all that kind of person. I'm the victim of something that probably very many people might have been exposed to. But that nobody talks about in that way. I'm like a fully functioning person with kids and family.

As the quote above shows, Sara does not at all identify herself with the, as she sees it, often very broken persons that are represented in the media. She sees herself as a fully functioning person and puts this in contrast to the perceived media stories.

Sara has not told her closest family about the assaults she experienced as a child. Not even her husband or any other sexual partner she has had. Sara says that even though she knows it's not her fault, she has – and has had ever since it happened – thoughts such as “how could I be so stupid letting it happen? How could I be so clueless?” I notice that this feeling of guilt is a very complex thing to talk about for Sara, filled with contradictions. I experience that this is something she is not totally comfortable with. On one hand, she says that she got these feelings; on the other hand she wants to deny them. That it's not something personal but rather something she can imagine other people are thinking. This contradiction is very prominent several times in our conversation, for example in this passage:

Sara: I imagine that it's really terrible to tell someone that this has happened to me.

Frida: Mm...why is it terrible?

Sara: Because, uh...like, how could I be so stupid. I mean, that's not how I thought, but...but I can imagine that that's what it's about, that you yourself are feeling stupid.

Frida: Do you recognize that feeling? How could I be so stupid?

Sara: Yes, but ...yes. Well, it's hard to think that...(sighs)... Like, I kind of felt, well I don't want this to happen, but I ought to want it...No, this is really hard...

I interpret this as if there are thoughts inside of Sara that she is not totally comfortable with, she doesn't want to have them because she knows logically that they are not true. But still they appear. This results in a difficulty of talking openly about it. I get the feeling that she's trying to hide behind the words that she can imagine this being the case for many people. This general way of talking about the subject can be a strategy for Sara to not reveal her own thoughts and feelings in the issue.

Sara says that the reason she has not until this day told her parents is that she doesn't want them to live with that sorrow, and she doesn't want them to feel guilt over what happened. It's a way for her to take responsibility for the persons around her, to keep them from getting sad or imagine her as a little girl in this situation. To protect them from the sorrow the knowledge would cause them.

I notice that Sara find it hard to relate to the word identity connected to her experiences of assaults. Her strategy through the years has been to try to deny it ever happened. However, in this phase of her life she is making some great life changes that have made her start thinking about her sexuality. This has been the start-up for starting to identify herself as someone who has these experiences and opened up the opportunity to for example be a part of this study.

She describes the experiences of assaults as something that have been following her like a feeling inside of her. Something that she has never put words on or defined clearly, even for herself. Until now. And now when she admits to herself what's happened she also realizes how much it actually has affected especially her sexuality. She describes that she has felt locked, closed and limited in her ability to feel sexual pleasure. She says that she doesn't permit herself to let go completely. But at the same time she says that she is bad on setting limits in relation to others, which can result in that she might do things she doesn't really want to. But now when she can admit the sexual assaults, she reflects upon the fact that the limitations no longer need to be so

crucial. Instead, she reasons that she can turn them into a strength, a part of an experimental attitude to her own sexuality and in that way understand herself better. She also reflects upon the expression “moving on” in relation to the sexual assaults.

Well, for me, sex is about contact, communication and pleasure together with another person. In a respectful way, a hundred percent respectful way. And what I mean by that is that one then can bring these experiences into it. Then you don't need to move on, instead they become a part of it. (...) If you have feelings of offensive stuff that comes back, well, then it happens, right there. And then it must be allowed to happen and then it is like a meeting between people. That's how it is for me.

Sara hence feels that by admitting that she has experiences of sexual assaults, and by letting a potential partner also know about this, she can turn this knowledge into an opportunity for an explorative sexual meeting between herself and her partner. This could be a strategy instead of trying to deny them and hence be limited in her sexual actions.

When we talk about the concept of rape survivor, Sara says that she finds it more encouraging than the expression of being a victim. Still, she says that she primarily connects the word survivor to someone who has experienced a plane crash or something, rather than sexual assaults. She doesn't use the word herself and doesn't feel comfortable with it but she can understand how some people choose to use it instead of the word rape victim. Sara says that she is very sceptical to the image of a rape victim as someone who has been destroyed for all future. She claims several times during the interview that she doesn't think about herself as a victim at all.

After the interview, when I ask Sara how it feels to have been a part of my study she says that it feels revealing to have started talking about these things. But also that she sometimes found it hard to understand my questions. I have been thinking a lot about this afterwards and is very aware of the fact that this interview in many ways were different from the others and that I as an interviewer was not prepared for interviewing a person who just recently has started to talk openly about these issues. But I still find the interview with Sara very important and interesting to bring into the thesis in relation to the other interviews with individuals who are more used to talk about these issues.

Interview with Molly

The interview with Molly is held in a public space. We meet up at a café that Molly has chosen. Before the interview there have been some adjusted time for the meeting, primarily depending on my daughter being ill. These circumstances have led to quite a lot e-mail contact only concerning time changes and possibilities to meet. Therefore I'm glad that Molly still is up for the interview – despite the trouble I feel that I've cost her by cancelling previous appointments!

I have had some doubts about meeting in a public space for this kind of interview, and tried to replace it either to her place or mine. But Molly has been quite distinct about where she wants to meet, so I respect her choice. It turns out that it goes very well to hold the interview at the café. Molly seems relaxed and I notice that this is a kind of favourite spot for her: when I come to the café she is already there, eating some homemade food that she has brought with her, explaining that this is ok for the staff since she has also ordered coffee. I order a coffee as well and sit down diagonally opposite her. Something that also signifies the familiar feeling of this place for Molly is that for a short while her mother shows up. They talk for a while about something, and then Molly and me start small talking about the café and about the subject of the thesis.

