RAPE BY SOMEONE YOU KNOW:  
A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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PURPOSE OF THESIS

The experience of acquaintance rape and assault is examined from both a personal and factual perspective. Designed to educate other students about acquaintance rape and assault, this thesis utilizes information gained from ten victims' experiences. An informal study was conducted to determine the similarities of acquaintance rape victims' attacks. Insight on their experiences was obtained through the use of a questionnaire and either telephone or personal interviews. The author also discusses the myths, perceptions, emotions and after-effects of acquaintance rape/assault. Suggestions are provided to help others learn effective strategies in preventing an acquaintance rape and assault from occurring.
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FOREWORD

Acquaintance rape/sexual assault is an issue that can no longer be ignored by society. The stereotype of a stranger jumping out of a dark alley is not always the case today. More and more the reality of rape is that the attacker will be someone the victim knows and trusts.

College women are a high risk group for this type of sexual violence. This is due in part to the college social scene, where ambiguity over what is expected of men and women regarding their dating relationships is prevalent. Confusion over behavioral roles, lack of communication and misjudgment can often lead to an unwanted sexual attack by an acquaintance.

Although I have tried in the past to appreciate and empathize with women who have experienced a rape or assault, I didn't fully understand what emotional trauma they had gone through until August 24, 1992, when I too became a victim of sexual assault. We can tell ourselves that it will never happen to us, but the reality is that it can.

Part of my own healing process is the composition of this thesis. Although it hurts to recall a not-too-distant memory that is very painful to me, I feel that I have something to offer. That "something" is knowledge which I've acquired from my own experience. I want to educate others about acquaintance rape and assault. The best way I know how is to tell you what myself and
others have felt during and after an attack. I interviewed ten other victims who agreed to talk with me about their experiences and also fill out a questionnaire I designed. The insight I have gained from their experiences and mine, along with the research I have done on acquaintance rape and assault, has allowed me to feel comfortable in sharing this crucial information with you. I hope and pray that this thesis will help you learn how to prevent an attack from happening to you.

First of all, I would like to clear up some terms and other notes of importance in regard to the thesis. **Acquaintance rape** can be defined as sexual penetration (penetration with penis of the vagina, rectum, or mouth) against one person's will by someone she knows. **Acquaintance assault** can be defined as sexual aggression (fondling of sexual organs, stimulation of vagina or rectum with hands or objects) against one person's will by someone she knows (Hughes, 1987, p.1). Both of these situations can involve physical force or threat of force, as well as verbal and mental abuse.

Please note that this thesis will be written in first person. I will be using facts and statistics to help support feelings and emotions. Making reference to "I" and to the volunteers with whom I spoke is done to ensure that the personal side of this difficult issue is addressed. One other note of concern before moving on has to do with male victims of acquaintance rape/assault. Although men can be, and are, victims of date rape and assault, this thesis will primarily focus on the female survivor. While females are more commonly victims of rape crimes, men are also at risk. In
fact, two of my interviews were with men. By not addressing acquaintance rape from a male point of view, I am by no means trying to ignore or belittle their experiences of sexual violence. I am simply trying to narrow the focus of acquaintance rape to a more manageable level for my thesis.

With this information in mind, I would now like to share with you what happened to me on August 24th and 25th, 1992 that has given me a strong conviction to write this paper. I'm going to be honest with my feelings to help you understand the range of emotions I was experiencing during the attack. It's sad to say, but I have a feeling that many of you will be put into a situation similar to the one I'm about to describe at some point during your life.

Amelia Earhart is quoted as saying, "Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace." You see, I had to write this thesis, for myself and for women everywhere. If I help just one person stand up and walk away from an acquaintance rape or assault, then I will find peace with myself. Please note that all names have been changed for anonymity.
PERSONAL STORY

It was a gorgeous Monday morning just two days before the beginning of my senior year. I was excited and looking forward to getting back into the routine of college life. In general, I felt happy and positive about my last year at Ball State.

It was about 11 a.m. when the phone rang. It was for me, a call from a guy friend named Mark. He was a high school buddy of my boyfriend and the boyfriend of my best girlfriend, so I'd known him for about four years and considered him to be a close friend. He was passing through town and was hoping we could get some lunch. We decided to go out and eat at a local hangout with one of my roommates and another girlfriend.

We were all in a good mood, drinking beer and enjoying ourselves. Mark kept saying that he had to get home, which was two hours away, and that Kim (his girlfriend) would be upset if she knew he was here partying. Well we decided to get more beer after lunch and head back to the apartment. The rest of the afternoon was spent playing drinking games. We were all getting "buzzed" and I told Mark he was welcome to stay overnight if he didn't want to drive the distance home; I thought this was safer anyway.

I could sense at times that Mark was coming on to me. He put his hand on my leg and tried to tickle me several times. Later, I came out of my bathroom to find him standing there, and he kissed
me. I drew back rather shocked and asked him why he did that. He'd said he didn't know. Almost the same scenario happened again about a half hour later. This time I said something like, "Look, this isn't right." He mumbled, "Yeah, I really should go." I thought he felt bad for his actions and that nothing else would happen; thus, I persuaded him not to drive home in his condition.

