MALE SURVIVORS’ STORIES OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION: 
STIGMA MANAGEMENT AND A SURVIVOR IDENTITY

by

Kevin M. Ralston

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

Summer 2015

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by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how men make sense of their experiences with sexual victimization. Through 19 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with men who experienced sexual victimization since turning 18-years-old, this research provides insight into how the men experience, understand, and process their sexual victimization. The participants underwent a process of self-stigmatization, which caused them to experience psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. In order for the participants to proceed through the recovery process, they had to actively transform into viewing themselves as a survivor. For the participants, this process meant revising their masculinity so they could embody a new identity that did not stigmatize their experience. The final aspect of the recovery process was transforming from a victim to a survivor, and a new positive identity. Throughout this dissertation, parallels between the experience for the participants is discussed in relation to current literature and the experience for women. The conclusion suggests the development of an alternate narrative of men who experience sexual victimization that does not include gender stereotypes. Limitations of the study and implications for future research are also discussed.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Thanks to feminist writing, the subject of sexual victimization is seen as a social problem and receives attention in the media. The sexual victimization of women is often depicted in scripted television, especially in crime dramas like Law and Order: SVU. In recent years, the sexual victimization of males has also received attention in the media. Much of this attention has been from stories about clergy sexually abusing young boys and more recently the predatory nature of Jerry Sandusky at Penn State. Famous athletes have come out and told about their experience with sexual victimization as children, including 2012 National League Cy Young winner R.A. Dickey and former Heavyweight Champion Sugar Ray Leonard. In his autobiography, Dickey discussed how he was sexually abused by two different people when he was about 8-years-old, including a female babysitter while both their mothers were in the house and separately by an older boy that same year. It took Dickey until he was 31-years-old to tell anyone about being sexually abused because he hoped he would be able to deal with it himself. In an interview on Sports Illustrated’s website (Wertheim, 2012), Dickey says that “shame and loneliness - - those are the sensations that you feel when something like that happens to you, and those are the sensations that I carried with me for a long, long time.” He only now decided to talk about it in his autobiography to empower others who have been
through a similar experience in the hope that the more dialogue there is in the public, the less of a taboo topic it will become. In his autobiography, Leonard too talks of his experience being sexually abused as a child. At 15-years of age, Leonard describes being told to take a bath with another male fighter while his coach sat in the bathroom and watched. In an interview, Leonard mentions that the two boxers thought this to be inappropriate, but neither wanted “to question a strong male authority figure” (Araton, 2011). Leonard shared that the same coach attempting oral sex on him in a car several years after the incident and Leonard described feeling frozen and the only thing he could do was to open the door and run.

Each of the incidents described by Dickey and Leonard depict a child who was sexually abused by someone older. Many times the sexual victimization of children is a result of power the adult uses over the child. These two examples illustrate that it is now socially appropriate to discuss the victimization that happens to males. However, both instances discuss men who were sexually victimized as children. In keeping with this, research and attention to the sexual victimization of adult men is lacking. In fact, it was not until December of 2011 that the Justice Department updated their definition of rape to include men as victims of rape. Instead of the definition reading that only women can be raped, the definition now reads as “penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013: 1). While practically impacting how sexual violence is tracked by law enforcement, this changing definition of rape is also symbolically important for men who have been sexually victimized to illustrate that society is beginning to view them in a different light.
One such example of a man who was sexually victimized as an adult is James Landrith. Landrith poignantly talks of how he was raped by a pregnant woman who was a friend of a friend over the course of a seven hour period after he believed she had drugged his drink. In his account of the evening, he talks about the power and control she had over him and his “refusal to harm a woman” meshing together to allow her to manipulate him to stay quiet for almost twenty years (Landrith, 2008). Landrith is not the only adult male who has been sexually victimized. Approximately nine percent of people who are sexually victimized are men according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), although this may not be accurate (Weiss, 2010a). Of the men who are sexually victimized, the NCVS indicates that approximately forty-six percent are sexually victimized by women (Weiss, 2010a). This study examines how men make sense of their sexual victimization, and pays attention to how men engage in identity work in their recovery process.

**Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Research**

Prior to recent research on men who have been sexually victimized, rape and sexual assault has disproportionately been constructed as a woman’s problem; whether for women’s safety or as an area within the violence against women literature. This has contributed to the development of theories regarding men’s violent nature as sexual predators and women as their victims (Weiss, 2010a). This line of research has been important in highlighting sexual victimization as a social problem that disproportionately affects women. However, simply framing sexual victimization as a problem for women ignores the reality that men are also victims of sexual assault, and that approximately nine percent of people who experience sexual victimization are male (Weiss, 2010a). For the purpose of this study, sexual victimization is
conceptualized based on the NCVS definition of rape, attempted rape, and sexual assaults that encompass “forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration” … “attempted forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration,” … and “completed or attempted attacks involving unwanted sexual contact” (Weiss, 2010a: 278).

The narratives from R.A. Dickey, Sugar Ray Leonard, and James Landrith illustrate that men can be sexually victimized as children and adults. While research about the sexual victimization of men reveals similarities with women, there are some unique differences. Like women, men who are sexually victimized experience vulnerability, sleep disturbance, sexual dysfunction, suicidal thoughts, and uncertainty about their sexual orientation, especially if the perpetrator is male (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Mezey and King, 1989). Weiss (2010a; 2010b) found that men, like women, report the use of alcohol or drugs prior to being sexually victimized. Men also experience higher degrees of depression and hostility compared to women (Frazier, 1993; Kimerling, Rellini, Kelly, Judson, and Learman, 2002). However, the NCVS estimates that men report their experiences with sexual victimization at low levels, including that they are one and a half (Pino and Meier, 1999) to two-times (Weiss, 2010a) less likely to report being sexually victimized compared to women. In addition, men are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a same-sex perpetrator compared to women (according to the NCVS, fifty-four percent to one percent).

This idea that men are sexually victimized by both men and women indicates that men may provide a viewpoint different from women since they are not almost exclusively victimized by opposite sex perpetrators. Studying men who experience sexual victimization could provide new insights because masculinity is constructed as
a privileged gender status or identity compared to femininity. Literature about women who experience sexual victimization often center on women who are victimized by men. This work is often thought of in a context of heterosexual relationships. By examining men of varying sexual orientations, insight into intersections of gender and sexuality, and how they influence the recovery process for men can be valuable. Examining men can provide additional insight into how dominant ideologies associated with masculinity work to hinder or help the recovery process.

Research about men who experience sexual victimization does not focus on recovery and their perspective. Instead this research has primarily focused on prevalence (Pino and Meier, 1999; Weiss, 2010a; Weiss, 2010b), characteristics of the incident (Banyard, Ward, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, and Walsh. 2007; Stermac, Bove, and Addison, 2004), and negative consequences of victimization (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Mezey and King, 1989). While research has suggested that scholars should focus on qualitative-based examinations of how men who are sexually victimized discuss their sexual victimization (Weiss, 2010a), little has been done to take this next step. Scholars have not paid much attention to men who experience sexual victimization because the attention has been on women. By almost exclusively examining women, sexual victimization has been defined as something that happens to women. In addition, the masculine scripts permeating in our culture overlooks and almost disqualifies them as possible victims. They are instead constructed as perpetrators, not as victims, and thus are invisible as victims.
This study provides a victim-centered approach to examining the sexual victimization of men that centers on the individual’s identity as they process their experience. In addition, this study compares and contrasts the experience for men and women throughout to provide insight into how privilege works to influence how men and women experience sexual victimization and its aftermath. It is important to provide a context for what men who are sexually victimized encounter as they begin to process their experiences before discussing this process for the participants. This study examines how men make sense of their sexual victimization in the context of both privilege and marginalization. It addresses the following questions:

1. How does sexual victimization influence men’s definition of the self and their relationships with friends and family?
2. How do ideas about masculinity impact men’s help seeking behavior and recovery work?

**Organization of the Present Research**

This chapter reviews the literature on men who have been sexually victimized. It provides a detailed discussion of the reality of sexual victimization for men and women, including prevalence of sexual victimization, characteristics of a sexual victimization episode, hardships men and women who experience sexual victimization face, and reporting and help seeking behavior. The chapter then discusses the myths and perceptions associated with men and women who have experienced sexual victimization and situates these myths in gender stereotypes. The chapter then connects the ideologies surrounding sexual victimization with perceptions that blame the victim and cause negative experiences for male and female victims. Finally, the chapter discusses stigma faced by people who experience sexual victimization and
how women make sense of their sexual victimization experience in the context of victim and survivor identities. The chapter ends by emphasizing where the literature about how men process their sexual victimization experience is lacking and describing the goals of this study.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed methodology of the current research, including an explanation detailing why I implement a feminist methodology, along with information about the sample and recruitment, how the study was conducted, and how the data was qualitatively analyzed.

Chapters 3 through 5 provide the findings of this study. The findings chapters are structured to illustrate the three stages men who are sexually victimized experience during their road to recovery. In Chapter 3, the sexual victimization experience for the 19 men who participated is described. This includes information about the different types of victimization, how they occurred, negative issues the men encountered because of their victimization, and their experiences with reporting their sexual victimization to police. This chapter focuses on how stigma may work differently when examining differences in participants and perpetrator characteristics. Chapter 4 describes the victim identity and the process of transforming from the victim to survivor identity. This chapter provides information about how this process occurred, including the importance of treatment, and how redefining their masculinity helped them to manage stigma and make the transformation from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. In Chapter 5, the final on-going stage of recovery is discussed, including the importance of the survivor identity and the on-going identity work that is needed to keep a survivor identity. Chapter 6 concludes this study and includes a summary of the results and their significance to broader
literature on the subject. This chapter also includes practical contributions of this study, along with limitations and directions for future research.

**Review of the Literature**

**Reality of Sexual Victimization**

The sexual victimization of adults occurs at an alarming rate in the United States. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey\(^1\) (NISVS) of 2010 approximately one in five women and one in seventy-one men report being sexually victimized at some point during their life (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2011). This indicates that a greater percentage of women experience sexual victimization in their lifetime. Of individuals who experience sexual victimization, the National Crime Victimization Survey\(^2\) (NCVS) estimates that approximately nine percent of rape and sexual assault victims are male\(^3\) (Weiss, 2010a). In 2010, the NCVS indicated that of the men who are sexually victimized, approximately 54% are victimized by another man and the rest (46%) are victimized

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\(^1\) The NISVS is a nationally representative random digit dialing telephone survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The survey produces lifetime and past 12-month prevalence data for sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence.

\(^2\) The NCVS is conducted each year by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The survey uses a nationally representative sample of households to examine victimization during the past 6-months (BJS).