When we start the recorded interview it very quickly gets prominent that Molly has been struggling with two opposing identities. One of them is the identity of being a tough, strong, independent woman who always says what she thinks and always stands up for her convictions. The other identity is as someone who has experienced both mental and physical violence and sexual assaults from people with whom she has had close relations to. Considering this part of her identity she has felt a need of showing weakness and get sympathies and help from her surroundings – but still she has rejected these needs. Molly thinks that this inner conflict between two contradictory identities highly has affected the way she has handled the experiences of sexual assaults.

Trying to handle her feelings after the assaults made her talk about these experiences in many different situations, even to strangers. But she did it in a way that should make her seem untouchable of what happened, sometimes even as a joke. Her interpretation of this behaviour is that it served to fulfil the image of her as a strong, independent woman. But she says that it was really just a fake. It wasn't how she

really felt about the experiences. Molly reflects upon the fact that it surely was a complicated attitude, since it didn't result in the reactions she longed for. As she expresses it: "if you don't act like a victim you don't get what the victim should have". Today, Molly can reflect upon this on another level. She wish that she could have allowed herself being a victim for sexual assaults with need of special care and at the same time gotten the chance to be considered active and strong. Both in her own eyes and in the eyes of the society. Not trying to fight one identity to give room for another. She expresses a feeling of wanting to reclaim the victim position, or the victim concept.

What is it that makes it so stigmatized? I mean, why is it so hard to admit that you have been molested, or exposed to something? Like, what is it that makes me not wanting anyone to get the idea to feel pity for me? There's something about that I really think you actually should not be so afraid of. But still not be passive, because that's what the term sometimes includes. Yes, but I believe that if I think of a victim, I think of someone who is downcast, someone who is like...screwed. Thus, not active. And you don't have to be like that just because you are a victim, really.

Molly has not wanted to identify herself in relation to the concept of victim at all, as she has understood it. She has not felt that she fitted in to the template of how a victim should be. Still, in some ways, she has longed to be considered a victim in some situations.

When we start talking about sexuality after assaults Molly starts reflecting a lot about feeling desire or not. She experiences that she has felt a great lack of desire. And that she has tried to deal with this as something that's a consequence of the assaults. But as time goes by during the interview I realize that she more and more is reflecting about if the lack of desire actually is depending on something else. She tells me that she has thought about if she might be asexual, or have tendencies of being asexual. This is also something that she says that she has had problems with integrating into her identity and the image she has of herself.

This is of course also interesting, because I think there are like different norms in different groups. And in my association, asexuality is not considered exciting. Instead it should be more... the norm is a bit more ... well, maybe queer, as a contrast to the traditional role, the monogamous, heterosexual, two-same sexuality,

that you're still in some ways are supposed to handle. That's kind of like the sexuality I have, but in my association it's considered quite boring, if you know what I mean. So yes, I think it's complicated, this whole thing of how to attach these experiences to sex.

The fact that monogamous heterosexuality, and even more asexuality, is considered boring in her social circle has influenced Molly to blame the lack of desire on her experiences of sexual assaults. These experiences have been socially accepted as reasons for not wanting to have sex. In this way, Molly says that she has leaned upon, and welcomed, the stereotype that victims of sexual assaults are not supposed to want to have sex. In fact she has even used this stereotype in order to, as she expresses it, manipulate a possible sexual partner. She says that using this stereotype is considered a much more acceptable reason for not wanting to have sex than just saying that you don't want to. She has felt that not wanting is not reason good enough. She says that she has used this power of a victim position also with the partner she's having right now, especially the first years they had a relationship. At the same time, Molly interprets this as a kind of resistance from the supposed victim.

It makes the person to a subject who acts, who is using their weak victim position to manipulate. (...) I had not wanted to admit this five years ago. And like, what does it say? It takes away all this image of that someone who got raped is equal with being good, someone who got raped is equal with being pure but a little bit besmirched.

Something interesting happens in the conversation between Molly and me when we start talking about norms surrounding these two contradictory identities. I explain through a personal example that I have used the position of being a strong, sexually free person and changed position to play the role of a victim in an instant. When sharing this Molly exclaims:

" I've done exactly that too! I have made something identical...like, really exactly the same! I totally recognize that! "

And then she tells her own story of using these two positions in the same situation. This recognition in each other's stories I find very interesting, because it shows that some thoughts and reflections are made possible through our conversation only

because I share the experiences of sexual assaults with my informants. This makes it easier for us to talk about the subject in a certain way. Molly expresses that in most situations it's not possible to talk about the experiences the way we do; she calls it a non-sentimental way, without having to get sensitive and without having to expect pity in return.

Molly says that she is surprised that rape is so stigmatized and that people get so emotional of talking about it. Especially since it's so common, she says that in her surroundings the experiences of sexual assaults are not something rare. She experience that most women she talks to have experienced something of this character, more or less. Because of this Molly wants it to be talked about in another way, not so stigmatizing and not as something newsworthy and extraordinary.

In our e-mail contact after the interview, Molly writes that the most interesting part of the conversation was the part about using one's victim position in order to get out of other situations that are unwanted, and by doing this manipulate others by playing the part of being weak.

Interview with Rebecka:

Rebecka and me also meet up in a public place, at a café. I feel more relaxed meeting in public after having done it with Molly. The place is Rebecka's choice and it's a quite big café where it's quite easy to be anonymous and talk without anyone listening. This is the last interview and I feel that I'm starting to follow a certain structure in the interviews that I feel comfortable with. I arrive first to the café and choose a table that is standing a bit away from the others, a relatively private space in a big crowded room. When Rebecka arrives we start up with an ordinary fika (Swedish expression for taking a coffee, tea or a pastry together), talking a bit about ourselves before we start the interview. When I feel that we are in a good mood I suggest that we start the interview and she agrees.