We continued partying well into the evening when my friends and I decided to go to another party. Mark didn't want to go so I fixed him a bed on the couch, and we were off. My friends and I got back about 12:30 in the morning and Mark was still awake and on the couch. I had drunk quite a bit and wanted to go to bed so I headed into my room - Mark followed soon after me. At first he was just sitting on the bed and talking to me. I was tired and really didn't want to discuss anything, that is until he said he felt there was something I should know. Any cloudiness in my head was gone at this point. I was scared to hear what he was about to say and was on guard immediately. He lay down then and put his arm around me and said that my boyfriend and his girlfriend had "been together" on several occasions. The news choked me up and I started crying uncontrollably.

I was confused, uncertain, and in a very fragile state of mind. Mark used this to his advantage because it gave him an "in" with me. While he stroked my hair, he said that I was beautiful and that I didn't deserve to be treated the way I had been. I was oblivious to what was really going on. I just thought he cared about how I was feeling. The next thing I knew he was kissing me.
Initially I kissed him back, and sort of floated off not realizing what was happening until he started pressing his body onto mine. I told him that I just wanted to be alone and asked him to leave. He said he knew how upset I was and that he was sorry I had to hear all this. He pulled me closer to him and kissed me again. He told me that we could "get back at them" (my boyfriend and friend) by making love to each other. I said no, and told him to leave. He did back off for a minute, but only to get inside the covers with me. All he had on were boxer shorts and he started to remove my pajama top. I was panicked and dazed, but told him this wasn't right and that I didn't want to do anything with him. He kept moving and talking, saying how good I felt and how much he wanted to have sex with me. He had taken one of my hands and pinned it above my head, while he took his other hand and went inside my underwear. I used my free hand to try and move his hand away from there, but he persisted saying he wanted to make me feel good. He took my hand and put it on his genitals and said, "Touch me, feel how much I want you." At this point, I was nauseous and in a state of shock I think, because all I could do was say "no" and just lie there. However, my "no" was not enough to make him leave. I don't remember what happened after this. Either he finally left, or I passed out from the combination of alcohol and mental abuse I had just suffered. I woke up a few hours later to find that my pajama bottoms were off and Mark was in my bathroom. He came out, saw that I was awake, and stripped down completely naked in front of me. All of the things that had happened just a few hours before...
carne rushing back in my head. I lay there numbly, staring at the ceiling, as he got into bed with me and started pressuring me again physically and emotionally to have sex. I remember feeling afraid, guilty and angry all at the same time, but couldn’t bring myself to do anything to fight him. At this point, he got on top of me and was close to having intercourse with me when the phone rang. It must have scared him back into reality because I’ve never seen someone jump up so fast. All I know is it saved me from having intercourse with him. Mark left a few minutes later. As soon as the door was closed behind him I went into a fit of uncontrollable tears and rage - all the anger and emotions I had felt (and had wanted to express during the attack) finally came out. I was furious, scared, and most of all ridden with shame and guilt.
INTRODUCTION

By now, you may have had many things run through your head as you read this. Maybe it shocked you, maybe it didn’t, and maybe you have been in a similar situation. I was a victim of acquaintance sexual assault. Mark used his physical force and verbal manipulation to put me in a vulnerable position, so he could commit acts of sexual aggression against me without my consent. What happened to me is a criminal act of violence. Although I was not physically hurt to the extent of bruises, cuts, and/or other visible wounds (like most people think must be present in a "real" rape), the emotional and mental abuse I withstood is something that I cannot put into words.

When it is someone you know, it is more difficult to define or admit that a situation like the one above is assault or rape, but it is. It’s easy to shift the blame on yourself when your attacker is a close friend or acquaintance. I know because I blamed myself too. The fact is, an attack like the one I just described is not my fault. I have been a victim of acquaintance rape/assault, and unfortunately, I am not the first or last person who will experience this sexual crime.

It is important to talk about the myths associated with acquaintance rape, and how these false impressions end up "blaming the victim". I want to uncover the underlying views of men and women in their perceptions of acquaintance rape, and how these
perceptions can shape whether or not an unwanted sexual act will occur. I also want to help you understand what to say or do to effectively avoid an attack from occurring. In doing so, there are things I need to call your attention to about my experience and those of the people I interviewed, such as sharing the wide range of feelings and emotions felt by the victim before, during and after an attack. I will also touch on the aftermath of a sexual assault or rape and discuss the process of reporting an assault or rape to the police, as well as getting help and support from others.

Finally, avoiding an assault or rape by an acquaintance is the whole purpose of this thesis, so I will discuss key ways to avoid an unwanted sexual attack by an acquaintance. I hope this thesis will open your hearts and minds to a better understanding of acquaintance rape and assault. With this in mind, should you find yourself in a similar situation, feeling the same emotions as outlined in this thesis, you will feel confident enough to know what to say or do to get out of the situation successfully.
MYTHS

Robin Warshaw in her book *I Never Called It Rape* points out that "one in four women will experience rape or attempted rape..., and of the women surveyed, 84% knew their attackers" (Warshaw, 1988, p. 1). These alarming figures come from a well-controlled study done of over 6100 undergraduate men and women at 32 colleges and universities by psychologist Mary P. Koss. This national survey, done for Ms. magazine, was the first of its kind designed to find out more about men's and women's attitudes on acquaintance rape. Unfortunately, society tends to ignore findings such as these. This is because it is well-ingrained into the minds of people that rape is committed by a strange, sex-crazed maniac who jumps out of the shadows at his victims. Today, just the opposite is true in more and more cases. Most rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. It is time to stop doubting that acquaintance rape/assault exists in society. Instead, it's time that we start finding ways to prevent future attacks from occurring.