\(^3\) Statistics from the 2012 NCVS indicate that the 38 percent of individuals who experience sexual victimization are men, which is quite higher than previous years. Further years of the NCVS need to be examined to see if the 2012 prevalence statistic is simply an outlier or a trend of men feeling more comfortable reporting their experience.
by a woman (Weiss, 2010a). This differs from women who are almost exclusively sexually victimized by men (Weiss, 2010a). Two national surveys suggest that women are sexually victimized at a higher rate than men. However, men comprise almost ten percent of sexual assault victims. Furthermore, men are sexually victimized by both same sex and opposite sex perpetrators, which is unlike women. They are almost exclusive victimized by men.

**Characteristics of the Episode of Sexual Victimization**

As the previous section outlines, both men and women experience sexual victimization. Sexual victimization on college campuses occurs at rates higher than other environments. About nine out of ten women who experience sexual victimization know their perpetrator and about half of these incidents occur while they are on a date (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). Only about half of college women who experience sexual victimization define the incident as rape (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003), especially when the incident involves alcohol or lack of force. The sexual victimization of college aged women is more likely to occur if alcohol is present, the victim is a freshman or sophomore, or they are attending an off-campus fraternity party (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003).

Similar to women, the majority of men’s sexual victimization experiences mirror the definition of date rape (Weiss, 2010a). These are incidents that are perpetrated by intimate partners and dates, which do not typically result in physical harm (Weiss, 2010a). In an examination of incident reports 4 from the NCVS that

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4 The NCVS incident reports are the description of the victim. These reports may have contained a few words or long descriptions.
discussed men who had been sexually victimized, Weiss (2010a) found that most of the incident reports discussed girlfriends, exes, and female friends as the perpetrator. The typical sexual victimization experience for men includes a social gathering where alcohol is present, and the perpetrator tends to be a friend or romantic partner, particularly with college men (Banyard, Ward, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, and Walsh. 2007). This is similar to the experience for women because both groups typically know their perpetrator.

The sexual victimization of men is more likely to include physical harm (Struckman-Johnson, 1991), especially if the perpetrator is a stranger (Stermac, Bove, and Addison, 2004). Certain groups of men are more likely to experience sexual victimization. This includes men with certain conditions or situations that make them more vulnerable to violent victimization, including homelessness and physical, psychiatric, or cognitive disabilities (Stermac, Bove, and Addison, 2004).

Gay men also experience forced and coerced unwanted sexual victimization. According to Braun, Schmidt, Gavey, and Fenaughty (2009), there are four main patterns of sexual victimization for gay men: (1) incidents involving physical force, (2) men who are unable to refuse because of intoxication, (3) young or inexperienced men coerced into sex, and (4) men who felt obligated to engage in unwanted sex. The sexual victimization patterns for gay men are similar to heterosexual men. However, literature suggests that gay men who experience sexual victimization face additional hardships compared to heterosexual men, including being viewed as more culpable for their victimization (Anderson, 2004; Burt and DeMello, 2002; Davies and McCartney, 2003; Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001; Mitchell, Hirschman, and Hall, 1999; White and Robinson Kurpius, 2002). The idea of culpability of both men and women who
experience sexual victimization is discussed in more detail later in the review of the literature.

The sexual victimization of men and women occur in a very similar manner, regardless of sexual orientation. Both men and women who are sexually victimized are likely to know their perpetrator. These experiences are also likely to include alcohol or drugs, and can be characterized as date rape.

Consequences Faced by Individuals who Experience Sexual Victimization

Experiences with sexual victimization can cause negative outcomes for men and women, including psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. In a review of health problems that women who experience sexual victimization encounter, Jina and Thomas (2013) discussed some of the psychological and behavioral issues. The psychological issues they highlighted included “feelings of shock, denial, fear, confusion, anxiety, panic, phobias, withdrawal, guilt or nervousness” immediately following the experience (Jina and Thomas, 2013: 19). Other short-term psychological issues they describe are the possibility of eating disorders and sleep disturbance. Longer term psychological issues for women involve “anxiety, phobias, panic disorders, depression and suicide” (Jina and Thomas, 2013: 19). In addition, women can experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in situations where they do not receive treatment. According to Jina and Thomas (2013), women who experience sexual victimization are sometimes involved in risky behavior, including engaging in unprotected sex, engaging in sex while intoxicated, and substance abuse issues.

Men also experience negative consequences as a result of their victimization experience, including vulnerability, depression, sleep disturbance, sexual dysfunction,
suicidal thoughts, and uncertainty about their sexual orientation, especially if the perpetrator is male (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Mezey and King, 1989). In addition, men who are sexually victimized experience higher levels of depression and hostility compared to women who are sexually victimized (Frazier, 1993), and report a greater degree of acute psychiatric symptoms, history of psychiatric disorder, and psychiatric hospitalization compared to the general public (Kimerling, Rellini, Kelly, Judson, and Learman, 2002). Walker, Archer, and Davies’ sample of 40 men who were sexually victimized all experienced psychological disturbances as a result of their victimization, with the symptoms for their sample including “anxiety, depression, increased feelings of anger and vulnerability, loss of self-image, emotional distancing, self-blame, and self-harming behaviors” (2005:69).

College men who are sexually victimized experience higher levels of alcohol use including drinking problems, sexual risk behaviors, and more sexual functioning problems (Turchik, 2012). In a community sample of men and women, Elliott, Mok, and Briere (2004) found that while both male and female victims experience significantly increased distress compared to non-victims, men who are sexually victimized experience higher levels of distress than women. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994) contend that men experience a more negative emotional impact when the perpetrator is male. However, they do not offer an explanation as to why the emotional impact is more negative for male perpetrators nor do they differentiate across sexual orientation for the victim. The sexual orientation of the male victim could influence their emotional response, especially for heterosexual men. According to Heidt, Marx, and Gold (2005), gay men and lesbian women experience distress, depression, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms
in a similar manner. When examining just gay and bisexual men, victims report increased risky behavior (including crack cocaine use, unprotected sex, and exchanging sex for money or drugs) compared to non-victims (Kalichman, Benotsch, Rompa, Gore-Felton, Webster, and Simpson, 2001). In their sample of gay and bisexual men at a gay pride parade in a large city in the south, Kalichman, Benotsch, Rompa, Gore-Felton, Webster, and Simpson (2001) concluded that victims experienced greater psychological issues compared to non-victims and those who were coerced into sexual activity as part of their victimization reported greater instances of unprotected intercourse. Their results for coerced sexual activity supported past work by Kalichman and Rompa (1995), which found that men who are victims of coerced sexual activity report more sexually transmitted diseases and increased depression. In addition, coerced men report they were less likely to engage in risk-reduction behavior (Kalichman and Rompa, 1995). According to Ratner, Johnson, Shoveller, Chan, Martindale, Schilder, and Hogg (2003), gay male victims are 2.7 times more likely to report alcohol abuse, 2.8 times more likely to report suicidal ideation, 1.8 times more likely to report suicide attempts, 2.0 times more likely to report experiencing a mood disorder, and 3.3 times more likely to report current depression than non-victims. In addition, gay male victims report poorer self-esteem than non-victims (Ratner, Johnson, Shoveller, Chan, Martindale, Schilder, and Hogg, 2003). However, each study does not provide an explanation as to why gay men who are sexually victimized experience these issues at higher rates than heterosexual men who are sexually victimized.

Men who identified as gay may face homophobic stereotypes that suggest they wanted it, got pleasure from it, or colluded in their own abuse (Kassing, Beesley, and
According to Garnets, Herek, and Levy (1990) gay and bisexual men who have been sexually victimized experience strong internalized homophobia themselves, including the idea that their victimization is a punishment for their sexual orientation. Meyer (1995) suggests that a homophobic internalization for gay men who have been sexually victimized is a result of their joining with the perpetrator because of the violent act.

As a whole, men who are sexually victimized, regardless of their sexuality, experience negative consequences as a result of being victimized. Their experiences and outcomes are very similar to what women experience. These consequences for men and women tend to be psychological in nature, but can include increased substance use, riskier behavior, and therefore trouble with relationships. Many of these issues men and women endure as a result of being sexually victimized can be severe and long lasting (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). The main deviation between men and women includes higher rates of hostility and depression for men compared to women (Frazier, 1993). Men are also more likely than women to question their sexuality after experiencing sexual victimization (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Mezey and King, 1989). It has been suggested that one reason for the severe and long lasting problems for men who have experienced sexual victimization is the stigma they endure because of the myths and negative perceptions people have of men who have been sexually victimized (Stemple and Meyer, 2014; Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). This idea is discussed in more detail as the review of the literature progresses.
Reporting and Help Seeking Behavior

Sexual victimization is a violent crime, but it is not always reported to police. It is estimated that about half of women in the general population who experience violent victimization report it to police (Rennison and Rand, 2003). For college women, approximately 2 percent report their violent victimization experience (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, and Turner, 2003). Reporting varies by the type of violent victimization. According to the NCVS, approximately 12 percent of female college students report their experience with sexual victimization to police, compared to 45 percent for aggravated assaults, and 30 percent for simple assaults (Hart, 2003). The relationship to the perpetrator and whether an injury occurred influences whether college women report their sexual victimization to police. College women sexually victimized by an intimate partner are less likely to report their experience (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, and Turner, 2003). However, women who are injured during the sexual victimization are more likely to report to police (Bachman, 1993). In an examination of statistics from 1992 to 2000, Rennison (2002) found that only 36 percent of rapes and 34 percent of attempted rapes were reported by women in the general public. Often, reasons for not reporting include self-blame, guilt, shame, humiliation, wanting to keep it private, fear of not being believed, and lack of trust that the criminal justice system will properly handle their experience (DuMont, Miller, and Myhr, 2003).

The NCVS estimates that men are 1.5 to 2 times less like to report their sexual victimization than women (Pino and Meier, 2005; Weiss, 2010a). This could be because men feel they will not be taken seriously by police (Mezey and King, 1989), or worry they will be blamed by close friends and relatives they confide in about their sexual victimization (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). Men are more likely to
report their sexual victimization if they can maximize the chance they will be believed (Hodge and Cantor, 1998), which is why most men who report their sexual victimization to the police include that they are heterosexual, even if they are not (Hodge and Cantor, 1998). Gay men that are sexually victimized by a man worry that they will not be believed by police because their experience will be viewed as consensual since it aligns with their sexual orientation. They internalize the myth that men should be able to stop a sexual victimization from occurring, and if it does occur, they wanted it to happen. The problem is that most men do not resist the perpetrator and instead behave in a passive manner (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). This suggests that men who experience sexual victimization have to figure out how to navigate their sexual victimization in a context that has an untrue perception of them. Men and women who are sexually victimized report their experience to police at low levels. Each group is worried that they will not be believed, leading to their perpetrators not being held accountable for their actions.

Men who experience sexual victimization seek treatment at lower levels compared to women (Monk-Turner and Light, 2010). According to Monk-Turner and Light (2010), men who are sexually victimized seek counseling at lower rates when their victimization is deemed more severe. Their logistic regression model indicates that men who are victims of rape that included penetration are less likely to seek counseling than men who experienced a less severe victimization. This could indicate more severe sexual victimization experiences create higher levels of shame. Thus, in these situations with more severe sexual victimization, men might not want to discuss what occurred or even want others to know about their experience. However, when services are available and offered, men will use them (DuMont, Macdonald, White,
Regardless of the reason men choose to report and seek help at such a low level after being sexually victimized, Davies, Rogers, and Bates (2008) feel that both police and support services need to be aware of the frequency and unique needs that men who are sexually victimized might need.