After the assault Rebecka was struggling with her own identity and what she wanted people to know about her. She says that she didn't want people to know that she got raped because she didn't want to identify herself as the kind of person who got raped. By this she explains that she means that she didn't want people to think that she was like the stereotype of a rape victim or someone they should feel pity for.

What she did want people to know about the incident, and what she herself felt good to identify with, is that she in return used violence against the rapist.

I almost beat him to death, however, should be added. Actually. Because he fell asleep, or something, then afterwards. He held on for four hours with me, but then he fell asleep and I got hold of some bloody lamp, with which I started hitting like this, in his face. And his hips, I broke his hip bone and smashed his face (...) When it happened, I was much more focused on the violence, or that I had practiced pretty much violence against him as well. I thought it felt so very good. I was quite violent at that age too, I got into fights and stuff like that sometimes. So it was not something strange for me to beat anyone. But I thought it was so lovely, when people like "oh shit I heard that you, like, beat him up". Yes, I fucking did! Really, I felt so very cool having done that. And so satisfied (...) I took that identity, that no one messes with me. I was like cool, not a victim. It was a very nice feeling, indeed.

In the last sentence of this quote, Rebecka is using a Swedish dialectal slang word – “gött”. It’s a dialectal version of the Swedish word “gott” which means “good” in English. But the word is used in specific contexts in the Swedish language, why I find it hard to translate the meaning of the word. I chose to translate it with “nice feeling”, which in some senses can describe the word. But I’m not completely satisfied with that translation and therefor I highlight the circumstances here. Rebecka is also in this quote several times using the Swedish word “härligt”, which I have translated with that it “felt so very good” and “lovely”. The direct translation is “delightful”, but it’s a word that I don’t find completely suitable in this context when Rebecka is talking about how she really was satisfied with using violence. Therefor I chose other words with a similar meaning.

Using this violence helped Rebecka not to define herself as a victim but as an active person that no one messes with. It solidified the repudiation from being a rape victim and empowered the identification as someone that controls the situation. This strategy continued, explains Rebecka, for many years after the assault and was prominent especially in her sex life. It took some time for her to get back to a sexually active life after the assault, but when she did, she challenged her own fears in a sometimes very destructive way. She wanted to convince herself that she was free and that the rape hadn’t affected her at all. This made her for example having sex with three men at the same time, thinking that she could manage it. But she says that she

felt scared and after they had gone she could start crying and wonder why she put herself through this.

There was hence a period when Rebecka did a lot of sexual actions that she actually didn't want to. She relates these actions to the rape incident. She wanted to prove both to herself and to others that this had not affected her in a negative way. She also did not tell any of her sexual partners about the rape. Nowadays she always tells possible sexual partners about what happened. She experiences that when she has told a partner about this, there is a great need to talk about it – from the partner's perspective. She reflects upon that this is good but also a bit problematic since she doesn't experience the same understanding and respect considering her other traumas, for example that she has lost most of her family members to death.

I do not get that treatment considering any other of my traumas. It's very like, when it comes to sex, something has happened to you. But I feel like, it's harder to celebrate Christmas with a family, a whole family. That's harder for me than if he accidentally would hit me in bed, or whatever it could be. But I am more traumatized by family life.

This means that Rebecka experiences that the partners deal with questions regarding sex in a different way than other traumas they hear about. She thinks that this confirms the idea of rape as the worst thing that can ever happen to a person. But Rebecka claims that this is in her case not true.

Rebecka has experienced the norms of how someone who has experiences of sexual assault is supposed to act. She says that she was rewarded when she acted in a way that was coherent with the stereotype and was seen upon with doubt when she acted in contradiction to this.

If I was out partying and having fun, then I did wrong. And to look at handsome guys, it was like, "should you really do that?" So you get rewarded for good behaviour, and I experienced that good behaviour meant to be afraid and not wanting to have sex. While, here I'm not talking about my closest ones of course, but it was a bit like "oh ok, so you are on a party?", "oh ok, so you are making out?". So I felt that I got much more understanding when I was afraid and could not go out. And it's nice with understanding, but still it confirms everything. (...) I think that this extended my time for recovery, it was expected of me that I should feel so very bad.

Rebecka has also met prejudices about that people who have experienced rape are going to have destroyed sex lives for the rest of their lives. These comments have come from police officers, physiologists and sexual partners.

We start to talk about telling or not telling about the rape. Rebecka says that her closest family member do not know about the incident. She claims that the reason for not telling have to do with that she wants to protect this person from the pain of knowing. She says that this has nothing to do with shame, but is a way of protecting her most loved one.

Rebecka does not feel comfortable with the expression rape survivor or the concept of being a victim. She says that she was a crime victim when it happened, definitely, but she wouldn't use the word victim to describe herself today. She says that the assault has affected her in many ways, but so have many other things in life. She is very digested to the word rape survivor – even if she is one in the word's fullest meaning, she did barely survive the rape. But she thinks that the word reinforces that this is the most awful thing that can happen to you. And she ends with saying “There are worse things.” Today, Rebecka works as a volunteer with helping other people who have experienced sexual assaults.

After the interview when I reconnect to Rebecka she says that the interview has made her think a lot more about her identity as someone who has experienced rape and that it has resulted in conversations about it with her partner as well.

