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# HUSH

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# **HUSH**

By  
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An undergraduate honors thesis in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
In University Honors and English

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2018

# HUSH

## Abstract

In the midst of my freshman year of college in 2013, I was abducted and sexually assaulted while attending a party in my dorm building. I was taken away from my home under the influence of a date rape intoxicant, vanished from all consciousness and whisked into the darkness of that cold October night in Portland, Oregon. Fortunately, with the help from various doctors and two years of specialized rehabilitation, I have renewed my strength in mental stability, professionalism and verbal confidence to tell my story and establish a sense of closure for my own victimization.

To achieve this closure, I question how art therapy and the use of poetry can assist in the recovery process for rape victims and raise awareness of the contributors for rape culture on college campuses? In this collection, I focused on the trials of rape recovery and ending the silence and oppression of sexual assault. With *Hush*, I spoke for myself and for anyone in search of representation for their own experiences, and those who are in need of appropriate resources to service their recovery. This book is as much a self reflection as it is a topic of conversation for rape culture and its effects on people of all sexuality in the world today.

## Introduction

When it came to writing a rather personal and creative thesis, I learned rather quickly that I needed both scholarly and artistic resources regarding my topic, to authentically answer my thesis question. I had to look at significant relations that paralleled my topics of both poetry and scholarly research for the sake of retrieving formal information to answer a constructed thesis question. While I was brainstorming my poetry book and generating ideas about its main focus of rape and recovery, the most relevant topic intertwining an opportunity for scholar based research and freedom for personal expression was the presence of modern rape culture in society, particularly targeted toward college campuses.

I knew beforehand, that *Hush*'s focal point would center on my personal experience for the creative content, but my formal research needed to answer a specific question of fluctuating statistics, like the rise of rape culture and an absence for rape education on academic platforms. Since I was abducted from my dorm room on a college campus, I wanted to center my research primarily on campus rape culture awareness, along with research surrounding the benefits and effectiveness of art therapy for rape victims. My research on rape culture and art therapy not only educates my audience, it also pairs nicely with my creative process. This research allowed me to bring a personal artwork to the forefront of my thesis, along with a thesis presentation where I will speak about the contributing outliers of rape culture and engage a conversation with both students and the public surrounding available resources for anyone looking to start their own rehabilitation.

Sexual assault is beyond a significant problem on college campuses. Yet, hardly anyone seems to be able to talk about it. Instead, Colleges and Universities turn their heads to easier

excuses for campus rape that surround substance abuse and excessive partying. Meanwhile, the real problem produced by rape culture is the prevailing silence and lack of academic disapproval for normalizing rape as a focal point in the classroom. Linguistic factors within our dominant language contribute to a hostile environment that we have internally socialized for centuries. Sexually violent humor, including rape jokes, myths, and offensive metaphors, are contributors to this aggressive mentality and normalize it within society (Kondos.1). Instead of inviting conversations based around discussing what these definitions of rape, sexist humor, rape myth and influential media really mean, we as a society cover these topics with ambiguous definitions of what rape culture and consent really is. This ambiguity makes it almost impossible for victims to decide whether their rape was in fact really rape, or whether they can report their assaults. Instead, we silence and shame rape victims into a suppression that for some people, lasts a lifetime.

In this thesis, I will briefly discuss the contributors of rape culture that I plan to speak about in my thesis presentation. Each contributing factor is an important outlier in regards to the support of rape culture. I believe these factors should be taught to students on college campuses in order to spread awareness and promote the fight for decreasing rape culture on college campuses and in society as a whole. Considering my thesis surrounded rape and recovery, I wanted to use my presentation as a tool for supporting those in need of resources. I will then discuss how my process played out in the duration of creating *Hush*, my personal experience with art therapy, and how I answered my thesis question. *Hush* is not just a thesis project, it's a chance to make a real difference for the lives of those suffering from their own assaults and to help anyone in need of appropriate representation.

When I took on this project, there were a number of factors I wanted to include as opportunity for educational value and a resource for people whom are either interested in Rape culture, or are in need of resources. The project was not created to just focus on the personal content in my book, *Hush*. This was an important piece of the project for me, because I wanted to produce a piece of work that was as selfless as possible, while simultaneously being a project dedicated completely to the self. To cover the bases of rape culture awareness, I will briefly discuss the contributing factors of rape culture, and how I have personally been affected by each factor, along with how I was able to use the resource of art therapy to redirect my suffering into a creative process of recovery in my book, *Hush*. Amy K. Backos and Barb E. Pagon wrote an article called *Finding a Voice: Art Therapy with Female Adolescent Sexual Abuse Survivors* Where they speak about the benefits of Art therapy for rape survivors. This article is one I will reference various times throughout this thesis due to its knowledgeable and passionate content for the sake of educating the public about rape culture and artistic recovery resources. In the very beginning of the article, Backos and Pagan make a statement regarding rape culture that I believe fits the parameters of exactly what I am to do with my thesis and my creative work. Backos and Pagan say:

Teaching adolescent survivors about the rape culture provides them with a more global perspective of sexual abuse. The survivor then views sexual abuse as a cultural and global problem rather than as a personal problem. Shifting the focus allows survivors to recognize the commonality of their experience as well as the error in attributing blame to the survivor of the crime. Addressing the issue of

rape culture with adolescent survivors provides another way for them to integrate the abuse into their lives (Amy K. Backos & Barb E. Pagon.126).

### Linguistic Factors

What people struggle the most with regarding linguistic expression, are the real impacts that violent and sexist language provide for present rape culture, especially for students on college campuses. Every two minutes, someone in the United States is raped. Between 20-25% of women and 3% of men will experience an attempted or completed sexual assault in college (Burnett.465). The compliance of consent is the main target when it comes to victims remaining unsure if they were raped or not, due to their inability to remember if they gave consent, and whether it was physical or verbal consent. This prevalence is alarming and these are only estimates because rape is notoriously underreported due to women who are afraid of the repercussions when coming out as a victim (Kondos.3).