Researchers have found that there are several factors that influence the occurrence or acceptability of acquaintance rape. Probably the most detrimental influence is that of the myths associated with acquaintance rape. In other words, society has formed what they believe to be truths about women who are raped or...
assaulted by people they know. The following is just a sample of how the real truth can be distorted (Warshaw, 1988, p. 19):

**MYTH:** Real rape is committed by strangers.

**TRUTH:** Rape by a friend, acquaintance or date is real rape and punishable by law.

**MYTH:** If there are no visible wounds, you haven’t been raped.

**TRUTH:** It’s rape whether or not there are physical wounds. Mental or emotional wounds are just as painful, if not worse.

**MYTH:** Women who don’t physically fight back, haven’t been raped.

**TRUTH:** It is rape when you are forced to have sex, regardless of whether you fight back or not.

**MYTH:** When a woman engages in kissing or petting with a man, she is agreeing to have sex with him.

**TRUTH:** Saying NO to sex is everyone’s right, regardless of the activities engaged in beforehand.

Because of myths like these, acquaintance rape is not taken seriously. The myth that an attack cannot be considered rape if the attacker is someone the woman knows, blames the victim. The myth asserts that unless a woman is attacked by a stranger who stabs her, physically beats her up, or leaves her in a ditch somewhere, it cannot be rape (Powell, 1991, p. 140). This is exaggerated of course, but the truth is society doesn’t empathize with a woman when she says that she was attacked by her date or friend. This societal doubt spins a web of guilt, self-blame and
denial around the victim. Either the victim doesn’t believe she’s been raped; or if she finally admits she has been raped, she won’t report it due to the fear (placed by society) of not being believed or of not having anything done about the attack (Ward, 1991, p.65).

PERCEPTIONS

With these and other false statements about acquaintance rape, it’s not surprising that both men and women are confused about what acquaintance rape and assault can be defined as. For example, one study showed that if women are asked if they have been a victim of rape, most will answer "no". However, if the question is worded, "Have you ever had sex without your consent and/or against your will," a larger percentage responded "yes" (Floerchinger, 1988, pp.1-2). The same study asked both men and women to define rape (Floerchinger, 1988, pp.34,38). Here are some of their different responses:

FEMALE:  *Sexual intercourse without consent
MALE:    *A sexual contact that is not approved by the person who is considered to be raped
FEMALE:  *When a girl says no, but is forced to
MALE:    *Forceful sex
FEMALE:  *Rape is a forced sexual action that is not asked to happen- but does for some unusual reason
MALE:    *Taking advantage of a woman
As you can see by these varied responses, a lot of work needs to be done in educating both sexes on acquaintance rape. Men and women have differing opinions and definitions of rape. For example, men can feel that at a certain point it's too late to say no to sex, or that when women engage in certain activities, this justifies men having sex with them. With ideas like these, the gap between how men and women look at and define acquaintance rape and assault widens. A study done to determine when males and females felt it was too late to say no to sex arrived at some interesting conclusions. For example, 31 of the 57 men surveyed felt that it was too late for a woman to say no to sex after their clothing had been removed. Only 13 of the 93 females surveyed said that it was too late. Also, 21 of these same men said that it was too late to turn down sex if the woman went to a motel room with them, versus only 9 of the women feeling this way (Christiano, 1992, p.18). Another study looked at particular situations, involving women’s verbal or nonverbal actions. If the woman initially says yes to sex then changes her mind, if she dresses suggestively, if she drinks or takes drugs, or if she agrees to go to his place are some activities that men feel give them the green flag in having sex with a woman (Gibbs, 1991, p.51). In similar cases, women are blamed for triggering the man’s
behavior. However, it needs to be pointed out again that regardless of any prior sexual activity or a last minute change of mind, either by the woman or man, when "no" is spoken, it needs to be respected.

These results show a decided difference in the perceptions of the two sexes in regards to the same scenario. Lack of the two sexes coming to a "meeting of the minds" could turn into an acquaintance rape or assault. Thus, it is important that men and women try to communicate what it is that they expect from each other at certain points during the date, relationship, or social setting. Men and women are confused by both the verbal and non-verbal communication of the opposite sex. We are trained by society to act a certain way in social relationships according to our gender. Warshaw says that "miscommunication may occur because men and women often interpret behavior cues and even direct conversation differently" (Warshaw, 1988, p.41).

For example, I went to an awareness seminar on acquaintance rape which was held for incoming pledges of fraternities and sororities on campus. They had a woman and man act out a scenario that clearly illustrated how words or actions can be construed differently. The man felt that the woman was giving off signals that she was interested in him so he makes an advance towards her. On the other hand, the woman was just being friendly, thinking that she'd like to get to know him better. The problem here lies in that "mixed signals" are being exchanged. What can happen at this
point is that the male interprets her friendliness as an invitation to have sex; he makes his move because he has been conditioned by society to respond aggressively. The female feels uncomfortable with his aggressiveness; she says "no," and it is interpreted as a "maybe" by the male (Hughes & Sandler, 1987, p. 2). Because she has been taught to respond passively, she is afraid to resist his advances because it's not appropriate. As ridiculous as this may sound, it's a very common occurrence.