Analysis of Narratives

Presenting my conversations with Amanda, Sara, Rebecka and Molly as narratives enable the opportunity to see how they understand themselves in relation to their experiences of sexual assaults and how they choose to share these stories with me (Chase 2011). In this part of the thesis I will analyse these narratives in relation to my theoretical framework and previous research. The analysis will be based upon the questions I have outlined in the chapter about my theoretical approach, in the third phase of my analysing process. This will be done in relation to the mediating concepts that was presented in the same chapter – victimization, agency and identity.

Victimization

An overall theme of the narratives is that all of the informants told me that they have had to relate to the contemporary discourse of rape being the worst thing that can happen to you (Gavey & Schmidt 2011). They claim that this discourse of victimization is making them want to not recognise themselves as victims. In this way they dis-identify with the victim concept (Skeggs 1997, Mardorossian 2002). This aversion against being a victim is not related to the fact that they were crime victims, but to the, in their eyes, very problematic connotations that the word victim brings with it.

The contemporary discourse of rape has influenced all of the informants to develop different strategies in purpose not to be considered as one of those victims. These strategies are a central part of the narratives. But on the same time, especially Rebecka describes how she has tried to fit into the template of actions respectable for a victim, in order for her experiences to be acknowledged and her as a person to be credible. This can be compared with Skeggs' study of working class women and how they negotiate their identities in order to be respectable, to pass as a non-victim, but at the same time be limited by the expectations of how a victim should act (Skeggs 1997). If they have tried to act differently, they have not gotten the sympathy they feel that they have wanted. Rebecka, for example, tells about how it's not considered ok to make out or to party. Molly is discussing the problematic aspects of talking about her experiences in a way that is not expected by a victim. These stories of experiences show how the informants understand themselves and their actions in relation to the socio-structural context they are in (McNay 2004).

Amanda is saying that she feels insulted by the general image of a rape victim. And this was something she felt also directly after the assaults. She found her strength in persons who she knew shared her experiences but that she at the same time considered being strong. In this way she chose very carefully which ones she wanted to identify with. This recognition I interpret as very important for Amanda. She felt very lonely in her experiences and related to women in music and literature with whom she felt fellowship. Amanda's strategies for avoiding being identified as a victim had two dimensions: one dimension regarded her view upon herself as a victim. She tells me that she coped with those feelings by becoming a sex worker in order to show herself that she had no fear. She also related to role models who had a

strong attitude against their experiences of assaults. The other dimension regards her surroundings – she didn't tell anyone about her experiences but kept on living as usual, hiding it all inside of her. In this way she avoided to deal with the possibility to be seen upon as a victim by anyone else than herself.

An important part of Sara's storytelling is that she says that she has fled from the positioning of being a victim for many years. But now, when she can negotiate the victim role as something that doesn't have to dominate her life or be passivizing, she explains how she can feel another calm inside of her and hence she doesn't feel the need of running away from being a victim anymore. Her strategies to dis-identify as a victim has been to not acknowledge the assaults even for herself. She has not told anyone and has repressed what happened. She claims several times during the interview that she does not see upon herself as a victim. This has made her feel limited in her sexual actions and abilities to pleasure. But now when she starts to acknowledge the assaults and talk about them she feels that there is a possibility for managing the incidents in another way. As someone who actively takes control over her sexuality in relation to her experiences. By reclaiming the role of the victim and how she interprets this role she can identify with it and turn the victimization into actions that empowers her (Mardorossian 2002).

An important strategy for Molly to not be considered a victim was trying to convince people in her surroundings that she was strong and unaffected by the incidents. She spoke openly about the assaults to anyone in a way that made it impossible for the people she talked with to show sympathies. Still she was feeling bad about this because nowadays she realizes that what she really needed was sympathy. Or acknowledgment in that it's ok to be sad about the assaults. Molly is indeed problematizing the concept of being a victim in her argumentation. I get the feeling that she, like Mardorossian (2002) wants to reclaim the concept. That one can be a victim but still be active and a subject. She expresses that just because you are a victim it doesn't have to mean that you're "screwed". Molly is searching for a possibility for a victim to be considered active.

Rebecka is taking a completely different identity than the one of being a victim – someone who hits back and give revenge upon her rapist. This is an important thing in her understanding of herself as a subject in relation to the assault. She describes the feeling of being regarded as someone who hit back as "lovely".

Directly after the rape she says that she didn't want to identify herself as that kind of person that had been raped. With this she means the victimization that is the result if you tell anyone about these experiences. Still, she was physically really badly hurt and was indeed a crime victim. But since she had hit back, she could dis-identify with the victimization and embrace the identity of a revenger (Skeggs 1997).

None of the informants feel comfortable with the expression rape survivor. Sara is the most positive one to the expression, she can relate to the using of the word more than being considered a victim. Still, she doesn't use it herself. In the interview with Molly we did not speak of the expression of survivor. Rebecka and Amanda considered the word survivor as something that reinforces the preconception that rape is the worst thing that can happen to you, something that they find problematic. This is the case even though Rebecka literally really is a rape survivor. Still, she claims "There are worse things".

Agency

In all of the interviews we discussed an article where the author made an interpretation that people who have experienced sexual assaults don't tell the people around them because they're afraid of being seen upon as whores (<http://www.politism.se/genusfolket/svts-agenda-visade-strukturerna-aven-hos-oss/>). This is something that is completely denied by all of my informants. They talk about completely other mechanisms behind not telling, above all when it comes to telling your family about the assaults. Amanda, Sara and Rebecka are the ones who have not told their closest family members about the assaults. They are very determined that it has nothing to do with that they're frightened to be considered as whores. The reason for not telling is according to all of them to protect their family members from the pain of knowing. Amanda says that she has heard that the worst thing that a parent can hear is that their child has been raped. Both Amanda and Sara want to protect their parents from knowing this of that reason. This course of action shows an agency within the informants (McNay 2004). They choose how they want to negotiate the experiences of sexual assaults in relation to the socio-structural context. And the choice they make is to protect their closest ones from the pain of knowing, and hence being forced to deal with the victimization of their loved one.