But what is the definition of rape? A person is guilty of rape if he or she has sexual intercourse with a complaining witness against their will, by force, threat or intimidation; or if the complaining witness is mentally incapacitated or physically helpless (Kondos.4). The FBI recently added to the official rape definition that an assault can expand to oral penetration, this including the vagina or anus, no matter the distance or quantity. Unfortunately most victims don't know the true meaning of verbal consent and believe that if they didn't say "NO" than it was not actual rape. This is why when there is a dramatic lack or absence of rape education, these crimes go unrecognized and the victims feel oppressed and refuse to come forward about their experiences.

This kind of dominant language does aim toward women in specific and include words like “Bitch” making women inferior to men and one another. Along with “Slut” referring to female rape victims who were accused of wanting the assault. When women unwittingly use the dominant language, they are accepting their secondary position to men and are encouraging this outlier of rape culture. The dominant language system used by both males and females reflects rape myths, places women in a subordinate position, and indicates that men's dominant place in society has allowed them privileges to create and control the language and belief system regarding date rape (Kondos 6). More often than not, women aren't aware of using the linguistic factors that support rape culture and allow males to justify their attacks.

Rape victims are often so terrified by the possible reaction from friends and family, and that they will be blamed for their victimization. This fear causes victims to isolate and avoid both talking about rape or reaching out for support. We as a community, have created this platform of fear with rape culture and this dominant pro rape language. What a number of people don't realize, is that by staying silent, victims are supporting this dominant framework and letting the attackers walk away without consequence. Building a strong communication system for the public surrounding rape culture, in grade schools and on college campuses is crucial to the degradation of the dominant language used by the perpetrators in modern rape culture. In my book, I will discuss my personal experience with linguistic factors targeting both myself and strangers I've observed in public settings and on PSU campus. Linguistic factors are common, everyday small talk, thorough conversations and subliminal messages that leads to the normalized system which allows sexist oppression and rapists to attack on a daily basis without a single repercussion.

My personal experience with the the effects of language surrounding rape culture and decreasing female worth, was particularly shameful for me immediately after my assault. Since I was abducted at a party that took place in a college dorm, everybody knew each other. I attended a small private college, where the community was very intimate, and secrets were hard to keep. Everyone who attended the party, was someone I was either friends with or was acquainted with. This was the same fact for my rapist, who was also a student of the same school. My rapist had a known reputation for being a sort of “player” around the dorms. He was someone who had a nice exterior, presented himself as a charming, knowledgeable and attractive young man. There were plenty of girls whom he had slept with that actually told good stories of their experiences with him, and it made him desirable. So, being the free and independent eighteen year old that I was, I thought I’d jump on the bandwagon, and see what all the hype was about.

However, my story did not play out like the others I had heard before. Innocent flirting, transformed into a full blown attack in a matter of hours. After I was drugged, and force fed Sailor Jerry’s, I was a bit of a mess. Unfortunately I still to this day cannot remember I single thing about the party after my second drink. Although, I was told details of my condition during the remainder of the night, before I was abducted altogether and removed from the dorm building. Apparently I had gone from a completely conscious, maybe a little tipsy state of mind, to an absolute blackout in a matter of an hour. I could hardly stand up straight, spoke complete gibberish, fell down a flight of stairs, and laughed the entire way down. To everyone else, I just had too much to drink, blacked out, and was acting ridiculous.

So, when people from the party saw my rapist help off the ground, as I used his shoulders as my kickstand, they didn't suspect anything out of the ordinary. As the night led on, I had

completely disappeared. Two days later, the host of the party mentioned how inappropriate my behavior was that night. How I needed to respect myself, and learn to hold my liquor. I heard the words “Slut” and “Easy” and “Desperate” bounce off the rims of my ears throughout the hallways at school and in between the cracks of my dorm building. My experience with linguistic factors acted as the kindling that set my trauma spiral into a burning motion. It took a little over two years after my assault before I could utilize linguistic factors into a positive fuel for creative release in my recovery process. The first piece of creative literature I produced as a result of my experience with this kind of language and harmful labels was “R”, the first piece of poetry featured in *Hush*.

#### Rape Humor

Attitudes that support comedic hostility and suppression are an important predictors of sexual aggression. The most common attitudes are rape myth acceptance, acceptance of interpersonal violence, adversarial sexual beliefs and hostility toward women (Ryan and Kanjorski.744). Along with this, traditional attitudes that have been targeted women have also associated with aggression in men, these hostile attitudes and aggression towards women hold a connection to rape culture that is associated with the enjoyment of sexist humor. Sexist jokes may be used to test the waters with potential sex partners, they may be used to express repressed desires, Or they may be used in a hostile manner (Ryan and Kanjorski.744). Hostile jokes are used to attack individuals, groups of people, commonly used to reject and humiliate. Rape humor can also express a sense of dominance over a person of vulnerability.

Along with this, condoning sexist jokes and teasing individuals in an offensive manner is considered sexual harassment. It's easy to claim that jokes are not to be taken seriously, yet sexist

humor not only offends, but also supports rape culture and normalizes attitudes of sexual aggression and verbal abuse. When we target the difference of sexist humor from males and females, men are encouraged to sustain these attitudes. Women are put in a double-bind regarding their proper response to sexist humor. Women usually laugh at men's jokes, out of their pre diagnosed need for male approval. However, to laugh at a sexist joke may suggest that the joke was appropriate and funny. On the other hand, not laughing may imply that the woman is defensive and lacks a sense of humor. Thus, men may use sexist humor in a non-conscious hostile manner toward women. Their tendentious jokes can send a message that cannot overly be challenged. Moreover, they may interpret any audience reaction as support for their belief system (Ryan and Kanjorski.746).