During my attack, I remember feeling that I didn't want to hurt his feelings. Instead, I kept trying to bury my own. I felt I should just let him do what he wanted because I didn't want to risk a friend, someone I had liked and trusted, being mad at me. In a warped way, I felt it was my duty to oblige him, as though I didn't have the right to say no. He made me feel guilty for not wanting to have sex with him. One acquaintance rape victim said, "...when he tried to have sex with me, I asked him not to, but he didn't listen...I felt guilty that I didn't want to...that I said no" (Murnen, 1989, p. 95). I don't care how independent and outgoing a person you are, or what your relationship is with your attacker, when you are in a rape situation where the guy is someone you know, it makes it twice as hard to be assertive, to stand up for yourself and your rights against him.

Society needs to condition males that "sexual success is not scoring" ("Someone you know", 1986). Men believe they have the "right to sex," through traditional roles which teach them to
compete to get what they want. They are also encouraged to experiment with their sexual feelings as a part of their masculinity. Furthermore, men often perceive violence and force in more positive terms and may use them in relationships in order to reassure themselves of this masculinity (Aizenman, 1988, p. 309). Women, however, are socialized to be dependent on others, to be nurturers, to be "lady-like," and in many cases are discouraged from listening to and acting upon their own sexual feelings (Hughes & Sandler, 1987, p. 2). This supports how I was feeling during my attack. Even though I consider myself to be a strong-willed and independent woman, I still felt that it was my responsibility to suppress my needs and feelings in order to nurture his. I believe, as some researchers do, that many woman are so confused by this kind of socialization, that it can make it difficult for women to fight off a man's sexual advances (Podhoretz, 1991, p. 33).

Probably the best way to help men and women learn how to properly communicate with the opposite sex is to educate them on what perceptions each has by having classes or seminars for both sexes, similar to the one I attended on campus. Role-playing can significantly help students understand what men and women are thinking and feeling in regards to particular dating scenarios. It would also be helpful if men and women could tell each other what they wanted in relationships, setting guidelines that would allow students to understand the thinking of the opposite sex better.
For example, one study found that women wanted men to know certain things about their feelings and vice versa (Floerchinger, 1988, p. 54). Here are a few of their concerns:

Women wanted men to know 1) that they may enjoy kissing or being close, but that doesn't mean they want to have sex 2) they are afraid to hurt men's feelings and 3) they want men to be friends with them and not just want them for sex. The men wanted women to know 1) that they are afraid that women say "yes," but mean "no" 2) that they do want friendship with women and 3) they are afraid of being rejected. Laying all the cards out on the table would help reduce confusion and miscommunication between the sexes.

While most rape programming is skewed toward women, more and more programs on acquaintance rape are including men as well. However, most males are still not being educated about acquaintance rape and assault. It's important that both sexes understand what date rape is and how to prevent it. One author feels that the only way to get both male and female students involved is to present facts "credibly" (McEvoy, 1992, p. 43). McEvoy says that many males feel pre-judged, because they are all looked upon as potential rapists. Men need to be considered as part of the solution and not the problem. At this point, real communication between the sexes can begin, and a clearer understanding of what men and women really feel and want can be expressed in clear, concise terms.
EMOTIONS

In regard to feelings associated with an acquaintance rape or assault, I'll look at the emotions of myself and the women I interviewed - what we felt before, during and after our attacks. First of all, I want to address the thoughts and emotions that are present before the attack. At this point you have no preconceived ideas or thoughts about your date or friend because nothing threatening has occurred. If something is wrong, or just doesn't feel right, often a "little voice" inside you will pop up, causing you to either sit up and take notice or ignore. In my research I found that several recurring thoughts or feelings were present in regards to having a "gut feeling." It is said that most women have a strong sense of intuition. Women need to start listening to their "little voice" and trusting their own intuition when it comes to sensing that a situation is wrong. Several of the sources I consulted suggest that if women feel uncomfortable for any reason in a particular situation, they should get out.

In my situation I had felt uncomfortable early in the afternoon when Mark was tickling me. I didn't like him touching me, but I didn't say anything to him; I had suppressed my inner voice. Later, when he kissed me, I did confront him and I felt assured that nothing else would happen. While I'm not blaming myself for the attack, I wish I had listened to and been more
confident in what I was really feeling earlier in the day. Question number 18 on the questionnaire of other acquaintance rape victims (See Appendix A) lists a series of emotions that could have been felt by the women I interviewed at some point during their attack. This was probably the most difficult question of all to answer because it dredged up feelings during the attack that many tried to suppress soon after the rape or assault. The list is by no means exhaustive. I simply drew from my own experience and some of the emotions I had felt and I wanted to see if my experience was similar to others. I found out that I was not alone. Almost all of the volunteers had feelings of helplessness, denial, and fear during their attacks.

Studies have shown that many women have a sense of leaving their body, so to speak, as a way to shut out what is really happening to them. One woman said, "I wasn't there; I wasn't human; I was just a body" ("Against Her Will," 1989). This attests to the need for wanting to pretend that it happened to someone else. In my own situation I felt like I was "floating off." I just wanted to block out whatever was going to happen. I was denying that a close friend of mine was violating and manipulating me. Many times women will look up at the ceiling, or just close their eyes, falling into a numb-like state. These are survival tactics, too; women fall into these states because they're trying to deal with the loss of control and overwhelming helplessness that they feel. The victim, in order to survive the assault, will
sometimes adopt this calm, almost willing attitude even though in her mind she wants to kick, scream and fight back (Clark, 1992, p. 33). Fear and the need to feel secure during the attack also tie in to why women can't physically fight back. All of these feelings later produce a vacant feeling or loss of independence and self-worth. Victims can feel that they've been "taken." It is this reaction that causes victims to feel shame, guilt, anger and distrust long after the attack has happened.