This stigmatization and victimization of the experience of rape has hence hindered my informants from seeking help and support from their loved ones (Helliwell 2000). They have actively used their agency to withhold information (McNay 2004). This is something that I was very surprised by. This is also an understanding that was made possible in the interview context because of the reading of this specific article. Without bringing this article into the interview the storytelling about reasons for not telling would not have occurred the way they did (Chase 2011).

All of the informants consider themselves having a satisfying sexuality today. Sara is the one who is most ambivalent towards this and still feel that her sexuality is under progress. Sara relates her feelings of limitations in her sexuality to the denial of the assaults. She thinks that now when she has started to acknowledge them she can feel freer in her sexual pleasure and actions. The narrative of Sara's sexual identity is hence changing all the time and would have been different before she acknowledged the assaults. Her way of wanting to bring the experiences of sexual assaults into the meeting with a sexual partner is showing how she choose to negotiate her experiences in relation to the socio-structural context. As an active agent she chooses to acknowledge the experiences and let them be present in her sexual actions together with a partner (McNay 2004).

Molly is also still negotiating with her sexuality in terms of eventual asexuality. She has dealt a lot with the image of her wish to be a person with a queer sexuality but says that she now has landed in an identity of a monogamous, heterosexual love life with one long-term partner. She expresses how she has used a victim position in order to avoid sex in several situations, also with her current partner. This is something she claims she wouldn't have admitted some years ago, which is an indicator on how narratives changes over time (Chase 2011). Molly is ambivalent if the lack of desire actually has anything to do with the assaults; she is reasoning about that there might be other reasons for this, such as asexual tendencies. The using of a victim position in order to manipulate has been one of Molly's ways of negotiating the experiences of victimization in relation to social structures and is a part of her agency (McNay 2004).

Amanda has found strength in lesbian sex. She actually says, "It's a relief that I'm a lesbian!" We didn't in the interview talk about if her being lesbian is a direct result of the assaults and her experiences of selling sex. But she says that those two factors definitely have affected her feelings about having sex with men. That she feels

some kind of contempt against them. With women, however, she experiences sex in a totally different way and feels a strong sexual identity in that. By questioning the terms for her own sexuality in relation to her experiences of sexual assaults Amanda is an active agent in negotiating her inner conflicts and tensions about having sex with men (McNay 2004).

Rebecka says that she is no longer practicing sexual actions that she finds destructive. However, she did this for some years after the rape. For example she had sex with several men at the same time in purpose to show that she was not affected at all by the rape. Still, she admits that she was feeling afraid in these situations and cried afterwards. Nowadays she considers that it's other traumas that are affecting her more than the trauma of being raped. Rebecka became an active agent by hitting back upon the rapist (McNay 2004). By hitting back, she negotiates the role of being a victim and being an agent in relation to the discourse of how a victim and an agent is supposed to act.

The biggest surprise or turning point that occurred in the interview situations was the one where Molly started reflecting about how she has used her victim position in order to manipulate. It was very clear that this insight changed her way of understanding and interpreting her own experiences and also her understanding of herself as a subject (Chase 2011, McNay 2004). The interaction that occurred between Molly and me makes the context of the storytelling very significant (Johansson 2014). Using one's weak position in order to get someone else to do what you want can be understood as a resistance based upon agency (McNay 2004).

It's clear that none of the informants consider that sexual assaults have destroyed their sexuality for all future. They all felt affected by the assaults for some years after, but they all consider themselves having a satisfying sexuality today. Primarily Molly is questioning if she has blamed too many of her sexual concerns and insecurities on the assaults. This conforms to the study of Burkett and Hamilton (2012), which shows that even women who have not experienced sexual assaults are affected by socio-structural contexts and are not completely free sexual agents. It's hence difficult to say how much of my informants' concerns about their sexuality that is an effect of the assaults and how much that is an effect of their social contexts. Especially since they all were very young when the assaults happened, they were all under 20 years old at the time. They are all negotiating their sexual agency in relation

to their experiences of assaults, victimization and socio-structural contexts (McNay 2004).

Identity

Kathryn Robson is advocating an identity that is seen upon as relational (2015). She also argues to see upon rape trauma as a scar. This approach is conforming to the narratives of the informants. Their stories show that the experiences of sexual assaults are something that they carry with them many years after it took place. But it's not something that they consider has destroyed their life or their sexuality. It might even be something that makes them feeling stronger as human beings. It's not something they think about constantly or has affected them in their everyday life. But it's something that they have had to handle and negotiate and add to their life stories and that contributes to form them as the individuals they are today. If identity is created in relation to other people, sharing rape trauma with others with similar experiences can decrease the lifelong victimization of people who have experienced sexual assaults (Robson 2015). People's narratives whose experiences lie several years back in time can hence function as a kind of resistance to the contemporary discourse. These narratives can support recent victims of sexual assault in a way that enables agency (Robson 2015).