Sexist humor serves as a support system for rape culture and is being excused everyday by the silence and non disagreement of such language targeted at people in public settings and at students on college campuses. I have personally witnessed sexist humor on PSU campus and in my classrooms, without any means of disapproval or prevention for this kind of inappropriate humor. Women who have relatively more hostile beliefs about women may enjoy sexist and hostile humor about women more than those who dont (Ryan and Kanjorski.753). However, that does not excuse the use of humor and both females and males should also educated about the impacts of sexist humor and discouraged to support this outlier of rape culture. As many people we can educate about the effects of sexist humor, the better prepared we can make individuals for locating this kind of sexual harassment and preventing future assaults. In *Hush*, I produce a poem focused solely on the use of rape jokes.

This component of rape culture surrounding the use of humor is one I have struggled with the most in my personal life with my friends and is highly accepted by society as a whole, especially in professional comedy. The poems that targeted or regarded on my opinions of rape jokes is not so straightforward, as it is subtle, like the implementation of rape and humor I witness in my everyday life. What I've disclosed in *Hush*, are all of the things I've ever wanted to tell my friends for years about what it is to live as a victim. Most of what I had to say was abstract, and they would have had to go through my experience to fully understand what I talk about in my poetry. However, that's exactly how I wanted *Hush* to be. A book that made you think, that when read all the way through, the reader has to go back and read it again, and again. I couldn't filter or simplify my work for the sake of empathy. If I had filtered or simplified my experience, I wouldn't have recovered. My book is meant to reach those with paralleling experience, those who are looking for the words that will resonate with them on that same level of abstraction and complexity.

### Rape Myth

With the involvement of linguistic factors and the use of sexist humor standing as the strong foundations of rape culture, along comes the common occurrence of rape myths. Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women (Kondos.10). This kind of support for rape culture is most widely known for its suppression and victim shaming. This contributor is not segregated to women alone. An example of a rape myth, is that the victim asked for it because they wore revealing clothing, went to the wrong party, were under the influence of drugs and alcohol, or perhaps they were dancing provocatively at a concert. Another

common myth about rape is that the offender is usually a stranger, when in reality it is usual that the victim knows the offender. If there is a personal relationship with the offender, then the victim is less likely to report to the police because they don't want to start trouble with the perpetrator or with the mutual people around them. Society also views acquaintance rape as less serious than stranger rape, which causes the victim to self blame (Kondos.10).

Rape myths represent victims as both guilty and irresponsible. It projects false facts into society about Rape and how it occurs for victims and excuses the absence of consent for assaulters to take advantage and walk away free of consequence. College campuses are a dominant hegemony for rape myths and encourages attackers to be praised by their friends while victims are blamed for what happened to them, as if they gave consent by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. I believe The only way to implement a decrease of perpetual rape myths is to educate students and the public about rape statistics so they can locate rape myths they occur. These lessons could include percentages of rape on college campuses per day, locating designated safe zones on campus and in public places that one could reach resources available to them. One of the best strategies to prevent rape myths from spreading is by using the buddy system. Having a friend that can act as a vocal and confident defense witness for you and others serve as an advantage in taking down the rumors and preventing rape myths about you or someone else.

The most common (and most horrid) rape myths are that women enjoy rape, no means yes, husbands can rape their wives, women lie about being raped and no women can be raped against her will (Wise.3). It is also important to note that these myths are not limited toward women and affect all genders and sexualities. I was influenced by rape myths in the early days of

my recovery and I let it silence my voice for almost two years. The use of linguistic factors and rape myth intertwined with one another when I was shamed for my victimization.

In *Hush*, I speak about how my experience with rape myths acted like whispers in my head, voices that kept me up at night, followed me around and postponed my ability to act on my recovery and my trust my resources. I was so worried what would happen if people found out I was raped. How my family would react, how angry they would be. I was terrified that I would be forced to move back home and have to dropout of college, that my days in the city were numbered by my endurance for silent suffering. I was worried that my friends and my colleagues would make up stories about me and about my experience that weren't true. I was so sure of that I would never live down my public humiliation, that convincing myself that I was overdramatizing my attack. A portion of my poetry in *Hush* mention my denial of my rape and the traumatic shock that circled my victimization and my vulnerability in disclosing my experience with my loved. I was overcome with the fear of people labeling me as a number of normalized rape myths. If it wasn't enough to be labeled as a victim, or a survivor for the rest of my life.

Yet, the fear of being misinterpreted was enough to convince me that no one would understand, so I might as well get over it. This of course, was completely false. After I began *Hush*, and was able to write down on a piece of paper the word "Rape" and "Survivor" and "Abigail", there was no level of endurance to my silent suffering that could keep me from exposing my experience. I still remember vividly, the day I wrote down what happened to me. I wrote it down with a Sharpie in bold, capital letters order to get myself to accept and understand what I was going through. After I wrote down as much as I could recall about my experience, I

had planned to crumple the piece of paper and burn it, in order to move forth with my life. Instead, I kept the piece of paper in my pocket as long as I could, until every bone in my body shook uncontrollably as I handed the piece of paper to my dad a week later. To this day, it was the best decision I could have ever made.

### Rape Culture in the Media

A substantial portion of rape culture is physically and verbally induced by the contributors mentioned above, but what about visually? What about when we are alone? How does rape appear in our homes, on television, online, in movies, and by public advertisements? This transitions my discussion to the component of errors in representation for women in the media. The media is the most influential medium we have at our disposal as a society. With the power to influence men and women's understandings of gender norms and roles, as well as sexual and rape scripts (Wise.8). This format may be the most manipulative influence of rape culture that makes direct contact with people at all hours of the day, anywhere in the world, not limited by any age, gender, or sexuality.