Number 19 on the questionnaire (See Appendix A) asks what emotions are you still feeling today after the attack? I found that most of the women felt helpless, angry and distrustful of others. They also felt manipulated and taken advantage of, and in most cases, guilty. One volunteer said, "Sometimes I still feel a sense of helplessness, but most of the time I feel anger about the way he manipulated me." I felt this way too. I thought, "what's wrong with me?" Normally, I'm an independent, strong person who's usually in total control, so how could I have let him put me in such a vulnerable position? Then I felt guilty and blamed myself for not kicking or screaming at him to get the hell out my apartment. Feelings like these are common; however, the most important thing that all victims need to remember is that you have been raped or assaulted when you are forced to have sex or sexual acts committed against your will, whether you fight back or not (Warshaw, 1988, p. 19).

Dealing with these emotions after the attack is crucial. The
after-effects of acquaintance rape are life-altering. 82% of those in the Ms. survey said that their acquaintance rape or assaults had permanently changed them (Warshaw, 1988, p. 66). There are deeply-imbedded emotional scars that don’t just "go away." Many women don’t really know what they are feeling. They may question themselves about whether it’s right or wrong to say that what happened to them was rape. They question if they should tell anyone, and if they do, will anyone believe them? They’re afraid if they tell someone that they won’t be taken seriously. Probably the most detrimental feeling of all to the victim is that they have guilt feelings about the attack. Question number 10 (See Appendix A) of the interviews asked if the victim felt after the attack that it was their fault. Approximately 60% of them said "Yes." In response to question 11, "If yes to #10, do you still feel today that the attack was your fault?", approximately 20% said that they still did. Responses were such that they still felt they contributed to the assault, but were not "totally responsible" and one said, "Usually no, but sometimes I wonder...." Many women feel that they exhibited bad judgement, allowing them to feel partially responsible for the attack. Another volunteer said, "I still feel angry at myself for letting myself get into this situation...." All of these emotions have to be addressed as part of the victim’s healing process. Another victim I talked with said, "One thing I believe is incredibly hard to get over is that I went to his house...even though I know it’s not my fault, still
I went to his house." She says she knows that the attack was not her fault, yet she is still dealing with the guilt of having gone to his house. I understand their resentment because my assault took place in the comfort of my own bedroom. I too have questioned what I could have done differently. It's normal for victims to go back over the attack and "see" things now that they didn't during the actual assault. It's a natural feeling that people have to want to go back and change what cannot be changed. This is why it should be stressed that victims of acquaintance rape and assault are really survivors. They handled the attack the best they could at the time and under the circumstances (Powell, 1991, p.157). One volunteer that has realized this point and is trying to put her life back together said, "It's about surviving now."

Another frightening concern for the victim after an acquaintance rape occurs is seeing your attacker again. "Whenever I saw my attacker I'd have a 'fight or flight' response." This is what one of the woman I interviewed said in regards to seeing her attacker right after the rape, who raped her five years ago. She was raped by a trusted friend, someone with whom she worked, and reluctantly had to continue working with for several weeks after the attack. I asked the women (and men) I interviewed if they had seen their attackers since their attacks (See Appendix A, Question #14) and all of them said they had seen their attackers. Many of them described feeling "frozen", "scared" and "angry" upon seeing them again. It's not unusual for acquaintance rape victims to
encounter their attackers after the assault or rape due to the nature of their relationships. Many live in the same dorm, apartment or community. One woman said, "It was bad to see him, but it was good to see him, because it helped me get past some things" (Warshaw, 1988, p. 80).

Personally, I have seen Mark twice since he assaulted me, but only from a distance. I wasn’t sure how I would feel when I did see him again. In a strange way, I felt calm even though my adrenalin was pumping furiously. I guess I felt happy knowing I had written about what he had done to me. I felt satisfied that I had "something" over him, a certain will or confidence that he could never crush again. However, my feeling this way has been very recent. At first I did receive a phone call from him about eight hours after he had left my apartment. He apologized for hurting me, repeating over and over again, "I’m sorry, Tanya... God what have I done." All of my hatred came out at that moment and I asked him, "Didn’t you hear me say ‘no’?" He said, "yes." I then asked, "Did I look happy?" He said, "no". He even went as far as saying, "You’re not going to press charges against me are you, Tanya?" He knew that he had done something criminally wrong or he never would have asked me that question. In one sense, I felt victorious because I could tell myself that I was not to blame. However, I also hated him for thinking that he could just call me up and say "I’m sorry" and expect me to forget everything. I haven’t spoken with him since August 25, 1993.
Unfortunately, acquaintance rape and assault by someone you know can be much more devastating to the victim than if a stranger-rape occurs. What happens is that in acquaintance relationships a certain trust is developed. When a rape or assault occurs with the acquaintance, that same trust is used against the individual (McEnvoy & Brookings, 1984, p. 30). This causes all sorts of mental obstacles in the healing process after the rape.