Lamb (2009) as well as Burkett and Hamilton (2012) is problematizing the ideals of female sexuality as autonomous and subjective, especially since they found that young women who have not experienced sexual violence sees themselves as victims to the social context they are in. They understand themselves in relation to social structure (McNay 2004). Lamb is advocating a possibility to be both subject and object according to one's sexuality, with or without experiences of assaults (Lamb 2009). This double identity – or relational identity - is a need that all of my informants also are pointing at (Robson 2015). One of my informants is bringing up the idea to redefine the word victim in order to feel comfortable with integrating it to your identity, something that Mardorossian also is promoting as a way of developing a new feminist theory concerning rape (Mardorossian 2002). If there was a possibility to reclaim the victimization of people who have experienced sexual assaults there might not be a need to dis-identify as such a victim (Skeggs 1997). This would lead to

a non-dichotomous way of approaching sexuality both for people who have these experiences and people who haven't.

The dichotomy between women who have an autonomous, subjective sexuality and the victimization of people who have been raped is creating trouble for both groups (Burkett & Hamilton 2012, Gavey and Schmidt 2011). The opposition between these two groups are also very fluent since there are a lot of grey zones within the area of sexual assaults (Almestad & Beijbom et al. 2012). If this fluidity would be more visible in the discourses and if agency could be seen as something that come from one's experiences, based upon one's inner conflicts - then all individuals could be seen upon as active subjects (McNay 2004).

There were some contradictions in the storytelling that was very interesting in the telling and understanding of experiences in relation to identity (Johansson 2014). Sara uttered both that she had felt stupid for letting the assaults happen and that she didn't think thoughts like this, but that she could imagine many else doing it. This contradiction can be understood as an inner conflict in Sara (McNay 2004). This inner conflict create a disturbance in Sara's understanding of herself and hence her storytelling. This disturbance is a part of Sara's narrative that might change over time when her understanding of herself and her agency is changing (McNay 2004).

My Impact as a Researcher

As is described in the narratives of the interviews, my own feelings about the interviews and where they took place are affecting my achievement as an interviewer. What also affected my way of asking questions is if it was the first or the last interview during the process. Before the first interview I was very nervous and didn't have a clue what was going to happen. In the last interview I had already interviewed three other women and I had also had one interview in a public space before.

I was very worried about the ethical aspects interviewing people who have experienced sexual assaults (Beck & Britto 2006) I was worried about if feelings of re-traumatization would occur among my informants. In order to prevent this I followed the checklist very carefully that I presented in the chapter about my methods. Having this checklist made me feel more secure about how to act during preparation, the carrying through and the contact afterwards with my informants. My interpretation is that all of the points in the checklist encouraged a feeling of

confidence between the informants and me when talking about sensitive subjects such as sexual assaults (Beck & Britto 2006).

Working with two different languages through the research process has been a challenge. Some of these challenges are made visible in the presenting of the narratives, related to questions regarding translation. In the translation process some specific parts of the interviews have become prominent, such as when my informants used English words in an otherwise Swedish sentence or the using of dialectal slang. I also discover how my own understanding of the words is problematized when trying to find a word in English that I consider give the same meaning to the content. In some situations I struggled a lot with these translation concerns and when they were specifically relevant I have chosen to make them visible in the narratives.

In the meeting between my informants and me as a researcher it is prominent that my own experiences of sexual assaults are crucial for our interaction (Zavos & Biglia 2009). This affects the way we talk about the subject but also the confidence we share being a part of the same victimized and stigmatized group (Gavey & Schmidt 2011). I sometimes found this problematic, trying not to transfer my own understandings of rape and victimization upon my informants. But above all I consider our shared experiences something that strengthened the confidence between the informants and me and a prerequisite for the interaction and the way the narratives of the informants were being told.

Conclusion

I introduced this master's thesis with a quote that claimed that people who have experienced sexual assaults are non-present in the media debate concerning rape, because they are victimized (Svensson & Chamberland 2015). This thesis can be understood as a resistance against that victimization, through the narratives of my informants and with my own experiences of rape as a researcher (Robson 2015). The method of narratives and the theoretical frameworks of agency have been crucial for me in this act of resistance.

In this final part of the thesis I would like to come back to my research questions. The first question was how the informants negotiate their experiences of victimization in relation to the contemporary discourse of rape.

Using narrative analyses have enabled a visualization of how personal experiences are constructed through those narratives (Johansson 2014). By the very act of telling someone about our own experiences we reveal how we understand ourselves in relation to those experiences and the contemporary discourse of rape. When the informants shared their narratives with me, someone who they knew also had experiences of sexual violence, it was prominent that this act of sharing was relevant for their way of understanding themselves. There were parts of the interviews where we could understand ourselves better as a result of discussing similarities or differences (Robson 2015). This sharing as a development of understanding one's experiences might change the way we tell our narratives from time to time. In this way, narratives are changing every time we tell them in different context and to different listeners and are becoming a part of how we construct identities and experiences (Chase 2011).

When sharing one's experiences with someone who also has been a rape victim the storytelling becomes different compared to when talking about them with someone who doesn't share these experiences (Johansson 2014). This is made very obvious when Molly and me reflect upon the strategies we used when we took advantage of our position as a rape victim to avoid sex. These are stories that might not be revealed in a conversation with someone who have not shared the experienced the victimization of sexual assaults.

My informants also told me about how their understandings of their experiences have changed over time. When the assaults happened, the experiences had greater impact upon their lives than what they have today, several years after. For example Amanda is expressing how being a rape victim at the time was her whole identity, influencing all that she said and did – or didn't say and didn't do. But now she considers this being just one out of many experiences that influences her life.