The media helps to perpetuate this misconception about rape by continuously reporting false stranger rapes news stories, promoting rape scenes in television shows, in movies, and the use of objectified images in public advertisements. One of the biggest reasons for this fluctuation of rape culture in the media, is the fact that only 7% of directors, 13% of writers and 20% of producers are female, which means that males outnumber females working behind the cameras nearly 5-to-1 (Wise.8). The dominant male production and hierarchy of male power in the media allows them to do whatever they want with the male, female and trans body image both mentally

and physically. The particular lack of a female influence in media production results in women and young girls to be falsely represented, portrayed, and understood.

This incorrect representation causes women to view themselves and their world from a misguided lens, leading them to fear incorrect things, such as being raped by strangers, taking extreme precautions to avoid this fate, yet do not trust their instincts when it comes to people they know (Wise.9).

Our culture is saturated by objectified and sexualized images of women and young girls. The images projected by the media pose people as products to be purchased and consumed by the public. The current way we allow sex to be under-discussed in a both a public and an educational format, is unacceptable. We choose to not discuss rape culture with our youth, then images of women overly represented as objects in the media play a major influence of rape culture. This is normalized and accepted because what is not being discussed is what healthy sexuality really is. In schools with children of elementary ages, we educate them on the basic principles of what sex is and how to be safe about it, but mostly we aim for them to be completely abstinent.

We teach them in ways that do not consider interpersonal interactions, then allowing that model to be influenced by heteronormative and patriarchal attitudes perpetuated by our culture in its media (Forni.5). Unfortunately our media culture represents the woman as a helpless individual, who is weakened by her vulnerability and her uneducated mind. We let the mainstream media convince our children that the main role of a woman is to be beautiful and thin, to focus solely on her sex appeal and stand by her male dominant, as his property and servant. That males are supposed to be tough hearted, distant, independent and emotionless.

Aesthetic objectification of women's bodies in scenes portraying sexual violence, an act that is primarily a type of physical violence that causes bodily harm, renders the body as merely a vessel through which the violence is taking place.

These aesthetic choices actively disempower the victim as the subjectivity of their experience becomes lost in this patriarchal narrative aesthetic (Forni.9).

If we are to change the way we educate about the influence of sexual representation in the media and the realities of rape, one way is to promote positive messages through media literacy. Media literacy refers to the analytical tools required to critically evaluate and communicate messages in various mediums. Media literacy as an educational tool that will help to empower young girls and women to become users and producers of media, to help shape a digital world that promotes fair, balanced, and truthful depictions of women and girls (Wise.9).

I was also a little girl once, and a student in a public school system for twelve years. When we reached the point of pubescent development, in our late elementary school years, our version of sex ed was a list of scare tactics and blushing faces. I had a nurse look me straight in the eyes and tell me that I was going to start bleeding, and it was going to hurt. She then handed each young lady in the class a piece of paper with all the supplies I needed my parent to buy so I didn't have accidents in class. The only mention of sex, or of any curiosity in boys was that both would lead to consequences that were fatal. There was no honesty, no talk of safe sex, no actual education. I wasn't aware that rape even existed, that woman could be taken advantage of, that I was an object of sexual desire.

I was also raised by a single dad, and the mixture of absence in the classroom and at home about safe sex and my body, was in no way beneficial to my adolescent development. If

our school system would implement even a ten minute window for safe sex education, for mutual respect, for what to expect in the world, we could prevent countless perpetrators, we could offer resources to the youth that may have already been victimized, we could literally save lives.

Media literacy could be a wonderful resource to educate adults and young people about structural privilege, gender hierarchies, hegemonic masculinities, and the meaning of rape culture

(Walsh.11). In more ways than one, *Hush* is a reflection of a major component in my education that was missed in my youth. As proud as I am with my book, and how far I've come in my recovery, I can't help but wonder if *Hush* would exist if I had the proper influence when I should have. Would I have known the signs of my perpetrator if id been taught them in my adolescence?

While it is too late for me to change my past, it is not too late to protect and educate our youth, and decrease the number of rape victims displaced by simple unawareness.

### Art Therapy

Art therapy is a health profession, and a form of psychotherapy that involves encouragement for expression of the self by stress release through various forms of creative practice; like painting, drawing, sculpture, sound, ect. Art therapy is often used as a remedial activity, but can also be used as a tool in order to diagnosis symptoms of mental illness. The use art media, creative practice, and the result of beautiful artwork helps individuals who are struggling to express their emotions, to better explore their feelings, make amends with emotional conflicts, promote one's stable perception of reality, console behavioral issues, aid turmoil and stress with addiction, assist in the development of establishing important social skills, reduce the harmful effects of anxiety, and increase personal self esteem.

One of the main goals art therapy is to improve, or reestablish a client's sense of personal well being and self care. To be an art therapist, one must have obtained the required knowledge of visual art including at least the basics of drawing, painting, sculpture, etc. As important as it is for an art therapist to be trained in the basics of visual art, it is also crucial for them to be trained in the complexity of the creative process. A creative process is different for every individual, especially those who are basing art work around trauma. Art therapists also need to be specialized and trained in human development, psychology, counsel theory and be trained in various therapeutic techniques. Today, art therapy has proved to be very useful, and is extensively practiced in a wide variety of settings. These diverse settings include hospitals, psychiatric and rehabilitation facilities, private practice, support groups, wellness clinics, crisis centers, senior living communities, online formats, etc.

During both individualized, or group style sessions, art therapists evoke their patients to use art practices to promote their physical, mental, and emotional healing process.

The aims of art therapy often vary according to the particular needs of the individuals with whom the art therapist works. These needs may change as the therapeutic relationship develops. For one person the process of art therapy might involve the art therapist encouraging them to share and explore an emotional difficulty through the creation of images and discussion; whereas for another it may be directed towards enabling them to hold a crayon and make a mar, thereby developing new ways of giving form to previously unexpressed feelings (Edwards.4).