One mental block is that many victims will "re-experience the trauma through dreams or recurrent nightmares" (Burgess, 1985, p. 50). This frightening intrusion into one's life can haunt a victim for years after the attack. Several of the women I interviewed reported having disturbing nightmares as well as daydreams at all times of the day; some still have them today. The day after my attack, classes were scheduled to begin for fall semester. Despite my attack having just occurred, I was determined to put it out of my mind. I forced myself to go to class anyway and had painful flashbacks of my attack to the point that I had to excuse myself from class or risk a public outburst.

Another obstacle is that the woman feels distrustful of herself for making a bad judgement of a person she thought she knew, and distrustful of all others because now it's not just the stranger jumping out of the dark that poses a threat, but also the "guy next door" (Warshaw, 1988, p. 70). For many acquaintance rape victims recovering from the trauma takes longer than with stranger-rape victims. One study found that it can take up to
three years longer for an acquaintance rape victim to recover from an attack, than it does for a stranger-rape victim (Warshaw, 1988, p. 65). A woman feels invaded and violated in any rape; however, when the attacker is someone she knows, the victim feels that she cannot find protection or support from anyone; no one may be trusted.

CONFIDING IN SOMEONE

Because this trust has been violated, it's not easy for the victim to confide in someone about her attack, but this is another important step in the healing process. First of all, victims should not try to tough it out alone because there are others who can help. Getting support is not a sign of weakness, or an admittance of defeat. By telling someone about the attack, the victim is taking steps to make sure that this won't happen to her again. Because of all the myths about acquaintance rape, it's understandable why many victims want to keep their attacks buried within them for weeks, months, even years before allowing themselves to talk about them (if they ever do). Research shows that a victim is more likely to report being raped by a stranger than to press charges against a friend or relative (Clark, 1992, p. 51). This goes back to the disbelief that can develop when the victim finally realizes that even someone they thought they could trust is capable of rape or assault; it also
goes back to the fear that nobody will believe them if they confide in someone.

I remember when I made the first call to tell someone about my attack. I was confused and scared about what had just taken place with Mark. I knew deep down that what he had done was wrong because I had never felt so helpless, sick and out of control. I just didn’t know if what Mark had done to me was criminally wrong. I guess I was afraid of not being believed too, especially by my boyfriend and our mutual friends. The woman I had called was from a victim’s advocacy group in town. She asked me the following questions, "Do you have men living in your apartment complex?" I replied that I did. Then she asked, "If a neighbor from another apartment, whom you didn’t know, had done what your friend did to you last night and this morning, would you think that it was wrong?" I answered "yes" without hesitation. She made me realize that my situation was no different than if a stranger had broken down the door and attacked me. Her words were soothing, but I was still overcome with the fear of jeopardizing other people’s lives (mutual friends) who would undoubtedly be affected, should I make the assault public. Here again, I was putting Mark’s and our mutual friends’ needs first, denying my feelings so I could protect theirs. It took a lot of counseling to help me see that I was doing this and that it was wrong.

For me, simply regaining control of myself was the first thing I needed to do. In order to try to do this I called the
Counseling and Psychological Services Center on campus. Unlike other victims, I was able to talk about some details of my assault right away. I became furious right after the attack and was so enraged that I channeled all of my energy into getting back at Mark and making myself stronger. However, I also began to unconsciously suppress feelings that I wouldn’t allow myself to address until later in counseling. I removed myself from my own situation and saw the whole thing as if it happened to someone else. It was as though I became a mediator between Mark and Tanya. I viewed the whole situation as a battle that I had to win for Tanya. Meanwhile my feelings of self-worth, confidence and self-esteem were diminishing because I was ignoring that I was the victim.

It takes a long time to get to the heart of all the anger, guilt and other emotions. I took on counseling on a week to week basis for a semester to sort out the buried feelings and to help me rebuild my confidence and self-esteem. To this day I still don’t feel that I am the same strong, independent person that I was before the attack. When Mark sexually assaulted me, he robbed me of my confidence, self-esteem and integrity. There are still times that I look back on the attack and question and blame myself. However, I do know that I was the victim, not Mark; I know that the attack was not my fault; and I know that in reality I am the person who has more power and control over their life, not my attacker. I could not have come out on top, nor have had the courage to write this thesis, if I hadn’t received the help and support from
psychological counseling. It is crucial for victims to receive professional help following an acquaintance rape or assault. You will be heard, not judged, and will receive the necessary moral support for what you have just endured. I also believe that if victims can take it one step further by reporting the attack or pressing charges, perhaps the myths of acquaintance rape will be laid to rest, and the blame will shift from the victims to the offenders.

Filing a report or pressing charges is another issue that I want to address. Two of the questions on my survey dealt with this (See Appendix A). Question number 6 asks, "Did you press criminal charges against your attacker?" Number 7 then asks, "If no to #6, do you wish today that you had pressed charges? The majority of answers to question 6 were "no". Interestingly, I received an overwhelming response of "yes" to question 7. One volunteer replied in her comments to me, "Don't regret pressing charges just do it...I'll regret it (that she didn't press charges) the rest of my life." It was her response that gave me the strength and courage to listen and really hear what all of these brave victims were telling me - press charges, because they wish now that they had. I did begin legal action and will talk about this in further detail later.