This changing of narratives over time shows how important it is with narratives told not only by people who have experienced sexual assaults currently, but that there is a point with highlighting narratives told by individuals where the assaults lies several years back in time. By doing so, the understanding of life-long victimization, agency and identity in relation to rape experiences can be broadened (Gavey & Schmidt 2011). This is a reason to why this thesis is an important contribute to the field of Gender Studies. This thesis is a contribution to Gender Studies in terms of being an addition to the continuous dialogue about how rape

should be understood and with what mediating theoretical framework we can understand victimizing of people who share these experiences (Mardorossian 2002).

Another reason for the importance of this thesis is the fact that when several years have passed, non of my informants consider the assaults being the worst thing that have happened to them and they all consider themselves having good lives at the present. The rape victims themselves are the only ones who can tell these kinds of narratives. Hence, it's important for the understanding of the consequences of rape that these people get a voice and can challenge the contemporary discourse (Gavey & Schmidt 2011).

It's impossible to draw general conclusions about rape victims out of these narratives. The people who contacted me and wanted to be a part of this study might be persons who feel that they do not recognize themselves in the contemporary discourse and it's impossible to say if they are representative for all rape victims. But it's not my aim to draw such conclusions. The narratives show that the understanding of one self in relation to the experiences is a continuous process and changes and are negotiated with other lived experiences that are integrated into one's life (Chase 2011).

This might be an important thing to communicate to rape victims to whom the assaults have happened recently. I argue that it's important that the organizations which work with treating people with experiences of sexual violence should be equipped to communicate this in their produced material. Research that focus on how people with rape experiences are victimized and research concerning narratives of people with these experiences can be an important entrance for more nuanced guidance material to treating staff within health care (Gavey & Schmidt 2011).

My second research question was how these experiences affect the informants' identification/dis-identification with being a victim of sexual assaults. All of the informants have developed strategies in order to avoid being associated with the contemporary discourse of rape. This dis-identification is connected to the victimization (Skeggs 1997, Gavey & Schmidt 2011)). My informants want to be considered active, not passive. Their dis-identification is not against being a crime victim, but against the expected ways in which rape victims are supposed to act (Gavey & Schmidt 2011). They are using their agency to act in resistance against these expectations (McNay 2004).

Still, several of the informants claim that they at the same time were in need for sympathy in some ways – without being totally passivized. This shows that the informants are asking for an understanding of rape victims beyond the dichotomies of active/passive (Lamb 2009). If there would be such an understanding, they would not need to dis-identify with the discourse concerning rape. One way of getting another understanding of the concept could be to reclaim the word as a possibility to resistance (Mardorossian 2002)

The concept of identity is in this understanding relational in terms that it is developed in relation to the socio-structural context and is changing and being negotiated in the interaction of storytelling (Robson 2015, Chase 2011).

There is however a need for other narratives than the ones from white, able-bodied, well-educated cis-women that are represented in this study. For people who have other intersectional identities the narratives might be totally different. I'm looking forward to a continuing of this academic dialogue about victimization and agency in relation to experiences of sexual assault. One of these continuations can be to broaden the image of the rape victim to include people who identify as transgender, are disabled in different ways, different class identities and different ethnicities. I also welcome a continuous dialogue about the perpetrator and the stigma of committing rape, which Desperantes is asking for as well (2009).

The overall central theme in each one of the interviews considering victimization is that the informants don't want to be associated with the connotations they all have towards the concept of being a victim – someone who is passive and in need of support and comfort. They all want to be considered strong and as people who take their life in their own hands, even if they have been crime victims. In this way they are making resistance to the socio-structural contexts of victimization and negotiating their identity in relation to these contexts. Their agency is hence developed through what they experience through the body, which conforms to McNay's interpretation of the concept (2004). This attitude among the informants becomes very significant with Amanda's expression, "I feel more like a superhero".

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Quotes in Original Language

Amanda

Jag hade den som en sån tröst. Och det här låter helt knäppt, men jag längtade dit, för där gick hon runt, tillsammans med en massa kvinnor och de delade erfarenheter. (...) Jag menar inte att jag längtade till en sån situation, men det fanns nånting, som jag typ nästan blev lite avundsjuk på. En sån stark gemenskap mellan de kvinnorna och av att dela en sån ...alltså man skrattar åt det, man skämtar om det, det finns en slags galghumor kring helt sjuka saker som händer de här kvinnorna varje dag. Och nånting stort i mig längtade efter den typen av gemenskap. För så extremt var det i mig, men så extremt var det i mig *ensam*. Alltså just det där, man behöver inte nån som tröstar en och klappar en på kinden och stackars lilla dig, utan jag hade typ behövt nån stark person som visste vad jag hade gått igenom. Den boken var nog liksom mest den där jag liksom hittade tröst i och det låter ju helt absurt för det den gör är ju bara att beskriva fruktansvärda övergrepp.

När jag gick på gatan, när jag prostituerade mig, det är ju det som är ordet för det, då kände jag ingen maktlöshetskänsla, utan jag kände att jag var starkare och bättre än de människorna som utnyttjade min kropp. Jag bara tänkte, du är så jävla dum i huvudet, du är så patetisk. (...) Jag känner nån slags förakt, stackars dumma du, vilket tråkigt liv du måste ha. (...) Så jag har inte haft det så sexuellt att jag känt mig utsatt eller rädd. Snarare då, om jag skulle gå hem med en kille så kanske det skulle vara mer synd om honom, för att jag höll på och hade massa konstiga tankar.

Oavsett om folk visste om det eller om folk inte visste om det så kände jag ju mig som den personen, men då i större eller mindre grad av förljugenhet liksom... här berättar jag inte om det största i världen eller här berättar jag om det största i hela världen.

Alltså, frankly, det låter kanske jättefulnt mot de som inte känner så, men för mig känns det nästan som kapital nu. Jag tycker att den erfarenheten gör mig starkare på nåt vis. Alltså att jag vet nånting som nån annan inte vet. Alltså att det känns som en styrka mer än en svaghet.