With children or young adults, art therapy is beneficial for the way they are able to communicate about their trauma or mental illness. Art helps start conversations, it focuses on the positive, rather than the negative emotions of expressing one's personal experiences. Art therapy can help bring adults out of internal isolation. Art often speaks for itself, and assists as a tool for the individual's ability to speak openly and comfortably about trauma. It was because of Art therapy, that I was able to utilize linguistic factors, in all of its negative connotation, and transform it into a positive mechanism for creation and release of abusive thoughts against my own personal healing.

Introducing an art component to the adolescent survivor adds a creative dimension that seems to decrease adolescent anxiety through action-based tasks. Distress or negative energy is projected onto the artwork, providing an outlet for inner tension and validating the teen's feeling (Backos Pagan.127). When I was able to transform my suffering into creativity, through painting and writing, rather than harvesting those negative emotions, my real recovery began. Art therapy held a number of positive impacts on me that helped guide me down my road to recovery. At first, art therapy allowed me the freedom to tell my story without saying a word. I was able to paint about my experience, mostly in abstract form, and experiment with how I could represent my trauma through color, and eventually through literature. Art therapy assisted me in the restoration of my voice. After painting and writing about my rape, and my trauma, I was able to physically tell my story to my therapist over the course of 3 months. Before that, I had been held in a state of silent suffering for over 2 years.

Before art therapy, I could never say, or even think about what had happened to me on that October night. Art therapy saved my life, and gave me back my assurance of individual

identity. Art therapy reinvented my voice, and my renewed my sense of self worth. The therapeutic process was, and still is the sole reason I took on rape culture as my main focus of study for my thesis. What art therapy it did for me, is what it could do for thousands of victims who are still struggling to find a balance in life with their own trauma. Because of art therapy, I came out of my rehabilitation a stronger female, an anti-rape culture activist, and an artist believes full heartedly, that art really does save lives.

Hush

The creation of my book, *Hush*, is a work of self reflection as I've mentioned, but it is also a resource and an empathetic tool for anyone who has had an experienced like my own. Beyond that, *Hush* is a resource for anyone who needs a support system. For those who hold a fear, who feel oppressed, who are dealing with self hatred and desperation, for those who need a voice without saying a word. I want my readers to finish *Hush* with a sense of relatability and to not feel so alone. My main goals for this project was to not only complete what is my first official collection of literature, but to also reach out to as many people as I could, To invite the general public to give my work a chance, to help me raise the conversation of rape culture awareness. We must storm through the barrier of silence designed around modern rape culture. We need to talk about why we aren't talking about rape and normalize the topic by bringing it into the spotlight, as an immediate need for reassessing the ways in which we overshadow rape culture in our academic institutions and urban society.

The process of writing hush had a lot of ups, and a lot of downs. There were days, weeks, and even month long periods where I couldn't write a single thing about my experience. The days where I didnt feel like being a victim anymore were excruciatingly long, and the days where I

didn't mind being a victim, were incredibly short. I learned that it is pretty hard to write a book about your recovery, when you are still recovering. However, I knew from the very beginning that it wasn't going to be easy, and that I didn't want it to be easy. I wanted it to be real, and honest. That would mean that I would have to fail in order to succeed. That I would fall, and I would have to get back up.

The creative content production, book design, editing, proofreading, and critiquing was done completely by myself, with the assistance of my thesis advisor, Wendy Bourgeois. Wendy helped me tremendously in the writing process of *Hush*. I provided Wendy with poems I wrote for the book, with articles surrounding rape culture I found interesting, with drafts of my prospectus, and with random pieces of literature that inspired me to keep going. I carried around a stack of poetry books with me that I encouraged my writing style, and provided me with the empathy that I wanted my poetry to offer my audience. Wendy was a wonderful advisor, and I consider myself lucky to have been able to work with her creative mind and her formal specialization in creative writing.

I was also incredibly lucky to have had a thesis advisor that did not push me beyond my comfort zones. Wendy never expected more of me than I was willing to give. She understood my experience, she was gentle with my recovery process, genuinely interested in my content and supportive of my direction with my thesis project, and with the future of *Hush*. There were times when we didn't talk for long periods of time. Simply because I needed a break, because it was too hard for me to put my mental state into physical words, or because I was back in therapy and needed to feel stable in my head before I could stand in front of an audience with confidence regarding my experience.

I learned that patience may always be the greatest virtue. That I have a lot more learning to do about being patient with myself, and with others. You cannot force a recovery, you cannot expect people to know how you feel, or how people heal from trauma. What you can do, is be more patient in everything that you do, and with anyone you meet. Patient people give more chances, they forgive those who have wronged them, they forgive themselves for their faults, and see a world in which everyone works together, slowly, to build a world of compassion and healing. Poetry has forced me to be more patient with myself, that small steps really do lead to something bigger. *Hush* has taught me that even slow accomplishments, are still accomplishments all the same.

Poetry has assisted my recovery process in enormous ways that I am eternally grateful for. Poetry was single handedly the reason I was able to accept the reality of my rape. The words I could not form on my tongue, instead I let dry in ink on a piece of paper that helped me reveal my suffering to my family. Poetry is the reason I was able to make it through my rehabilitation program. Poetry was the first form of communication that involved words that I was able to make with my therapist, when I couldn't physically speak to her about my rape, I could write sporadic emotions down on a notepad and then organize them into stanzas.

Poetry gave me the hope that I needed to keep moving forward. When I woke up screaming in the night and nothing could clear my head, I was able to find release through poetry. I could write down anything I was feeling and make it into art, instantly. It didn't need to make sense, it was poetry. It could be awful, and heart wrenching, and honest, and it was art. Poetry is the one thing that no one can take away from me, because it is all around me. Poetry is in my notebooks and on my laptop, tangible and physically present. But poetry is also in my eyes

and dances across my hairline. Poetry is the way I care for myself and for my loved ones. Poetry is every kiss I give my dog on the forehead and every smile I am able to share with another person each day. Poetry has been the vice I've leaned on more than anyone to keep me standing upright. Even when I couldn't stand any longer and I did fall, poetry was there to comfort me on the ground, and eventually pick me up, put me back on my feet, and hand me a pen.