The majority of rape cases in America go unreported. Using the estimate that for every one reported rape, six go unreported, the FBI found that in 1991 as many as 639,560 rapes
were not reported (Christiano, 1992, p. 141). More and more women, however, are reporting their attacks and in some cases taking them to trial with the hope of seeing justice done. According to Linda Fairstein, a Manhattan prosecutor, date rape convictions are on the rise: "In 1972 there were 18 convictions in sexual assault cases in New York City...now, I think, there have been several hundred successful convictions." She says, "Women can recover from rape, from the hopelessness and from the feeling that the guy will never be punished. Recovery is helped immensely by a conviction" (Carlson, 1991, p. 14). While more cases are coming to trial, it needs to be pointed out that many times the "legal definition of consent is often determined not from the woman's perspective, but from the man's" (White & Niles, 1990, p. 4). In other words, it is very difficult for a woman to prove her innocence in an acquaintance rape trial. A lawyer must prove not only did the woman not consent to sexual activity, but also the man was aware of the non-consent and forced her anyway.

Part of my healing process was to report my attack to the university police. It took me almost two months to make the decision to bring this into the law's hands; but I had to do it, especially after hearing the responses of the women I interviewed. Despite beliefs that college police or law enforcement in general are insensitive to students who are victims of sexual violence, many today are being trained in how to sensitively handle rape victims. I was relieved when a woman detective was assigned to
take my statement. She was both considerate and sensitive to my emotions. Although the process of pressing charges can be long and drawn out, I really wanted to go ahead with the initial steps. The detective listened intently to my story and then had me fill out a report or statement. This was very difficult because I had to recall every minute, painful detail of my attack. After this they inform you that they will send a notice to your "alleged" attacker to also fill out a police report for his version of the situation. I was told that if Mark didn’t do this he would be summoned to do so. Mark did fill out the report and had it sent to campus police. Several weeks later I received his report from the detective. I cried for a long time after reading what he had written. The facts and events were distorted beyond belief. I was told by my counselor that I should expect the worst, but I wasn’t prepared to read his version of an "innocent attraction between two people" after all the pain I had suffered. My next step was to take both the reports into the city prosecutor. After almost six months and having heard no news from the prosecutor’s office, I called to find out where my case stood. I was told that nothing had been done. If I wanted to see things progress I would have to go through Victim’s Advocacy, a group that helps victims understand and use the legal system. I was told a victim must have recommendation from this organization before criminal charges are filed (at least in Delaware County).
AVOIDANCE

If only one thing is learned by reading this thesis, I would hope that it be to learn how to successfully avoid or at least handle an acquaintance rape situation. I would like to share with you the key ways to recognize a potential assault situation and offer suggestions on what steps can be taken to help avoid the threat of being raped or assaulted by an acquaintance.

First of all, women need to be aware of their surroundings. Most assaults take place in an isolated spot. When on a date, insist that you only go to public places where you will be around other friends or people. Use your best judgement, especially in situations that feel "wrong." As I mentioned earlier, if you start to feel uncomfortable in a situation - get out. Trust your feelings always. It's better to be overly cautious, than to become a victim.

Another issue is the role that alcohol and drugs play in acquaintance rape situations. College life breeds "partying," and many times perceptions are clouded and inhibitions freed in social situations where drinking is involved. In my own assault, alcohol was involved. I drank quite a bit over several hours, and Mark could see what kind of vulnerable state I was in; I became an "easy target" for him. While I know that I am not to blame for the attack, I do know that I would have been in better control of my
emotions and vulnerability had I been sober. Alcohol and drug use affect both the mind and body, causing you to lose control over your emotions and thoughts. Drinking does not mean that if you are attacked it is your fault, but staying sober is your best chance for remaining in control of a situation and avoiding an acquaintance rape (Warshaw, 1988, p.155).

Don't believe the myths associated with acquaintance rape. Believing that you are supposed to give in to a man's advances is wrong. Realize that stereotypes prevent you from expressing your true feelings. For example, if you feel angry at a guy from coming on to you, say so. Don't remain silent because society says women are supposed to be passive. Stand up for what you really want, and don't be afraid to voice your concerns. This goes along with being assertive and communicating what you really mean. When you say "no" say it with conviction. Say "yes" only if you really want to, versus saying "yes" if you are just trying to avoid hurting the man's feelings. Only you know what your real feelings are. Listen to and be in touch with them at all times (Floerchinger, 1988, p.53).

Communication is crucial. Men and women need to learn to communicate openly with one another. Although it's easier said than done, it's a good idea to discuss sexual expectations with a new date so there are no gray areas as to what you want from each other. Making your intentions and feelings perfectly clear can be difficult. You must fight against the instinct to remain silent
when you feel uncomfortable about the way the date or social situation is headed (Powell, 1991, p. 152). Besides if your date or friend calls you a "prude" or other degrading names because you won’t succumb to his advances, then you don’t need him in your life anyway. Take care of yourself and don’t worry about saying no and how it will affect them and their feelings.

Finally, there are some danger signs to look for in men who may become violent or threatening to you in a social setting. Keep in mind that identifying a potential rapist is not an easy task. A nice, "normal" man could be your attacker. However, some men can give off clues that may help women recognize a threat and steer clear of them. For example, watch out for men 1) who do not listen to you or ignore what you say, 2) who ignore your personal space or get too close, 3) who express anger towards women in general or negative emotions toward females, 4) who try and make you feel guilty or accuse you of being "uptight" if you resist their advances, 5) who act jealous or possessive, 6) who drink or take drugs often, 7) who are violent or physically rough even in playful or innocent situations, and 8) who act in an intimidating way towards you both in verbal and physical gestures (Hughes & Sandler, 1987, p. 4).