Men might be less likely to report their sexual victimization because of shame associated with myths and perceptions of sexual victimization. This could cause the men to internalize the myths and blame themselves. According to Weiss (2010a, 2010b), the shame and embarrassment evident in NCVS incident reports are the core reasons why some men do not report their victimization to police. Weiss (2010b) explains that the shame felt by men regarding their sexual victimization is a result of not measuring up to the idealized form of masculinity. Much like with stigmatization, shame of sexual victimization for men “is mediated by the ways in which the culture defines appropriate gender behaviors and sexual practices for women and men” (Weiss, 2010b: 288). Since these men have deviated from the ideal construction of masculinity, they may feel shame. Also, Weiss (2010b) found that shame was evident in multiple ways for men who have been sexually victimized and include: (1) the disempowered victim who expressed self-blame, (2) the emasculated victim who felt they were now less of a man, and (3) the exposed victim who felt their mask of masculinity, or their public masculine performance, was being taken away and they were therefore being exposed. Myths about sexual victimization and their connection to gender stereotypes are discussed in the next section. Special emphasis is put on masculinity and myths regarding the sexual victimization of men.
Myths about Sexual Victimization

Myths about rape and sexual victimization are widely held beliefs (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994), which are typically constructed to reduce the severity of sexual victimization (Bohner, Reinhard, Rutz, Sturm, Kerschbaum, and Effler, 1998). These myths are situated in a narrative based in stereotypes and prejudices, with ill-informed beliefs about the perpetrators and victims of sexual assault and rape (Burt, 1980). Many of these beliefs lead to the perception that the individual who has been sexually victimized is to blame (Costin and Schwarz, 1987).

There are a set of perceptions for both men and women. Stereotypical views about women who experience sexual victimization include that she ‘asked for it’, enjoyed the experience, or lied about what happened (Buddie and Miller, 2002). For women, the myths associated with their sexual victimization experience are tied to her sexuality and purity. Kassing, Beesley, and Frey (2005) refer to these perceptions as myths and suggest that there are six categories of male rape myths, which all acknowledge and perpetuate the hegemonic masculine and heteronormative nature of American men and society as a whole. The categories include: (1) because men are strong and powerful, they cannot be overpowered and raped, (2) because men are sexual beings, they initiate sex and would not be targets, (3) men who are sexually victimized lose their masculinity since masculinity does not include sexual victimization, (4) the sexual victimization of men is rare, (5) because men are strong, both emotionally and physically, they can easily cope with being sexually victimized, and (6) the sexual victimization of men only happens in prison. Sleath and Bull (2009) mirror these thoughts and list other examples they refer to as myths, including that a man will always enjoy sex even if it is pushed on him and that any normal man can resist and stop a sexual victimization experience. Therefore, these myths suggest
that women cannot sexually victimize men because men should be able to defend themselves from a woman if he wants (Sleath and Bull, 2009).

The belief and acceptance of these myths can harm individuals who experience sexual victimization, which is true for both men and women. Certain myths about men who have been sexually victimized posit that men cannot be raped or that the sexual assault of men is not as severe as women who are sexually victimized, leading towards a blaming the victim narrative (Groth and Burgess, 1980). Davies (2002) writes that men who have been sexually victimized internalize these myths as a way to blame themselves and think that they should have been able to do something to prevent their attack. The internalization of these myths also makes it difficult for men to acknowledge that they were sexually victimized because they were socialized to believe that men cannot be sexually victimized (Garnets, Herek, and Levy, 1990). The internalization and harm of these myths about men who have been sexually victimized are viewed as stronger when the perpetrator is female (Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson, 1992). The stronger association of rape myths for the female perpetrated sexual victimization of men puts more strain on recovery for these men and can lead to a greater degree of harm (Davies, 2002). Harm associated with rape myths and their acceptance is acknowledged in more detail later in the review of the literature, and is merely mentioned here to provide a connection between these myths and other ideologies in society.

Scholars suggest that myths about sexual victimization for men and women are related to dominant and often stereotypical views of gender (Buddie and Miller, 2002). For men this is often related to how masculinity and sexuality are viewed for them. Stereotypical aspects of masculinity contend that men are heterosexual, strong,
powerful, and unable to be sexually dominated. Even though statistics say otherwise, these myths still persist. The next section examines the relationship between the myths about sexual victimization and stereotypical views of gender.

Rape Myths and Gender Stereotypes

Myths about the sexual victimization of men and women can be viewed in the context of gender stereotypes. Rape myths about men and women can cause harm for victims, including not reporting to police or seeking treatment. This can lead both men and women to leave any psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems untreated. The anchoring of myths associated with male sexual victimization in traditional gender ideologies supports and perpetuates the idea that women are submissive and men are dominant (Sleath and Bull, 2009). Thus, men cannot be sexually victimized, especially by women, because of their dominant status in the gender hierarchy. The rest of this section discusses how these myths are situated in gender stereotypes. It begins by conceptualizing traditional views on masculinity and then connects these stereotypical views to the myths associated with men.

Masculinity

Masculinity is a socially constructed idea based on the meanings society associates with men. Hegemonic masculinity, a widely discussed notion of masculinity, is defined as the ideal construction of masculinity (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This form of masculinity asserts that all men are supposed to strive towards, but very few, if any, actually embody it. Hegemonic masculinity is defined in a hierarchical manner, and situates femininity for women and every other form of masculinity as below it. Put simply, this version of masculinity
changes over time, and typically involves characteristics of a strong, heterosexual man who is always ready for sex and is devoid of emotion. However, over time this construction has changed along with changes in the social climate, with one major transformation being that the hegemonic construction now allows for emotion (Messner, 2007), as long as the masculine identity is situated in a heteronormative context. A heteronormative context presents heterosexuality as normal and natural, thus suggesting that all other forms of sexuality are not normal. This relationship between sexuality and masculinity creates a climate where homosexuality and other forms of male sexuality that are not heterosexual are viewed as the ‘other’ and therefore marginalized in comparison to heterosexual masculinity.

The characteristics associated with the hegemonic construction tend to coincide with hypersexualized stereotypes of men, and contrast with what real men encounter or the identities they embody. This includes the idea that men are sexually insatiable. However, because this form of masculinity is present in the media through television, film, music, and sports figures, the construction is glorified as the ideal, and pressures men to see their own masculinity in relation to this ideal.

The basis of the hegemonic masculine construction is that it is relational, and is always defined in relation to femininity for women and other forms of subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This situates masculinity as dominant over all other forms of masculinity as well as femininity, thus supporting a patriarchal view of gender.

Research examining the concept of multiple masculinities has contended that constructions of masculinity can differ across race (Anderson, 1999; Junn, 2007; Junn and Masuoka, 2008; Pascoe, 2007; Perez-Jimenez, Cunningham, Serrano-Garcia,
Ortiz-Torres, 2007) and class (Harper, 2010; Messerschmidt, 1993). The social context influences the different masculine constructions because each social context deems different characteristics as important for men to have and embody. Therefore, it can be said that masculinity is also constructed based on how others view masculinity, especially when examining the connections between race and masculinity (Ferguson, 2001; Pascoe, 2007). Both Ferguson (2001) and Pascoe (2007) found that the masculinity for young Black men is constructed not so much because of the social context, but also based on the perceptions others have of young Black men. Ferguson (2001) concluded that young Black men are disciplined more harshly than other young men in schools because they are viewed in the same context as adult Black men instead of being viewed in a lens of adolescence like their White counterparts. Pascoe (2007) found similar results in her study of adolescent masculinity and homophobic discourse. The young Black men in her study were viewed in a more negative way by school officials when homophobic discourse was used compared to the White adolescent boys in the study. As with Ferguson (2001), the adolescent boys of color from Pascoe (2007) were viewed in the context of stereotypes associated with men of color and were disciplined harsher than their White counterparts. In both instances, the perception of others is integral to these varying constructions of masculinity.

Men act a certain way to display their masculinity. Men participate in strategies to display their distance from homosexuality, including the use of homophobic discourse in order to create that distance (Kimmel, 1996; Pascoe, 2007). Therefore, because the myths associated with men who have been sexually victimized are based on these dominant and stereotypical notions of masculinity, homophobia is also a major aspect of the myths as well. Thus, men who make sense of their sexual
victimization must process and make sense of not only their masculinity as it relates to the hegemonic ideal, but also homophobia. This may be difficult for gay men who have been sexually victimized and may provide an extra layer for them to navigate. Even if a man does not prescribe to these dominant notions of masculinity and sexuality, they must still navigate them in their process of making sense of their own identity and recovery.

Perceptions of Sexual Victimization

The myths about sexual victimization create perceptions if they are believed. These perceptions vary depending on a number of factors, including victim characteristics like gender, sexual orientation, whether resistance was involved, and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator. Belief of these myths influence whether the victim is believed and can also have bearing on whether the perpetrator is charged (Gerger, Kley, Bohner, and Siebler, 2007; Ward, 1995). This section reviews some of the victim characteristics that influence whether the victim will be blamed.

Resistance of the Victim

Resistance during the sexual victimization is another characteristic that helps to associate blame with the victim. When the victim does not resist, they are viewed as holding more blame than if they did resist (Davies, Rogers, and Bates. 2008). This is especially true for men because of ideas about masculinity (Davies, Rogers, and

5 Most of the studies that examine how victims of sexual assault are perceived using vignettes. The participant reads vignette about a sexual victimization episode and provides their feedback, including culpability of the victim. Rater refers to the participant who reads the vignettes and provides their feedback.
Whitelegg, 2009; Davies, Smith, and Rogers, 2009; Kassing and Prieto, 2003). Men and women assigning blame in these studies vary on their opinion of blame and resistance. Through these vignette studies, research suggests that men attribute less and less blame the more resistance that is used, which is not the case for women raters who do not vary blame as much on resistance (Sims, Noel, and Maisto, 2007). In their thought piece, Bruggen and Grubb (2014) suggest that this could be the result of women being more sympathetic towards victims, especially victims who do not defend themselves.