*Hush* is a product of my rehabilitation, of my survival, and of my process. I am not healed because I wrote *Hush*. I am not cured of my trauma because I went through a specialized clinic that helped me regain my strength and discover my self worth. As a person who has gone through something of such high intensity, such turmoil as to reach the depths of attempted suicide and self desolation, I cannot say I have defeated my demons, erased my memory, or been reborn again. I am still me, I am still a victim. However, I can say, I am better. I can say I am confident in myself for a bright future and a life of happiness and optimism. I can say that without poetry and without my wonderful resources, I don't honestly believe I would have made it to today. What I have learned during the last three years of my recovery, is to always offer a voice to those who may not know what to say. I have reached a place in my process where I know I can help others in need. I have done the dirty work, I have felt the bottomless depths and I have been climbing ever since. My main goal with *Hush* was for the book to help at least one person. If I could connect with somebody, anybody with my poetry and my experience, then I would have succeeded. If I could make just one person feel less alone, I would have done what I set out to do.

I always thought of others during my writing process, and how I wanted to help the world with my story, it was productive and inspiring for me. That said, what I really learned

from this thesis and as a result of my project, was how to help myself. The progress I made in my own process has redefined what self care really means to me. What you can do for yourself in this world is absolutely extraordinary. It isn't easy, and most of the time I found myself sabotaging my own support before I could really let myself in. Before I could believe myself, or convince myself that I was worthy of this work, that I was rightful in my words, that I was validated in what I had to say, and that I could really do this. In the end, I told myself I could write a book, so I did. I believed I could speak openly and confidently about my personal assault and about rape culture in a positive light, so I did. I decided I could provide empathy for rape victims still in need of support and resources for their own recovery process, so I did. From this thesis, I learned that I am as strong as I allow myself to be and to grow in that strength. That I have the ability to move mental mountains, and I can help build a path for others like me, to move mountains of their own.

*I am not a woman of many words unless it is written. You are a muse meant to grace my pen. Words sprout from my heart and transport to your pages but you treat me like I'm corrosive. I have a solution. Bind me acid-free. Maybe in time you'll see the splendor of my words. - K.Y Robinson.*

### Annotated Bibliography

Please note the various poetry book annotations do not have individual contributors to the discourse community, for they were their own contributors and it was necessary for me to include the following authors for my thesis research.

Amy K. Backos MA & Barb E. Pagon MA. *Finding a Voice: Art Therapy with Female Adolescent Sexual Abuse Survivors*. 2011. Print.

This article written dually by two scholars Amy Backos and Barb Pagon speaks about the benefits of art therapy for child and adolescent rape victims in a group and individual therapy setting. I was attracted to the article because it performed a real study on the effects of art therapy for young females dealing with the recovery process of rape and their lives in rape culture. Art therapy was extremely beneficial for my personal recovery process and I wanted to conduct a portion of scholarly research based on the tactics of art therapy also helping other female individuals who have been through a similar experience as I have. The article discussed exactly what art therapy is, its main goals, the expected beneficiaries and provided real results of positive impact for rape victims through experimentations with drawing, poetry, songwriting and free form expression.

Daley-Ward, Yrsa. *Bone*. N.p.: 3 AM, 2014. Print.

*Bone*, by Yrsa Daley-Ward, is a collection of poems regarding the perspective of her personal life through poetry and short stories. Ward's writing style and captivating voice can only be heard by her attention to everyday fear, observation of her

surroundings and the people she shares her life with. *Bone* talks about an honest recollection of a female life, stripped away by memories and feeling. Ward discusses her obstacles with mental health, illness, familial issues, womanhood and sexuality. I consider *Bone* a primary source for my thesis when it comes to writing length driven poems and I am using this book as a resource for story based poetry. Ward is a British poet, and an inspiration for my work when I speak about my own struggles with mental instability and family support in my thesis presentation. Ward's discourse community stands with both feminist and identity poets and collections.

Edwards, David. *Art Therapy*. SAGE. 2004.

In his book, *Art Therapy*, David Edwards presents an introduction for those who are interested in increasing their training and knowledge surrounding the psychological practice of art therapy. Edwards offers a deeper look into the origin, development, and success of art therapy for people of all backgrounds, who share the same experience of intensive trauma. *Art Therapy* is an excellent resource for a clearer understanding of psychotherapeutic concepts involved in art therapy, the benefits of a therapeutic creative process, and the modern developments art therapy has established in today's society for mental illness and PTSD.

Forni, Alexandra. "Breaking Rape Culture: Considering Media Representation in the Battle against Sexual Assault on College Campuses." *Proquest Dissertations Publishing* (2014): n. pag. Print.

In her published dissertation *Breaking Rape Culture: Considering Media Representation in the Battle against Sexual Assault on College Campuses*, Alexandra

Froni discusses how the *Pact 5 Initiative* was a project that encouraged college students to get involved in activist film work. The films produced by the students targeted activism against rising sexual assault persuasion on college campuses nationwide. Froni took part in the Pact 5 with her own film, *In Motion*, Froni researched the ways in which the narrative form of film could be used similar to documentary as an activist source to fight against victimization sexual aggression against women. This research was tied along with how the women based storytelling presented through digital media can educate college students about rape myths that surround the culture of violence and sexual assault on college campuses.