Unfortunately, just knowing about the warning signals and prevention techniques for handling or avoiding an acquaintance rape situation may not always prevent an attack from occurring. Many circumstances may be beyond our control, like the presence of
physical force and/or verbal threats. When a person is involved in a threatening situation, she can become confused and out of touch with reality. Her thinking process becomes distorted and any hope of taking action against the attacker is dissipated. She is vulnerable, scared, and most of all, completely overcome with a sense of helplessness. As a victim, you must remember that if you were forced to commit sexual acts against your will through the use of mental and physical abuse and/or verbal threats, you were raped or assaulted. There are no if’s, and’s, or but’s about it; the attack is in no way your fault. Acquaintance rape situations may involve different circumstances, but one thing they all have in common is that one person is taking advantage of another person’s right - her right to say no and mean it.
CONCLUSION

Acquaintance rape/assault is happening everyday to women (and men) in small towns, in cities, on college campuses, and in private homes. The fact is the majority of assaults and rapes in this country are committed by someone we know - an acquaintance, a friend, a date or significant other. This sexual crime cannot be ignored. Acquaintance rape and assault invites controversy and confusion, misunderstanding and miscommunication in society today. It’s time we put stereotypes of men’s and women’s roles in social relationships to rest, and start to listen to the real needs and feelings of the opposite sex. It’s time to stop believing the myths associated with acquaintance rape and assault and start educating men and women on the facts. Most importantly, it’s time to stop blaming the victim, and instead start convicting the perpetrators for violating and manipulating another human being into committing acts of sexual violence against their will.

It’s not going to be easy to break the mold that has formed society’s way of thinking in regards to acquaintance rape or assault. I feel that it can be done, but it’s going to take a lot of courage and faith on the part of victims everywhere to stand up for their rights as individuals and as human beings. Until then, I hope and pray that both men and women will learn to respect each other’s feelings and needs so that we can all live at peace with
If you are a victim or know someone who has been a victim of acquaintance rape or assault, please know that you are not alone. I encourage you to seek help from a close friend, or a professional counselor. It is important that you tell someone about your attack so that you can learn how to deal with all of the frustration, guilt and emotional pain you are going through. It's not easy to take this step, but have faith in knowing that you can and will have the strength to pull your life together again, even if right now it's hard to admit to yourself that you have been a victim of sexual assault or rape. Remember: Acquaintance rape is a crime. Just because your attacker is someone you know, it does not make sex right when he has forced you against your will; YOU HAVE BEEN WRONGED, AND IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT.
APPENDIX A

CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY
ON SEXUAL ASSAULT/RAPE BY ACQUAINTANCE

INSTRUCTIONS: This confidential survey is part of an Honors study on acquaintance assault/rape. Please answer the questions honestly. All responses will remain anonymous. The results will be included in an Honors Thesis to create awareness, and hopefully help prevent future attacks from occurring. Thank you for sharing.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS:

Date Rape or Acquaintance Rape - Victims experienced acts that involved sexual penetration against their will by someone they knew.

Sexual Assault - Victims experienced acts of sexual aggression (without penetration) against their will by someone they knew.

1. Using the definitions above, were you a victim of:
   Date Rape_____ Sexual Assault_____ Both_____

2. What was your age at the time of the assault/rape?_____

3. If you were in high school or college at the time of the attack, please circle the corresponding year:
   HIGH SCHOOL - Fr. So. Jr. Sr.
   COLLEGE - Fr. So. Jr. Sr. Graduate Student

4. Did you tell anyone about the sexual assault/rape after the attack happened?
   YES NO

5. If yes on #4, check the persons who were told about the attack:
   Female Friend(s)___ Male Friend(s)___ Boyfriend___
   Acquaintance(s) of the attacker___ Police___
   Counselor/Psychologist___ Religious Counsel___

6. Did you press criminal charges against your attacker?
   YES NO
7. If NO to #6, do you wish today that you had pressed charges?  
   YES    NO

8. After the attack, did you know that you had been a victim of sexual assault or rape?  
   YES    NO

9. If no to #8, how long before you realized that you had been sexually assaulted or raped? ________________________________

10. At the time, did you feel that the attack was your fault?  
    YES    NO

11. If yes on #10, do you still feel today the attack was your fault?  
    YES    NO

12. Was your attacker under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the attack?  
    YES    NO

13. Were you under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the attack?  
    YES    NO

14. Have you seen your attacker since the sexual assault or rape?  
    YES    NO

15. Have you spoken with your attacker since the sexual assault or rape?  
    YES    NO

16. If yes to #15, did you talk of the sexual assault or rape?  
    YES    NO

17. If yes to #16, did the attacker admit to committing an act against your will?  
    YES    NO

18. Please circle all the emotions that were felt during the actual sexual assault or rape by acquaintance:
   
   Fear     Paralysis     Helplessness     Numb     Used
   Disbelief  Shock  Anger  Denial  Flattered
   Nauseous  Passiveness  Guilt  Violated  Shame
   Manipulated  Consoled  Aroused  Paranoia  Distrust
19. Which of the above circled emotions are you still feeling today in regards to the attack? 

20. Comments: 

____________________________________________________________________________________
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