Verbal coercion has been found to be predictive of sexual assault. Verbal coercion or verbal abuse is when the victim ultimately gives into sex even though they do not officially consent. Katz, Moore, and Tjachuk (2007) found that the undergraduate students who read vignettes that did and did not include verbal coercion, believed that verbal coercion is more controllable than rape, thus in instances where verbal coercion is the method for forcing sexual activity, the victim is seen as holding more responsibility. The authors also indicate that verbal coercion perpetrated by a female on a man is more controllable than the other way around, indicating men who are sexually victimized hold greater responsibility than women. Rye, Greatrix, and Enright (2006) also conclude in a similar manner that women who are sexually victimized are seen as less responsible than men. Both men and women are viewed as holding blame for their victimization based on their level of resistance. This is troubling since most victims of sexual assault know their perpetrator and are either unable to or do not defend themselves physically.
Victim Sexuality

The sexual orientation of the victim is used to blame men more than women. Gay men are blamed more for their experience with sexual victimization than heterosexual men (Anderson, 2004; Burt and DeMello, 2002; Davies and McCartney, 2003; Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001; Mitchell, Hirschman, and Hall, 1999; White and Robinson Kurpius, 2002). They are seen as having pleasure and their sexual victimization experience is minimized compared to heterosexual men (Davies and Hudson, 2011). This is especially true if the preceptor is also male.

The blame gay men who experienced sexual victimization receive holds true for both sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger and sexual victimization perpetrated by people known to the victim like in cases of sexual victimization perpetrated by an acquaintance (Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001). In instances of sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger, gay men are viewed as holding more blame than heterosexual men. This is magnified if the victim was attracted to their perpetrator (Davies, Austen, and Rogers, 2011). In addition, Wakelin and Long (2003) found that gay men and heterosexual women are viewed as holding more blame than heterosexual men and gay women. This could be related to the gender of the perpetrator. If the perpetrator’s gender aligns with the sexual orientation of the victim, the victim could be viewed as holding more blame.

Victim Gender

Both men and women receive blame for their victimization. In general, men receive behavioral blame (Howard, 1984). This means that men are blamed because they should be able to defend themselves. It is suggested that this behavioral blame is directly related to stereotypes about masculinity, most notably that men are strong and
assertive (Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001). Women on the other hand receive blame based on characterological characteristics (Davies and Rogers, 2006). This is the idea that women who are sexually victimized are too careless and trusting of their perpetrators.

In cases of sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger, men are viewed as holding more blame than women. This is especially true in cases where the man does not resist (Davies, Rogers, and Whitelegg, 2009). However, the blame men receive for sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger is reduced when a man resists and defends himself (Davies, Rogers, and Whitelegg, 2009). It is suggested that this is only the case with a male rater (Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001; White and Kurpius, 2002). This could be because men internalize stereotypes of their masculinity and therefore blame other men who do not act in that stereotypical way; defending themselves. As Anderson and Lyons (2005) suggest, it could be that men who do not display masculine characteristics in their victimization are viewed as less masculine, and therefore more culpable. Regardless, both men and women are blamed for their own victimization and this blame varies depending on the characteristics of the situation.

6 Most of the studies that examine how victims of sexual assault are perceived using vignettes. The participant reads vignette about a sexual victimization episode and provides their feedback, including culpability of the victim. Rater refers to the participant who reads the vignettes and provides their feedback.
Rape Myth Acceptance

The acceptance of rape myths help to determine the amount of blame that is placed on the victim (Sleath and Bull, 2009; Ward, 1995). A variety of factors influence how much blame is placed on the individual who is sexually victimized, including characteristics associated with the victim and perpetrator and the nature of the sexual victimization (Davies and Rogers, 2006). The blame places on the victim can lead to a magnitude of problems, including the psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems discussed earlier in the review of the literature. At times men who have been sexually victimized accept these same myths and blame themselves for their victimization, especially in their belief that they must have done something to provoke the incident or they should have done something more to prevent it (Davies, 2002). In addition, perceptions of culpability can even influence reporting behavior for male and female victims. One theory for the acceptance of rape myths is the Just World Theory. This theory contends that the world is a fair place and people receive what they deserve (Lambert and Raichle, 2000). Therefore, people who adhere to a just world belief feel that men and women who experience sexual victimization deserve what happened to them. Grubb and Harrower (2008) contend that this belief provides order and justice to those who adhere to it. Scholars suggest that the acceptance of the just world belief is connected to the acceptance of rape myths (Burt, 1980; Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994). For the context of this study, it is important to understand who accept these myths about rape that place blame on the victim.
**Who Accepts Rape Myths**

Empirical work that has observers read vignettes and provide thoughts on the scenario indicate that men are more likely to blame individuals who experience sexual victimization than women (Davies, Rogers, and Whitelegg, 2009; Davies, Smith, and Rogers, 2009). This is true for scenarios involving female victims (Sims, Noel, and Maisto, 2007), male victims (Davies, Rogers, and Whitelegg, 2009; Davies, Smith, and Rogers, 2009), gay victims (Davies, Austen, and Rogers, 2011), and heterosexual victims (Burt and DeMello, 2002; Mitchell, Hirschman, and Hall, 1999). This is also the case for sexual victimization classified as date rape where the victim knew their perpetrator and sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger (Black and Gold, 2008).

In a survey of 144 randomly selected undergraduate students from a University consisting of an even amount of male and female participants, Burczyk and Standing (1989) found that, on average, male raters provided a significantly lower rating than their female counterparts, indicating less sympathy towards the victim. Without looking at the gender of the rater, the results indicate that there was more sympathy for victims compared to non-victims and that there was more sympathy for female victims compared to male victims. Also, Burczyk and Standing (1989) found that there was a significant difference in the rating for female victims and non-victims (more sympathy for victims), but no significant difference in the ratings for male victims and non-victims. These results suggest that on average, men and women are more likely to sympathize with women who are sexually victimized. However, men are more likely
to blame an individual who experienced sexual victimization regardless of any variation in the characteristics of the victim or the victimization scenario.

The acceptance of rape myths concerning male sexual victimization is especially true for men, and the idea that a man can be sexually coerced into unwanted sex with a woman (Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, and Turner, 1999). If an individual, especially a man, is more prone to accept heteronormative beliefs about men and women, they are more likely to think that sexually coercive behavior is acceptable (Eaton and Matamala, 2014). In a study of 423 college students (276 females and 147 males), Chapleau, Oswald, and Russell (2008) found that rape myths concerning men who are sexually victimized are believed by men more than women. The acceptance of rape myths by men regarding men who are victimized is especially true when the perpetrator is female. According to Smith, Pine, and Hawley (1988), men believe that female perpetrators cannot sexually victimize a male because the man should always be ready for sex with a woman. Under Smith, Pine, and Hawley’s assertion, it seems evident that the average male views the sexual victimization of a man by a woman as not possible because of how they view the masculine identity. Even when a man is sexually victimized, people, especially men, believe the man actually initiated and enjoyed the sexual activity, and as a result does not go through negative emotional stress (Smith, Pine, and Hawley, 1988).
Sexual Victimization and Stigma

The concept of stigma has been extensively written about since Goffman published the seminal book on it in 1963. Since that time, the basic concept of stigma (act of becoming stigmatized, managing stigma, and repairing identity) has not been significantly altered, although some of the language has been modified. Goffman (1963) describes stigma as a spoiled social identity, meaning that stigma involves some trait that is widely disapproved by society. This does not necessarily mean the trait is physical in nature. It can be any attribute (physical or behavioral) that is characterized by societal disapproval. Therefore, stigma is less about the attribute itself and more about the social response to that attribute (Crocker, Major, and Steele, 1998; Hebl and Dovidio, 2005). Stigma is a product of social interaction that emphasizes the recognition that an attribute is ‘different’ causing a response that marginalizes the individual who has the ‘different’ attribute (Dovidio, Major, and Crocker, 2000). However, social interaction is not always needed for stigmatization, and can occur based on perceived social response to an attribute (Pryor and Reeder, 2011). Stigmatization can be displayed in both direct and indirect ways. Stigma can produce minor discomfort in social interactions between individuals who do and do not hold a stigmatized attribute (Hebl, Tickle, and Heatherton, 2000). However, stigma can cause more overt reactions, including rejection of individuals holding a stigmatized trait. It can even lead to non-stigmatized individuals holding stereotypes of individuals with the stigmatized attribute (Herek, 1999).

The basic process of stigmatization includes an attribute that becomes widely disapproved by society. As this occurs, negative stereotypes are associated with people who hold the undesirable trait. This causes individuals with the attribute to have negative reactions to being viewed as ‘different’, and can lead to discrimination
Phelan, 2005). Goffman (1963) described three broad categories of stigma: abomination of the body, blemishes of individual character, and tribal stigma. He conceptualized abomination of the body as stigma that results from physical or mental disabilities causing the trait to be easily noticed. Blemishes of the individual character category are easier to hide from society, and are defined as traits indicating the individual is weak, without passion or drive, along with having problems with addiction or being homosexual. The final category, tribal stigma, relates to traits that are passed down from generation to generation, which indicate the individual’s genealogy and lineage, including race and religion (Goffman 1963). When an individual possesses a trait that falls into one of these categories, they are viewed as different by the dominant society and stigmatized.

Stigmatization does not always occur through social interaction. It can occur through the perceived social response to an attribute. According to Pryor and Reeder’s (2011) conceptual model of stigma, there are four ways that stigma works: public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, and structural stigma. The conceptual model asserts that public stigma represents how society views people they believe have a stigmatized trait. Self-stigma is the internalization of holding a stigmatized trait. This includes internalizing how the individual thinks society members will react if their stigmatized trait is made known. Self-stigma encompasses the worry of having a stigmatized attribute exposed and the internalization of the negative outcomes related to others knowing about the attribute (psychological and emotional manifestations). Stigma by association is the reaction individuals receive when they are associated with someone who has a stigmatized trait. Structural stigma is how stigmatization is ingrained in certain social institutions. For Pryor and Reeder
(2011), each of these aspects of stigma work together, but public stigma is the core because it represents the response society has towards stigma and helps to influence the other three. However, structural stigma is necessary for public stigma, meaning certain beliefs about an attribute have to be present for society to have a negative response to it.

Sexual victimization, especially the sexual victimization of men is a good illustration of the interplay between structural stigma, public stigma, and self-stigma. In the context of men who have experienced sexual victimization, structural stigma can be viewed as the gender stereotypes that influence the dominant perspective associated with sexual victimization. Meaning, the acceptance of hegemonic masculinity legitimizes these stereotypes through its inclusion in various social institutions. Public stigma is therefore the response society has to these perceptions created by the structural stigma. These responses include blaming individuals who experience sexual victimization. Self-stigma is the internalization of the response. Pryor and Reeder’s (2011) conceptualization of stigma, and how it works at different levels of society, can provide insight into men’s responses to their experience with sexual victimization. Both men and women can experience shame associated with the stigma from their sexual victimization experience (Stemple and Meyer, 2014). However, feminist work about women has helped to challenge the myths about sexual victimization for women, allowing discourses that do not always include the dominant perception (Stemple and Meyer, 2014). That is not to say that women are no longer stigmatized for their sexual victimization experience. Just that an alternate discourse about the sexual victimization of women is present; one that is not based completely on myths and gender stereotypes. In their think piece about sexual victimization,
Stemple and Meyer (2014: e20) describe the alternate narrative as teaching that “the victimization of a woman is not her fault, that it is not caused by her prior sexual history or her choice of attire, and that for survivors of rape and other abuse, speaking out against victimization can be politically important and personally redemptive.” However, this alternate narrative is not present for men who experience sexual victimization. The narrative is still based on gender stereotypes. Until the narrative is created, men must navigate the stigma that is based on these gender stereotypes. The next section discusses how men may navigate the stigma they encounter as they progress and recover from their experience with sexual victimization.