Froni found in her research that sexual persuasion, victimization and active rape culture are both significant problems on college campuses, yet there is a chance to change the attitudes of the representation in media for women and rape myths. I have looked at an array of media influence and research in my own writing and poetry practice focused on virtual rape culture and its influence. Froni's dissertation is a good resource for me to look through and use as reference for me own representation on how I talk about rape culture in media and on college campuses. Froni's discourse community is varietal and holds a stance in rape culture, rape myths and victimization on college campuses. digital media in film and pro feminist projects. Along with literary scholars Sharon Bryant, Rebecca Flintoff, Ida Johnson, Martha Lauzen, Robert Sigler, Stacy Smith and Gale Spencer as Froni's main references. I plan to use Froni as a resource for my thesis through her research on the power of media influence on female representation and objectification.

Kaur, Rupi. *Milk and Honey*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel, 2016. Print.

In her book, *Milk and Honey*, Rupi Kaur discusses the turmoils of loss, suffering, female suppression, sexual assault and recovery process. The book is separated into four different chapters, The Hurting, The Loving, The Breaking and The Healing. Each chapter discusses and deals with a different pain in transition of overcoming the mental and physical battles of sexual assault, personal struggle, growing pains and survival through poetry. Kaur's illustrations pair with her simplistic writing styles and short poems. The book is a strong message to all women and young girls that they are not alone. Kaur's writing style will be used as a resource for shorter poems in my book. I admire her ability to restrain herself from writing more than necessary and I am inspired to translate her skill into my own work. Kaur's discourse community targets sexual assault, womanhood, mental illness and family values.

Kondos, Lacey Marie. "Linguistic Causes of Rape Culture on College Campuses." *Philologia* 8 (2016): n. pag. Web.

In her article *Linguistic Causes of Rape Culture on College Campuses*, Kondos explores the concept of language surrounding sexual violence contributes to the presence of rape culture on college campuses and how linguistic contribution causes rape to become normalized and regularly victimized college students. The lack of communication, information and ambiguous definitions of rape and consent, along with silencing victims, have all contributed to the uprise of college campus rape culture. Instead of opening dealing with these contributors, the media turns to alcohol and greek life as the sources for sexual violence against female college students. There is also the

influence of movies, tv shows, social media formats, music and pornography that work to normalize rape culture.

Kondos argues that latent linguistic factors are the ultimate roots of rape culture. Kondos claims latent linguistic factors need to be fully analyzed and then be directed into the classroom starting with incoming freshman, opening a campus wide discussion about rape culture, the definitions of rape, assault, and verbal consent. Kondos believes that if we educate college students about rape, consequence and available resources, the sexual assault rates will decrease on college campuses. Kondos article is reflective to the thoughts I have about taking the initiative to start the conversation on college campuses and educate as many people as possible about rape culture, violence and consent. This is something I plan to discuss in my thesis presentation and her article is a good resource to have on hand that helps me with ideas for a better and safer college campus environment. Kondos discourse community is mixed with college campus security, sexual education and rape culture in young adults and students. Kondo's references literary scholars David Angelone, Ann Burnett, Soraya Chemaly, Stacy Mallicoat and Kathryn Ryan.

Moon, Shinji. *The Anatomy of Being: Poetry from 2011-2013*. Raleigh, NC: Lulu.com, 2013.

Print.

The poetry collection, *The Anatomy Of Being: Poetry from 2011-2013* by Shinji Moon, is about the perspective of the pain and trials of adolescence, into adulthood. Moon is a beautiful poet whose sentence structure and use of creative language has captured me in all of her books and pieces. Reading Moons poetry is much like reading a novel, for when the poem is finished you have learned something about Moon and

something about yourself. Moon inspires my work to create that same essence of questioning the poem and questioning your own perception after the book is finished. As a poet, Moon makes the reader feel her words, to which I will use Moon as a resource for my own work, in hopes that I can do the same. Moon's focus on youth and female adolescents makes this a book that must be read by all young females in their transition into women. Moon's discourse community centralizes around female youth, mental health, and womanhood.

Ryan, Kathryn M., and Kanjorski, Jeanne. "The Enjoyment of Sexist Humor, Rape Attitudes, and Relationship Aggression in College Students." *Plenum Publishing Corporation* 38 (1998): n. pag. Print.

In their article *The Enjoyment of Sexist Humor, Rape Attitudes, and Relationship Aggression in College Students*, Kathryn Ryan and Jeanne Kanjorski discuss the attitudes residing in men that find pleasure in sexist and rape humor that result to the support of rape culture and leads to sexual aggression against women. Ryan and Kanjorski observe the enjoyment of sexist humor and pro rape attitudes and the courtship violence in men and women college students. Ryan and Kanjorski claim that attitude is a significant predictor of sexual aggression in men of any age. With the most frequently studied attitudes being rape myth acceptance, and acceptance of interpersonal violence, Adversarial Sexual Beliefs and a general hostility toward Women. These discovered attitude have been directly connected with men's likelihood to force sexual aggression on women. Ryan and Kanjorski believe a substantial measure of pro rape and sexist attitudes may be sourced from men's enjoyment of sexist and rape humor.

Ryan and Kanjorski conducted a study that included 227 men and women to hear 10 sexist and rape jokes from the age of 18-19. Ryan and Kanjorski hypothesised that the men will rate sexist jokes as funnier, acceptable, and less offensive than women will; Also men will show a positive correlation between the enjoyment of sexist humor and rape myth acceptance and female violence. They were correct in their claims. Ryan and Kanjorski argue that an avenue for decreasing rape culture and sexual assault on college campuses is to increase the intolerance of sexist and rape humor, along with pro rape beliefs and female suppression. They believe that further research should be annually progressed to locate the enjoyment of rape humor and locate whether it increases its connection to sexual violence and rape culture in men. This article is one I find particularly interesting and is a concept people don't usually think about when they think about rape culture.

Rape humor and sexist jokes are something I have had to personally deal with in my recovery and not enough people are educated on the correlation between rape humor and rape culture. Rape jokes are something I will be talking about in my book and this article is a good resource as evidence for direct correlation between sexist humor and sexual aggression against women. Ryan and Kanjorski discourse community stands with rape culture, rape humor and rape attitude on college campuses. Ryan references scholars Leonard Berkowitz, Martha Burt, D. Byrne, Canter Brown, F.Scott Christopher, Sigmund Freud, Mary Koss, Neil Malamuth, Ellen Richlin and Murray straus as her main sources for this research.