Sara

Jamen det är ju fruktansvärt tragiska historier bara. Och det känner inte jag igen mig i alls, för jag är ju inte alls den typen av människa. Jag är ju utsatt för nånting som antagligen jättemånga människor varit utsatta för kanske. Och som ingen pratar om, på det sättet. Jag är ju en fullt fungerande människa med barn och familj liksom.

Sara: Det är ju jättehemskt att berätta att det här var jag utsatt för, tror jag...

Frida: Mm... varför är det hemskt?

Sara: För att, ehm... hur kunde jag vara så dum, liksom... eller, så tänkte ju inte jag då, men... men jag kan tänka mig att det är det som det handlar om, att man själv ändå känner sig korkad...

Frida: Känner du igen den känslan? Hur kunde jag vara så dum?

Sara: Ja... men... ja... Det är svårt att liksom tänka att... (suckar)... nämen jag kände väl så här att det här vill jag inte, men jag borde vilja det här... Nej, det här är jättesvårt...

För mig handlar det ju liksom om kontakt, kommunikation och njutning, gemensamt med någon annan person. På ett respektfullt sätt, ett hundra procent respektfullt vis. Och vad jag menar med det är att man kan ju då ha med sig de här erfarenheterna in i det. Då behöver man inte gå vidare utan då är de en del av det. (...) Har man känslor av kränkande saker som kommer tillbaks, då händer det liksom, just då. Och då måste det få hända och då är det ett möte människor emellan, liksom. Så är det för mig.

Molly

Vad är det som gör att det är så brännmärkt? Alltså, varför är det så svårt att erkänna att man har blivit förgripen på, eller utsatt för nånting? Alltså vad är det som gör att jag själv inte vill att någon ska få för sig att tycka synd om mig? Det är nånting med det där som jag egentligen tycker att man inte borde vara så rädd för helt enkelt. Men inte för den sakens skull bli passiv, för det är ju det som det

begreppet ibland innefattar. Ja men jag tänker att om man tänker på ett offer så tänker jag ju på nån som liksom är nedslagen, alltså nån som är körd, typ. Alltså, inte aktiv. Och det behöver man ju inte vara bara för att man är ett offer, egentligen.

Det här är ju också intressant, för att jag tycker att det finns ju olika normer i olika grupper, typ. Och där jag rör mig, där är ju inte asexualitet så spännande liksom. Utan där ska det ju vara mer... normen där är ju lite mer...kanske queer, då...i kontrast till den traditionella rollen, den monogama, heterosexuella, tvåsamma sexualiteten, som liksom ändå ska på nåt sätt...som man ändå ska kunna klara av. Det är ju typ den som jag har, men i mina kretsar så är ju det ganska tråkigt, om du fattar vad jag menar. Så ja, hela det här hur man knyter de här erfarenheterna till sex tycker jag är komplicerat.

Det gör personen till ett subjekt som agerar, som utnyttjar sin svaga offerposition till att manipulera. (...) Jag hade inte velat erkänna det för fem år sen. Och vad säger det liksom? Det tar ju bort hela den här, våldtagen är lika med god, våldtagen är lika med vit fast lite besudlad-bilden.

Jag har gjort exakt det där också! jag har gjort identiskt...typ...alltså verkligen exakt samma! jag känner verkligen exakt igen det där!

Rebecka

Jag slog nästan ihjäl honom, dock, ska tilläggas. Faktiskt. För han somnade, eller nåt, sen efteråt. Han höll på i fyra timmar med mig, fast sen så somnade han och jag får tag i nån jädra lampa, som jag börjar slå, såhär, i ansiktet på honom. Och höfterna, jag slog sönder höftbenet på honom och krossade ansiktet på honom (...)
När det hände så var jag mycket mer fokuserad på själva våldet, eller att jag hade utövat ganska mycket våld mot honom också. Det var så himla härligt, tyckte jag. Jag var ganska våldsam i den åldern också, jag hamnade i slagsmål och sånt ibland. Så att det låg nära till hands för mig att liksom slå nån. Men jag tyckte att det var så härligt, att när folk såhär ”åh jävlar jag hörde att du, såhär, spöade honom”. Det gjorde jag fan. Alltså, jag kände mig så himla häftig i det. Och så

nöjd (...) Jag tog den identiteten, som att ingen sätter sig på mig. Att jag var såhär tuff, inte nåt offer. Det var väldigt gött, faktiskt.

Jag får inte den behandlingen på några andra av mina trauman. Det är väldigt såhär sex, där har det hänt dig nånting. Men jag tycker såhär, att det är jobbigare att fira jul med en familj, en hel familj, det är jobbigare för mig än att han skulle råka slå till mig i sängen eller vad det nu skulle vara. Men jag är mer traumatiserad av familjeliv.

Om jag var ute och festade och hade roligt så gjorde jag fel. Och det här att titta på snygga killar så var det ”ska du göra det?” Alltså så att man belönas för rätt beteende och rätt beteende är att vara rädd och inte vilja ha sex, upplevde jag det som. Medan, här pratar jag om inte de närmaste förstås, men lite såhär ”oj, är du på fest?”, ”jaha, hånglar du?”. Så där kände jag att jag fick mycket mer förståelse när jag var rädd och inte kunde gå ut. Och det är ju trevligt med förståelse men det bekräftar allt. (...) Jag tror att jag förstärkte de saker som jag förväntades uppleva, att jag drog ut på min återhämtningstid för att det förväntades av mig att jag skulle må så himla dåligt.