Stigma Management and the Survivor Identity

Stigma management is the main avenue for reducing stigma and repairing the identity of someone who has these feelings (Goffman, 1963). Repairing an identity is basically the process of reducing stigma so it no longer influences the individual’s identity. Goffman talks of stigma management as the act of trying to become ‘normal’ if the individual does not embody a discredited identity. To manage the stigma, the individual becomes involved with sympathetic others (individuals who share the same stigma), and through them learn how to cope with the stigma, receive social support, and learn other ways to view the stigma. As individuals eliminate their stigma, they redefine their stigma as positive and learn to develop a life that supports their stigmatized trait. In this sense, the individuals do not completely escape the stigmatized trait, they only learn how to manage it, and change their views on life so they can put a positive spin on their stigmatized trait. This section examines the process of stigma management for people who have experienced sexual victimization.
It suggests the process of transforming from a victim to a survivor as a strategy for stigma management, and provides a discussion of how women manage stigma and make sense of their sexual victimization experience, in lieu of literature on men.

**Survivor Status as a Repaired Identity**

There is very little research tackling how men who are sexually victimized may make sense of their victimization and/or overall identity after being victimized. Given the dearth of research in this area of inquiry, this section examines how women who are sexually victimized make sense of their victimization to give insight on how men might go through a similar process.

Over the past several decades, the term survivor has become more widespread in describing people who experience sexual victimization (Leisenring, 2006). The use of survivor has emerged because of the connotation both victim and survivor has on the individual who is sexually victimized. For instance, victim has a negative connotation and indicates that there is a problem with the individual it describes (Best, 1997). However, survivor situates the individual in a much more positive light and indicates that the individual has agency and is choosing to seek help and recover from the experience (Dunn, 2005).

Choosing which identity to embody is something that is not easy for women who are sexually victimized to navigate and decide. In order to take on a survivor status, women who are sexually victimized need to use their agency to decide they want to redefine how they view their sexual victimization (Naples, 2003). Naples (2003) refers to this new definition as deciding she wants her relationship with her victimization to change. How a woman reaches the survivor identity can differ from person to person, but it often includes therapy, talking with others, or learning
strategies from other women who have experiences sexual victimization (Leisenring, 2006). Regardless of the avenue a woman takes to reach this decision, her new status as a survivor can help reduce the stigma associated with her sexual victimization experience because the term survivor is correlated with characteristics that are viewed as positive, empowered, and counter to the victim narrative of passiveness (Dunn, 2005).

Not all women choose the survivor identity even though it has a more positive connotation compared to the victim identity. Leisenring (2006) found that women choose the victim status to illustrate they have suffered from their experience, could not control it, and deserve sympathy and help. This status allows women to blame others for what they experienced because it is seen as out of their control if they are viewed as a victim by both themselves and others (Holstein and Miller, 1990; Loseke, 1999). Also, this status indicates that the individual should receive help and some sort of compensation (usually the perpetrator being found guilty through the criminal justice system) (Holstein and Miller, 1990).

On the contrary, women choose the survivor status in order to not be seen as weak and to not be blamed for their victimization (Leisenring, 2006). They do not want to be seen as victim; passive or powerless (Best, 1997), and instead want to be seen as strong. Leisenring (2006) found that women who choose the survivor status view the victim status as being associated with blame for the victimization, and do not want to be seen as culpable. In both cases for the women in Leisenring’s study, they described their identity as not providing blame to them. Therefore, it seems important that the identity not hold blame or else women who are sexually victimized will not choose that identity in their road to recovery. Leisenring (2006) also found that
choosing the survivor or victim identity is not cut or dry and that many women choose to navigate multiple discourses of victimhood and survivorhood. She found it was a result of women having different meanings for survivor and victim across the sample, and therefore would prescribe to a certain identity based on their own definitions of victim and survivor.

Women who are sexually victimized undertake identity management\textsuperscript{7} to determine whether they view themselves as a survivor or victim. These women take their own definitions of survivor and victim to navigate the competing discourses and decide how they want to view themselves. Given these findings, it is not unlikely that men also engage in similar identity management to make sense of their sexual victimization. However, research has ignored this process of identity work for men who are sexually victimized.

The sexual victimization of men involves many similarities with the experience for women. Both men and women experience sexual victimization that is almost exclusively perpetrated by people they know and takes place in a context that can be characterized as date rape. Men and women also both experience negative issues as a result of their sexual victimization, including psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. Although there are some slight variations, men and women face similar experiences with sexual victimization. However, little is known about how men process and proceed through recovery. What we do know is that men are victimized by both same sex and opposite sex perpetrators, which is different than women. Men are also often constructed as privileged in regards to gender. Literature

\textsuperscript{7} Identity management refers to the strategies people use to create their identity based on the social context.
emphasizes that women begin to identify as survivors during the recovery process. However, we currently do not know if men do the same or what factors, such as gender stereotypes about masculinity, might differentially affect their journey. This study examines this process for men in the context of dominant perceptions about their sexual victimization that are influenced by gender stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

Based on the NCVS, men comprise almost ten percent of individuals who experience sexual victimization (Weiss, 2010a). Like women, these men often do not fight back and experience psychological problems because of their sexual victimization (Frazier, 1993; Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Kimerling et al., 2002; Mezey and King, 1989). Many of these issues are long lasting and can take years for men to seek the help they need (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). However, dominant perceptions about the sexual victimization of men suggest that men cannot experience sexual victimization, thus creating a narrative that is not indicative of the reality.

While research has provided information about how men who experience are viewed by others, empirical work has not examined how men make sense and process their sexual victimization. Weiss (2010a) suggests that men defend their masculinity when describing their experience with sexual victimization. However, she is unable to provide insight into how men process their sexual victimization and proceed through recovery. I add to the literature about sexual victimization by examining how men make sense of their sexual victimization and proceed through recovery. I accomplish this by situating their experiences within their views on masculinity and how that influences their recovery journey. I pay special attention to how these men experience
In examining how men make sense of their experience with sexual victimization, it is important to take into consideration possible differences based on both participants and perpetrator characteristics. Throughout the findings chapters, I describe any differences based on the sexuality of the participant, gender of the perpetrator, or relationship between the participant and perpetrator. Before shifting to an explanation of the methodology used for this study, it is important to discuss why these comparisons are relevant and important to make.

The reason it is important to include comparisons across sexuality when examining men who experience sexual victimization is because of masculinity. Prior research on men emphasizes the importance of masculinity. This includes how sexual victimization is defined, how men describe their sexual victimization, and why researchers believe men are less likely to report their experience to police (Weiss, 2010a). Central to dominant constructs of masculinity is not only the idea that men are strong, powerful, and sexually dominant, but that men heterosexual (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The heteronormative context for masculinity is evident in both perceptions and previous research about men who experience sexual victimization. As noted earlier in this chapter, the sexual victimization of gay men is minimized compared to heterosexual men, and gay men are viewed as receiving pleasure from their experience, especially if the perpetrator is male (Davies and Hudson, 2011). Gay men are also blamed more for their experience with sexual victimization compared to heterosexual men in instances perpetrated by strangers, as well as sexual victimization perpetrated by people known to the victim,
like an acquaintance (Davies, Pollard, and Archer, 2001). In fact, the sexual victimization of gay men is viewed in a similar way as the sexual victimization of heterosexual women. Both groups are viewed as holding more blame than heterosexual men (Wakelin and Long, 2003). Based on previous research about gay men who experience sexual victimization, they encounter a more negative view of their experience, one that sees them as more culpable. Thus, they have to navigate these perceptions as they process their experience with sexual victimization. The reason for these different perceptions and experiences could be directly related to the heteronormative nature of masculinity. Gay men are seen as deviating from dominant masculine scripts. Their masculinity is often viewed as holding similar characteristics as femininity (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, it is not surprising that the sexual victimization of gay men is viewed in a similar manner as heterosexual women. The inclusion of comparisons across sexuality is important because of the heteronormative nature of masculinity. Gay men are already stigmatized in regards to their sexuality. Therefore, comparing men who already hold a stigmatized trait with men who do not may provide a different outcome. These two groups of men already face different views of their sexual victimization. Heterosexual men are viewed as not able to be victimized, while gay men are viewed as receiving pleasure of the victimization. The comparison across the two groups provides insight into how privilege and marginalization work within masculinity and whether it works in a similar manner as gender in general. The following chapter describes how I designed and executed this study.
Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study builds on the current literature about men who have experienced sexual victimization, incorporates masculinity, and implements a qualitative approach that does not rely on NCVS incident reports or other survey data. Since the research emphasizes a victim centered approach that situates the analysis on narratives, I incorporate a feminist epistemology both in terms of study design and reflexivity (Harding, 1987; Collins, 2000b).

This study reports on 19 semi-structured in-depth interviews with men who reported at least one experience with sexual victimization since they turned 18 and that did not occur during an incarceration (see Appendix A for the interview guide). In addition, I implemented grounded theory to simultaneously conduct interviews and analyze the transcripts so the data could be tested for reliability and validity while also testing for the saturation of data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). All participants provided demographic and background information, their perceptions of men who have been sexually victimized, details about their own victimization, how they view their identity since being victimized, their experience going through recovery, and their involvement in advocacy work. Participants were recruited through online discussion boards housed on national advocacy group websites (Male Survivor and 1in6), advocacy and support groups throughout the United States, a crisis center at a mid-
Atlantic university, and social media support group sites. The majority of these sites were found on Facebook. In addition to the purposive sampling, I also relied on snowball sampling in the recruiting of participants, which included asking participants to provide information about the research to individuals they thought would qualify (Charmaz, 2006). The following section provides more detail on the sample, recruitment, observation, interviews, analysis, and issues that occurred during the process of conducting the study.

**Population and Recruitment**

I recruited and sampled men who experienced sexual victimization, outside of an incarceration, since turning 18. Participants who experienced sexual victimization during childhood were not excluded as long as they also experienced sexual victimization since they turned 18 and not during an incarceration. The interview guide was designed to probe sexual victimization history so that any differences between men who were sexually victimized, both during childhood and as an adult, could be compared to men who were only sexually victimized as adults. These differences are discussed where appropriate in Chapters 3-5. Early on in the planning process, the decision was made to only include men who experienced sexual victimization while a member of the general public instead of also including men who were sexually victimized while they were incarcerated. The reason is because some literature suggests that masculinity is viewed differently in prison, while other literature does not. Informing that topic is beyond the scope of this study. It should be noted that I did not have to exclude any participants because they were only sexually victimized while incarcerated. During the discussion of future research in Chapter 6, I will discuss an expansion of this study to include participants who were sexually
victimized while incarcerated and in the military to allow for comparisons at an organizational level (general public v. military v. prison).

Due to the difficulty in accessing this population, I incorporated both purposive and snowball sampling to recruit 19 participants for in-depth interviews. I originally planned to recruiting individuals for in-person interviews amongst four different subsets of men who have experienced sexual victimization: (1) members of national advocacy groups that are involved in online discussion boards, (2) men involved with advocacy groups in a mid-Atlantic states, (3) men involved in support groups, and (4) male students at mid-Atlantic universities. I gained approval from national groups like Male Survivor and 1in6 to post information about this study in the appropriate place on their websites.

I adjusted Recruitment strategies after it was evident that in-person interviews were not going to provide a large enough sample of participants. Through an IRB amendment, I revised the recruitment strategy to add recruitment through additional online message boards, social media websites like Facebook, and advocacy/service groups throughout the United States. The addition of the online message boards and social media websites allowed me to reach a wider audience and ultimately led to increased interest in participating. In order to post on a Facebook support group, I contacted the administrator of each Facebook group that offered support to men who experienced sexual victimization for their approval to post. In total, approximately fifty groups were contacted. Of the fifty groups, twelve responded and approved my posting on their page. Two of the groups were closed to the public and the administrator posted information on my behalf. The contact with the administrators of these groups provided a great opportunity to talk with men who experienced sexual
victimization in a guide role. As guides, the administrators provided me with ideas for additional groups to contact. One of the men I talked to in this capacity reported that he had experienced sexual victimization and even decided to participate (others reported that they had experienced sexual victimization, but only during childhood). Since the groups were sensitive in nature, I found it important to gain approval before posting because I felt it provided the research with legitimacy compared to simply posting without gaining approval. The Facebook postings provided the most interest out of any recruitment method, and I continued to post every 2-3 weeks for approximately six months to these groups until recruitment was no longer needed. Through the Facebook recruitment, I was contacted by some men who reported that their only experience with sexual victimization occurred during childhood. Even though they did not qualify to participate, I did get their permission to be contacted in the future if I conduct a study that included men who were only sexually victimized as children. I discuss plans for a comparative study between men who were sexually victimized as only adults, only children, and both in more detail in the section on future research in Chapter 6.

I also revised recruitment through another IRB amendment that included increasing the reach of contacting advocacy and service agencies to the entire United States. This included the use of resource pages on national groups like Male Survivor to find service and advocacy groups in states outside of the mid-Atlantic region. In addition, I relied on simple google searches to find and reach out to groups outside of the area. This method of recruitment provided some very good contacts, but was not very successful in recruiting participants. In total, I contacted approximately 250 agencies across the United States. Out of the 250 contacted, between 30 and 50
responded to my inquiry. None of the agencies that were contacted and responded indicated that they had services specifically geared towards adult men who experienced sexual victimization. Less than five of the agencies mentioned that they have had an adult who experienced sexual victimization seek their services. These agencies mentioned that their clients were almost exclusively men who only experienced sexual victimization as children.

Early in the recruitment process, I had informal conversations with people about the best way to recruit participants for this study. One of these informal conversations connected me to Mitch. Mitch experienced sexual abuse as a child and routinely has speaking engagements to talk about his experience. Even though Mitch was excluded from this study, he introduced me to some groups he is involved with and also provided some beneficial information for when I began conducting interviews. I also spoke with people who are involved in health and criminal justice organizations. Unfortunately, speaking with Mitch and these other non-advocacy organizations did not yield any participants because they only had information and access to men who were sexually abused as children. However, both avenues provided resources for participants when I expand the study to include men who were only victimized as children.

Demographics of Respondents

The participants consist of 19 men who report experiencing sexual victimization since they turned 18-years-old that did not occur during an incarceration. However, this did not exclude participants who experienced sexual victimization before they turned 18-years-old, as long as they had at least one experience since turning 18-years-old that did not occur while they were incarcerated. Overall, 13 of
the 19 participants reported experiencing sexual victimization during both childhood and as an adult, while only 6 participants reported experiencing sexual victimization only as an adult. Sixteen of the 19 participants who participated reported experiencing sexual victimization more than once, meaning that 3 of the 6 participants who reported only experiencing sexual victimization as an adult, had multiple experiences as an adult. Further characteristics of the participants’ experiences with sexual victimization are described in more detail in Chapter 3, including information about the perpetrator, age of both the perpetrator and participant during the experience, and the relationship to the perpetrator, among others.

Table 2.1: Demographic Information for Study Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race and Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Middle-Class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-Class</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-Middle-Class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-Class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of men who participated was not very diverse across race, with 14 participants reporting that they are White, 2 reporting they are Black, and 3 reporting that they are multi-racial (see Table 1 for Demographic information regarding race, class, and sexual orientation). In regards to ethnicity, only 2 participants reported that they view themselves as Hispanic or Latino. The sample did provide more diversity
across sexuality, with 8 participants reporting they are heterosexual, 8 reporting they are homosexual, and 3 reporting they are bisexual. It should be noted that the interview guide incorporated open-ended questions when asking participants about their race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Labeling a participant’s sexual orientation was accomplished through the context they provided in their answers, which ranged from a one-word answer to a paragraph. Participants mostly reported that they are middle-class (N=14). However, out of those 14 participants, 2 reported being members of the upper-middle-class, 1 reported being a member of the lower-middle-class, and 11 reported simply that they considered themselves to be middle-class. Out of the remaining 5 participants, 1 reported being a member of the upper-class, 3 consider themselves to be working-class, and 1 reported he considers himself to be poor. Additional information about the demographics of the participants are discussed throughout Chapters 3, 4, and 5 when discussing any intersections of different characteristics.

Interviews

Only one participant was local and interviewed in-person. All other participants were given the opportunity to conduct the interviews over the phone or through a video chat client like Skype. Sixteen participants were interviewed over the phone and two participants interviewed through video chat. Each interview took place in a location where others could not overhear the conversation. This was important because it helped to keep the confidentiality of the participants and hopefully helped to make each participant more comfortable about discussing their sexual victimization experience with me. The interviews lasted approximately 1-2 hours, with fifteen of the nineteen interviews lasting over 90 minutes. Each interview was audio recorded
and all participants consented to be contacted in the future for follow-up interviews or research in addition to consenting to participate. The interview guide (see appendix A) asked questions about the victim’s demographic characteristics and family in order to build rapport with the participant and allow them to become more comfortable with me before transitioning to questions about their experience with sexual victimization. During the questions about their experience with sexual victimization, the interview focused on details about their victimization, including perpetrator, characteristics about the episode, whether they reported the incident, why or why not, who else they told, how their victimization made them feel, support services they took advantage of or wished were available, coping strategies, and short/long-term issues from their sexual victimization. The interview guide then shifted to questions about how they view other participants who have been sexually victimized, how others perceived them if they talked about their victimization to others, and their recovery process of transitioning from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor (including the identity work involved in this process). The final part of the interview was meant to end the discussion in as positive of a manner as possible by focusing on advocacy and advice for other participants who have experienced sexual victimization. Probing questions were used to help decipher or gain more information where appropriate.

Participants received a copy of the consent form to read at the beginning of each interview. Next, I reviewed the research protocol and discussed the consent form with participants (all of the participants who were interviewed over the phone were emailed the consent form prior to the scheduled interview so they had time to read through it before we talked). Participants were instructed during the informed consent
stage that they could decline to answer any question, with no effect on their involvement in the study. Furthermore, I encouraged participants to ask questions and raise issues they thought were important. To receive help with emotional discomfort, participants were provided a list of agencies they could contact to obtain services and help with any discomfort. Referrals were originally limited to agencies in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland to cover all the possible areas of recruitment. After the amendment the list of referrals was tailored to the participant, including national groups as well as local groups for the participant. Finally, I asked that participants not mention specific names and dates when discussing their experiences or activities. However, I did ask for the age of the participant for each experience with sexual victimization. All of the participants were offered a list of referrals, but since all of the participants were currently receiving treatment and were involved in advocacy work, all participants declined the referral information.

Conducting interviews with the participants was, at times, challenging. I began the interviews building rapport with the participants, which often included chatting about my research and answering any questions the participant asked. However, the participants were often curious about why I was conducting the research. Prior to beginning the interview stage of this study, I made sure that I developed an answer to this question so that I would not influence the way the participant might answer questions as we began the interview. My answer to this question consisted of telling the participant there is little research on the subject of men who experience sexual victimization, and that I thought it important to gain insight into the experience for men, much like what was done in studies about the sexual victimization of women. I made sure I emphasized that it was important to
hear their stories as that was the only way we would know more information about how men experience sexual victimization. Emphasizing the importance of their story in my answer not only illustrated to them that I was interested in hearing what they had to say, it also positioned them as the experts on the subject. By doing this, I was able to put them at ease prior to the start of the interview, and to also indicate I was interested in hearing everything they had to say. After the interviews were completed, I often talked informally with the participants. Much of this conversation centered on continued discussion of aspects of the interview they would suggest adding or expanding. I would often go into more detail about my reason for conducting research and described my own views, which I thought was important since they were open and honest with me during the interview. After the interview was completed, I asked participants if they knew anyone else they thought would be interested in participating. Very few of the participants knew of another man who experienced sexual victimization as an adult since they were often involved in groups for men who were victimized as adults or children. In the few instances where a participant knew someone, that person ended up not being interested in participating. However, the majority of participants mentioned that they would be able to help me recruit if I was interested in interviewing men who were only sexually abused as children.

**Data Analysis**

I incorporated a grounded theory approach to this study so analysis and data collection could occur simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006), thus the analysis could inform any modifications that needed to occur to the interview guide. This was important because this study is one of the few that have incorporated a qualitative methodology to examine men who experienced sexual victimization. Thus, while I based this study
on previous research, it is still exploratory in nature. I incorporated a process of continued analysis in order to follow a grounded theory approach. This included first and second cut examinations of interview notes, preliminary memo-writing, line-by-line coding, focused coding advanced memo-writing to begin focusing on themes present in the data (Charmaz, 2006). The use of grounded theory is in line with a feminist methodology as outlined earlier in this section. Instead of relying on previous theory that does not fully put men in the center of the analysis, I let their voices drive the research. I conducted and transcribed all interviews in order to fully follow grounded theory guidelines. I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, during the line-by-line coding and analysis of interview data.

**First and Second Cut Notes**

I incorporated first and second cut notes to follow a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). During each interview, I followed first cut guidelines, which included taking notes about the interview in a manner that would not cause discomfort for the participant. I did this by explaining to each participant that I would be taking notes throughout the interview, but that these notes would be to remind me to ask and to ‘jot down’ notes so I could remember what we discussed if there is an issue with the audio recording. Since the majority of interviews took place over the phone, participants did not feel discomfort with my note taking. Information that was recorded during the first cut included: any initial themes that materialize, body language of the participants if they were not over the phone, issues that occurred, timing of the interview, and any additional information that seemed relevant at the time of the interview. After the interview, I added impressions about the interview so
as to not have too much time elapse between the interview and the beginning of the analysis.