Robinson, K. Y. *The Chaos of Longing*. Place of Publication Not Identified: K.Y. Robinson, 2016. Print.

*The Chaos of Longing*, by K.Y Robinson, is one of great pain and great desire. On my hunt for rape poetry books, this one has stood the most resembling to my own work. Robinson's writing style both conceptually and formally speak directly to my own and I like to compare my own poems side by side to those in this collection. With language that speaks to your soul, Robinson is as graceful as she is erotic. She creates a fluid image in the reader's mind with every different story and is able to bounce from topic to topic with ease and magnificent fluidity. This book is an excellent resource for myself to keep on hand at all times as an inspiration for my own work and for my hope to become a published author. Robinson is a poet I look up to and a nice reminder that to impact the reader, all you need to do is share with them your honesty, along with a commitment to yourself before anyone else. Robinson's discourse community is varietal, with a place held in feminism, sexuality, female suppression, eroticism, mental illness and womanhood.

Rogue, J.R. *Tell Me Where It Hurts*. Ed. Alicia Cook. N.p.: Rogue, 2016. Print.

The book, *Tell Me Where It Hurts*, by J.R Rogue, is a collection only to be experienced, not simply read. On my hunt for rape poetry, Rogue has offered the most raw, honest and irrevocably painful collections of them all. This book is a process in forgiveness of self hate, abuse, inner demons, desire and raw emotion. This collection is one I intend to use as a resource for my most personal pieces. *Tell me Where it Hurts* is a book I have the most undying love and respect for out of my reading list thus far. Rogue

has effectively portrayed the very means of self destruction, of spiritual suffering and a cry for help. I believe this collection holds the most facts about living everyday as a victim, surrounded by rape culture, in a world of female hatred and sex shame. This is a book I needed to read in my own recovery process and one which will assist me in presenting my own book to the public. This is a collection that has made me a stronger writer, poet and woman. Rogue's discourse community stands firmly in woman suppression, sexual abuse and mental illness.

Walsh, Shannon. "Addressing Sexual Violence and Rape Culture: Issues and Interventions Targeting Boys and Men." *Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 29.3 (2015): n. pag. Print.

In her article *Addressing Sexual Violence and Rape Culture*, Shannon Walsh investigates the benefits of pro-feminist interventions on gender based violence with the approach of targeting men and young boys. Walsh claims that women based projects that address sexual violence is not enough to achieve the desired effect alone. Men and young boys need to be a part of the solution in the problem of supported suppression, silencing and retribution for women and girls in their surrounding cultural environment. Walsh uses examples from both South Africa and North America, observing the multiple approaches and initiatives taken by men and young boys. Walsh found herself looking more into the radical analysis of patriarchy within the work of the approaches and strategies. Walsh unpacks some of the problems and potentials while working with males as allies for targeting sexual violence and pro-feminism, while researching in what context and conditions interventions with men might be labeled as pro-feminist.

Walsh argues that pro-feminist interventions with men and young boys that distinguish the structural elements of the patriarchy will positively affect and subvert cultures of violence and sexual aggression against women and young girls. This approach would centralize education on privilege, hegemonic masculinity, gender hierarchies, aggression and the meaning of rape culture. Walsh's article holds a significance for me and for my thesis project as a representative tool for the way we discuss and inform both male and females about rape culture and violent aggression against women and young girls. It is important to not just educate women about rape culture, we must not look to males as being unteachable or unwilling to take part in pro-feminist projects.

We are the strongest when we stand together and if men can join women as allies in the fight against sexual violence and rape, then we can create healthy and safe culture surrounding that empower woman and you girls for brighter and stronger futures.

Walsh's discourse community stands with scholars centralized around rape culture education and pro feminist movements. Walsh references E. Anderson, Frederick Attenborough, Gary Barker, Michael Biernbaum, K.C Bojin, Michael Kaufman and Dean Peacock. Walsh also referenced organizations such as MenEngage-UNFPA, Men's centre, Philly Stands Up, White Ribbon Campaign and lastly The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

Wise, Elisabeth. "Rape Culture in Society and the Media." *Womennc CSW 2013*

*Fellowship*(2012): 15. Web. 26 Apr. 2017.

In her article *Rape Culture in Society and the Media*, Elisabeth Wise argues that media literacy focused around rape culture should be implemented into all levels of

public and private education as a strategic tool to teach young men and women how to think seriously and critically about media messages and influences of media images. Thus encourage young women to think about how becoming strong media producers, they can set better images of women and help defeat the myths of rape through bad media messages. Wise speaks individually about *Girls, Inc* and *Miss Representation* as being two successful online media programs that have already helped hundreds of girls and are examples of powerful tools to help generate more programs in the United States and around the globe.

This article holds importance to my thesis project by discussing rape culture in private and public educational institutions and the way rape is seen everyday in the media by young men and women. The youth need to learn about rape culture at an earlier age than high school because young women need to be informed about the resources available for them and learn about the ways of prevention and activism for a rape free society. It is crucial for young women to learn about how the media represents rape and what they can do to represent women in a positive, strong and confident way. The only way we can change the perspective of rape in schools and the media is through better communication strategies that both interest people and encourage the right direction for the safety of all young women everywhere.

The discourse community that Wise takes part in would be Rape Culture education for youth, sex education in school systems and women sexualization in the media. Wise refers to scholars such as Martha Burt, Katie Edwards, D.G Kilpatrick, Kathryn Ryan and Patricia Tjaden. Wise also used references from sources such as the

Ministry and Justice, National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women,  
Rape Abuse and incest National Network, World Health Organization and Women:  
Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey.