Speaking of Justice:
the significance of silence, recognition, communication and memory upon the impact of unwanted sexual experiences

Colleen Moore
Anglia Ruskin University,
Cambridge, England

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
WHY CAN’T WE TALK ABOUT RAPE?

- The liberal notion of consent is a recent construction
- Bourke, 2007

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
RECOGNISE & ACKNOWLEDGE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION STYLES, RELATING TO RAPE

Her Language

Sassy
‘That’ ‘It’ ‘Thing’
What it felt like
Humiliated
Shattered self
Silenced
This happened

His (the law)

Consent
Rape
Intent
Penetrated
Demeanour
Rights
‘Alleged’

PRELIMINARY RESULTS
HOW DO WE EUPHEMISE RAPE TALK?

- ‘Rape is not about sex’
- McPhail, 2016 - but this was sex

METHODS
CONVERSATION & LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

10 (out of 15) participants interviewed
Age range 18 – 52
All raped between ages of 11 – 21
No pattern of circumstance

- The participants had different ways of talking about their experiences, and how they coped afterwards. What was common was their reluctance to describe what HE did
- All participants agree that there is much to be said that we have no way of saying.
- Many expressed anger at being so ill-equipped to put voice to something that has so fundamentally and irreversibly changed us.

SPECULATIVE CONCLUSIONS
‘LEGAL’ RAPE IS NOT WHAT WE EXPERIENCE

- The bloody sheet he held up for his friends to see after he’d done it
- The words he whispered in my ear – “you love this, you filthy whore”

REFERENCES


FINAL OBSERVATIONS

All participants agree that there is much to be said that we have no way of saying. Many expressed anger at being so ill-equipped to put voice to something that has so fundamentally and irreversibly changed us.

Through analysis and further conversations, we are aiming to agree on some common and more intuitively comfortable ways of speaking out, speaking up and speaking justly about the rapes we have experienced and the impact they have had on us.

A word, after a word … is power (Atwood, 2003)