To reduce the likelihood of a crisis of representation, I typed up the first cut notes verbatim and added additional details along with my interview impressions (Charmaz, 2006). At that time, I added any additional impressions so I could begin to make comparisons and inferences about the interviews. This process was especially important and useful when I had multiple interviews scheduled within a short amount of time and before a full transcript was available, a process that was slower than expected. The first and second cuts allowed me to begin my analysis and thus allowed the data to drive the research following a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). In addition to the first and second cute notes, a memo was created for each participant. These memos included impressions, a summary of the interview, and themes that arose. This allowed for additional questions and themes to be added to future semi-structured interviews, which was invaluable to continuing a grounded theory approach. For example, after the first couple of interviews, a theme of identifying as a survivor instead of a victim began to emerge. Through the use of the first and second cut notes, and memos for each participant, questions probing the process and identity work involved in going from viewing oneself as a survivor instead of a victim was able to be included very early on in the data collection process instead of waiting until interviews were coded and needing follow-up interviews. This process was especially important for this study because of the small sample of men who participated.

Coding

Coding occurred after the first and second cuts were complete and the interviews were transcribed word for word. I incorporated initial and focused coding...
(Charmaz, 2006). During initial coding, I performed line-by-line coding in order to find patterns in the interview data (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2006). At times this included simply one word, phrases, whole sentences, or even paragraphs. With initial coding, I allowed the data to provide the code instead of using pre-existing codes on the data (Charmaz, 2006). This open-coding of the data ensured that the analysis was grounded in the data, thus following a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006).

Once initial coding was complete for the first third of the interviews, I incorporated focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). The process included the review of the initial coding for the first third of interviews to determine the most frequent of the earlier codes. These codes were used to help code the remaining interview transcripts. The use of focused coding in conjunction with the initial line-by-line coding was beneficial because it allowed me to go through and code each interview and field note twice, thus allowing for the addition of questions into the interview guide based on themes that began to show-up in the coding of the interviews (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2006). This grounded theory approach situated the stories from the participants at the center and ensured that any conclusions were based solely on the data.

**Memo-Writing**

During the data collection process, I engaged in memo-writing, which was an important step to gathering the data into groups/themes, deciding whether the data had reached saturation or if I needed to enact other sampling methods, and provided an important step in preparing for writing the first draft of this dissertation (Charmaz, 2006). The preliminary memos written during the data collection and analysis process included information about what I saw in my early analysis of the data, including the coding categories that emerged and where I needed to focus with the remaining
interviews (Charmaz, 2006). As the process continued, memo-writing included more advanced memos, which included organizing themes, making comparisons, and ironing out the argument of the study (Charmaz, 2006).

The advanced memos were also a way to determine if the data collection process had reached saturation. Once interviews were no longer providing different information and themes from the earlier interviews, then saturation of the data had occurred (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998). Saturation of the data began to occur around the fifteenth interview. Since this study is exploratory in nature, the interview guide consisted of broad questions to examine context surrounding the sexual victimization of men and how men process their sexual victimization. Results from this study will help to guide future research on the subject and will help focus both future research questions and interview guides.

**Reflexivity**

Throughout this study I was cognizant of the role my presence and own personal beliefs played in influencing the process (King and Horrocks, 2010). King and Horrocks (2010: 126) describe the process of reflexivity as “the realization that researchers and the methods they use are entangled in the politics and practices of the social world,” and that “this realization brings about the unavoidable acceptance that doing social research is an active and interactive process engaged in by individual subjects, with emotions and theoretical and political commitments.” This means that all research is influenced to a certain extent by the researcher because each person brings their own views into what they do. Simply by framing this study in the way I have puts an epistemological spin towards my own views and ideas (King and Horrocks, 2010). To minimize any slant or ideologies of my own, I framed this study
as exploratory in nature and only situated the research on the idea that dominant ideologies about masculinity and sexuality present a certain perception and context for navigating sexual victimization, and one that may provide a unique experience for men compared to women. I am interested in men’s stories to understand how they make sense of their own sexual victimization. As a result, I used a grounded theory approach that is based on the participants’ narratives. This meant the results of the study were based on what the participants shared during their interviews and not the views of the researcher, thus minimizing the impact I had on the outcome.

Reflexivity is not simply about how the researcher theoretically influences the research, but also how the researcher influences data collection and other aspects of the research (King and Horrocks, 2010). Researchers can influence the data that is collected through interviews, interactions with participants, and other fieldwork (King and Horrocks, 2010). I took certain precautions to make sure I impacted the research as little as possible. For instance, I made sure not to wear clothing that was too formal and would come off as clinical. This hopefully helped ensure that participants felt comfortable with me, and therefore more likely to share. During interviews, I was cognizant of my body language, how I spoke, and made sure I was not giving cues to participants that were providing right or wrong answers (e.g., nodding in a positive or negative manner). In addition, I made sure that I verbally provided a safe environment, which was especially important for the many phone interviews that were conducted. Interviewing members of a sensitive population can be difficult, and it is important to not be confrontational, and instead talk to them like you would anyone else, and be understanding when they need to take a break. Each interview was different, and it was important to me that I was aware that they may each bring
different challenges and therefore I made sure I was flexible and open to each participant. Certain data collection strategies helped to minimize my impact on the research. In order to make sure the participants’ narratives influenced the results and not my own ideologies, I coded their transcripts in the same way. This ensured the themes came from what the participants shared. This is a central aspect of feminist epistemology discussed by Harding (1987), and therefore was central to this study. Finally, I planned to write down any instances where I felt I was in any way impacting the research, which did not happen. Through these methods, I tried to limit the impact I had on the research and subsequent results.

**Crisis of Representation**

The crisis of representation is an important aspect of qualitative research to examine because it deals with the interplay of power between the researcher and the respondent (Anderson, 2009). More specifically, the crisis of representation is how accurately researchers present the material they obtain from their respondents (Anderson, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The accuracy of the data obtained from respondents does not refer to the finished published product, but also refers to field notes, interview notes, and interview transcripts (Anderson, 2009; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In order to reduce the likelihood of a crisis of representation, I followed three strategies to make sure I accurately represented the information the participants presented to me. The first strategy I followed was to make sure I asked follow-up and probing questions during the in-depth interviews to help clarify what they said. By following this line of questioning, it provided the respondent the opportunity to affirm, disagree with, or clarify the interpretation I made from their answer, thus making sure I accurately interpreted what the respondents chose to share. The second strategy I
employed was the opportunity for participants to review their interview transcripts. This both allows for a more collaborative relationship with participants as well as allowing for them to clarify anything they might have said during the interviews. However, no participants took advantage of my offer to review their transcript and a few participants even mentioned that they did not want to read the transcripts for fear that it would trigger a negative response. The final strategy I used to reduce the likelihood of a crisis of representation was to use quotes from the interviews during the presentation of findings. This allows the reader to see verbatim what participants shared and limits the interpretation made by the researcher. Researchers cannot completely dismiss the likelihood of a crisis of representation, but the strategies I used helped to reduce that likelihood significantly.
Chapter 3

SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION AND SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS OF MASCULINITY

Claude is a 41 year old single, White, middle class male who identifies as queer. He grew up in an upper class family with close friends and a family who prided themselves in their education. Claude was verbally and physically abused by members of his family, and experienced an episode of sexual victimization as a 4 year old when his babysitter forced him to inappropriately touch her. Claude was quite upset and disturbed about what happened with his babysitter and did not tell anyone about what happened until he was 11 or 12 years old. When he finally told his mother about what happened, she provided support and understanding because she was a survivor of sexual victimization. His mother’s support made Claude feel safe and was very important to him. When Claude was 18 years old and a freshman in college, he was again sexually victimized by a woman who was close to 30 years older than him when she performed oral sex on him without his consent. The experience left Claude questioning his sexuality and caused him to shutdown sexually for 2 years. Claude did not fight back when it happened, and did not report the experience to the police.

Claude is a pseudonym for one of the participants in this study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and no identifying information was used in the manuscript.
because he feared they would laugh at him and think there was something wrong with
him. Since this episode, Claude has been sexually victimized another 3 times. When
he was 23 years old, Claude was sexually victimized by a male friend when they were
sharing a hotel room while attending a conference. This incident of sexual
victimization was much more forceful than his previous experiences and Claude
fought back and stopped it from happening. He was angry and reported the incident to
the leaders of the men’s organization who were holding the conference. The leaders
of the organization banished Claude’s perpetrator from the group, but not every
member of the group was supportive, which did not bother Claude because he had
received some relief when he no longer had to see his perpetrator at meetings of the
men’s organization. Even with this positive outcome, Claude did not even think of
reporting his experience to the police. Claude’s third adult experience with sexual
victimization occurred when he was forcibly raped by a police officer when he was
31-years-old. After the police officer raped Claude physically and with his baton, the
police officer took him to a psychiatric hospital and told them that he was crazy. At
this time Claude felt completely vulnerable and victimized. To their credit, the
psychiatrist asked Claude what happened, and when Claude disclosed the details of his
experience, they believed him. Claude was able to press charges against the police
officer, but these charges were dropped because it was his word against the police
officer’s word, which made Claude feel crazy and caused him to block it out as best he
could. Claude was worried that everyone in the community knew what happened,
which was both positive and humiliating at the same time. Fearing for his safety from
the police officer he reported, Claude moved as far away as he could. While living in this other location, Claude was again sexually victimized. This time, the girlfriend of his roommate tried to perform oral sex against his will while he was sleeping. After his other experiences with sexual victimization, Claude hit her to make her stop. He later came to the realization that she didn’t think she was doing anything wrong, let alone sexually victimizing him.

The description of Claude’s experience with sexual victimization depicts some of the obstacles many participants encountered as they processed what occurred. Although the participants came from different backgrounds and had varying narratives about their sexual victimization, they each described similar themes as they began to process their own experience. While these processes were not exactly uniform throughout all of these participants, they included narratives about their relationships, interactions with others, reporting and telling others, and help seeking behavior. These themes were often influenced by and a response to internalizing societal expectations about gender and sexuality. The societal expectations include the idea that ‘real’ men are supposed to be strong, powerful, sexually dominant, and heterosexual. The internalization of these masculine scripts influenced how the participants navigated and understood the themes mentioned above. This chapter provides insight into how societal expectations of masculinity affect how participants begin to process their experience with sexual victimization. It pays special attention to how the participants experience and define sexual victimization, the psychological, emotional, and behavioral issues they encountered, and their initial help seeking behavior.
Defining Sexual Victimization

The experiences with sexual victimization and their recovery are tied to when they first experienced sexual victimization. Out of the 19 participants, 13 experienced sexual victimization as a child and an adult, while only 6 reported that they only experienced sexual victimization as an adult. It is not surprising that most of the participants reported they had multiple sexual victimization experiences. All of the 13 participants who experienced sexual victimization as both children and adults experienced multiple episodes of sexual victimization, and approximately half of the participants who only experienced sexual victimization as an adult reported multiple episodes of victimization.

Each participant labeled at least one adult experience as sexual victimization. A small group of the participants (2) described experiences that they said could be defined as sexual victimization, but did not label them as such. John, a 25-year-old, White, upper class, bisexual man, discussed instances where he “gave into” sex with women because he did not want to cause any problems and did not want them to question his sexuality. After John described his experience with sexual victimization, I asked him if he had any other experience. John replied:

“A couple times it would be socially better if I just went, just went along with it. It is just alright I guess we’re doing it. That has happened more than once definitely, but if you mean in a more serious manner then only once.”

In these situations, John did not himself label them as sexual victimization, but talked of giving into societal norms as the reason he had sex with these women. George, a 37-year-old, multiracial, middle class, heterosexual man, also did not think episodes that did not cause severe issues were considered sexual victimization even if it fit the legal definition. When asked about his experiences with sexual victimization, George described two experiences that he said would be defined as sexual victimization under
a legal definition. However, George only labeled his most recent experience as sexual victimization because it caused him psychological and emotional issues that still bother him today. George provided this response to a question of whether he was sexually victimized more than once:

“Yes, I mean there was one other time in my life that something happened to me that qualifies, I think, that’s sexual assault, but I didn’t really have long term psychological effects. It happened one night, it was freaky for that night, and I went to see a counselor at the University for a couple weeks after that…its effects paled in comparison to what happened to me in 2011…to the order of magnitude from one to hundred or something like that for the level of trauma.”

In both of these instances, the participants shared information about multiple experiences that they said could be defined as sexual victimization, but only labeled the experience that caused them the most problems. This could simply be that when comparing these experiences to what they viewed as sexual victimization, participants like George and John did not see comparable problems attributed to the experiences. Therefore, they only defined and labeled the experience that provided the most problems as sexual victimization. In addition to both cases not being seen as harmful, they also occurred in the context of a heterosexual relationship. John discussed giving into sex with girls because he was worried with what would be said about him if he did not. George on the other hand, was sexually victimized by an ex-girlfriend visiting him from abroad. In both cases, John and George shared that these experiences were more about giving into sex with their female perpetrators because that is what was expected.

These same scripts are evident in narratives provided by participants who were involved in abusive relationships. Often, sexual victimization within an abusive relationship was not defined as sexual victimization because it was seen as normal
within the relationship. For instance, Steve, a 45-year-old, Black, working class, bisexual man, described his involvement in abusive relationships. He discussed his confusion about whether his experiences were sexual victimization because he chose to be in the relationships when I asked whether he had other experiences with sexual victimization:

“You know it’s really hard to say because I picked an abusive boyfriend and stayed involved with him that I’m the victim, although you’re dealing with someone who’s being physically and sexually abusive. I feel like that’s because I didn’t value myself and allowed myself to get involved with these types of guys.”

The participants did not have trouble defining their experience as sexual victimization unless they were victimized by a significant other or did not view the experience as creating problems for them. The reason for this appears to be the result of dominant scripts associated with masculinity. The participants who shared that they either had trouble defining an experience as sexual victimization or did not define certain experiences as sexual victimization all described this in the context of masculinity. John described giving into sex with women because he was afraid they would challenge his sexuality if he did not. George gave into sex with an ex-girlfriend who was visiting him even though he was not interested, and regretted it the next day. Steve did not realize he was experiencing sexual victimization because he chose to be in the relationship. In each of these cases, characteristics of a ‘real’ man are present. The idea that a man should be ready for sex whenever the opportunity is there, and that if he is not, there must be a problem with his sexuality was especially present in the narratives of John and George.

Defining an experience as sexual victimization is similar for the participants and what we already know about the experience for women who have experienced
sexual victimization. For women, labeling their experience as sexual victimization is related to a number of factors, including the characteristics of the victimization, reactions they receive once their experience is disclosed, and the sociocultural context of the victimization (Bondurant, 2001; Orchowski, Untied, and Gidycz, 2013). Women who experience sexual victimization that is similar to stereotypes associated with rape (perpetrator is a stranger, victim resisted, or force is used), are more likely to label their experience as sexual victimization (Hammond and Calhoun, 2007; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, and Halvorsen, 2003; Layman, Gidycz, and Lynn, 1996). These are sexual victimization experiences that are perpetrated by a stranger where force is used. On the contrary, women who do not experience a stereotypical rape are less likely to label their experience as sexual victimization (Layman, Gidycz, and Lynn, 1996). Labeling experiences as sexual victimization for women tends to be related to belief and blame. In situations where they are less likely to be blamed (stereotypical sexual victimization experiences), they are more likely to label their experience as sexual victimization. This is similar to the experience for the participants. They are more likely to define their experience as sexual victimization when they experienced negative issues as a result of their victimization. However, in instances that involved fewer traumas or a significant other, they were less likely to view their experience as sexual victimization. This could be related to perception of others and blame they might receive. The participants might think they will not be believed, and therefore blamed, if their experience did not cause them trauma or if they had a close relationship with the perpetrator. The narratives of the participants also depict masculinity as important in why certain experiences were not defined as sexual victimization.
**Childhood Sexual Abuse**

Thirteen of the nineteen participants experienced childhood sexual abuse as well as adult sexual victimization. These 13 included seven who identified as homosexual, five who identified as heterosexual, and one who identified as bisexual. Overall, their experiences with childhood sexual abuse were uniform across sexuality and perpetrator characteristics. Their experiences are also in keeping with what research about childhood sexual abuse already describes in terms of characteristics of the sexual abuse.

**Perpetrated by People Known to Them**

The childhood sexual abuse fell into two categories based on the participant narratives: abuse where the participant knew their perpetrator and abuse where they did not. For the sexual abuse that was perpetrated by someone the participant knew, this could be family (5), friends (1), neighbors (2), and members of clergy (4). Ten of the thirteen participants reported that their abuse was perpetrated by men, which is in line with literature about childhood sexual abuse. This abuse also rarely involved force. For the two participants who experienced force as a child, their abuse was perpetrated by a family member. For Steve, this was a cousin who wanted to show his dominance. For Jacob, it was his father who ultimately allowed other men to sexually abuse him. None of the participants reported resisting the childhood sexual abuse they endured. Often, the perpetrator would spend a period of time gaining the trust of the participant so that when the participant was manipulated into a sexual act with the perpetrator, it would be viewed as something special between the two of them. This process is often called grooming, and it would be characterized by a gradual increase in the intensity and severity of the sexual abuse. Part of the grooming process
included the perpetrator convincing the participant to keep what was occurring quiet. A few of the perpetrators convinced the participant that it was a special secret between the two of them. Brian, a 48 year old, White, working class, heterosexual man, experienced this type of abuse. He was befriended by the vicar in his church and was sexually abused between the ages of three and six. Brian’s mother suffered from agoraphobia, and the perpetrator told him that the sexual abuse would help make his mother better. When Brian was 6 years old, his mother discovered what was occurring and they immediately stopped attending church. This action frightened Brian because he worried that he could no longer help to make his mother better. It was not until years later that Brian realized what happened was wrong. He explained that he repressed much of his experience as a child until his experience as an adult and the help he received in therapy. This does not mean that the participants repressed everything about their experience, only certain details. However, all of the participants who experienced childhood abuse (13) repressed some aspect of their abuse. Repression and its connection to recovery work are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Sexual victimization was also perpetrated by other authority figures in their lives, including sexual abuse perpetrated by family (5) and neighbors (2). These perpetrators used the same type of manipulative practices as clergy to both sexually abuse and hide it. Between the ages of 12 and 14, Tim, a 61 year old, White, lower middle class, heterosexual man, was sexually abused by a neighbor who was in his early 20’s. The perpetrator told Tim that he would help him meet girls, but that Tim needed to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator so he would help him. The
perpetrator kept the abuse of Tim on going by manipulating him and promising that he would help Tim find girls.

Manipulation was not always a part of the repertoire for perpetrators. Abuse that did not include manipulation was often perpetrated by family members (5), which made it hard for the participant to stop what was happening or tell anyone about their experience. When Anthony, a 45 year old, Hispanic, middle class, gay man, was 6 years old, he was sexually abused by his father’s half-brother, aged 16. The perpetrator forced Anthony to perform oral sex on him even though he vomited while it occurred. During this same period, Anthony’s grandfather would expose himself to Anthony. While no explicit manipulation occurred, Anthony still was unable to tell anyone and repressed these memories until he was going through the recovery process. All of the participants who were sexually victimized as children repressed aspects of their abuse growing up that were later remembered during treatment. These incidents of sexual abuse that were perpetrated by family members were exclusive to participants who experienced childhood sexual abuse. There were no instances of adult sexual victimization that was perpetrated by family members, unless significant others would fall into that category.

Perpetrated by Strangers

In addition to the childhood sexual abuse described above, participants also experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by people they did not know (2). The childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by strangers was a one-time incident for these two participants instead of a period of on-going abuse like the sexual abuse perpetrated by family, neighbors, and members of clergy. Unlike the sexual abuse perpetrated by people known to them, the abuse perpetrated by strangers was rare for these
participants. Steve was one of the two participants who experienced childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by a stranger. When Steve was 6 or 7 years old, he remembers being sexually abused by a stranger when he was on the way home from school. The details of the incident were still foggy for Steve because he was able to block out what happened to him until he was older. His only recollection was about not understanding why it happened to him, and thinking it was a problem with him, causing feelings of humiliation. Steve described this experience in relation to his other experiences with sexual abuse as a child. He said the abuse perpetrated by the stranger “did not cause as many issues for him because it only happened once,” and was not on-going like his other experiences.

The sexual abuse that the participants endured as children were almost exclusively perpetrated by people they knew (all but 2 instances). Often, the childhood sexual abuse lasted for a period of time because their abusers groomed them and incrementally increased the severity of the sexual abuse. In addition, their perpetrators were almost exclusively male9. As children, the participants were often told to keep what occurred a secret. This caused all of the participants to either repress aspects of their experiences as children or to think they had to keep it a secret. Manipulation was a prevalent theme mostly taking place during childhood and inevitably impacting them as adults, which was similar regardless of the relationship to the perpetrator. The childhood abuse experience of the participants is in keeping with what is already known about childhood sexual abuse. General statistics about

9 Two of the men reported being sexually abused by women while they were growing up. This included a grandmother and a female babysitter. Both of these men also experienced sexual abuse growing up that was perpetrated by men.
childhood sexual abuse estimate that approximately 75 percent of adolescents who experience childhood sexual abuse knew their perpetrator (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). Also, grooming is a major aspect of childhood sexual abuse. According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, the process of how a perpetrator grooms and manipulates a child includes targeting the child, gaining trust and access, becoming a part of the child’s life, isolating the child, creating secrecy, initiating sexual abuse, and controlling the relationship. The experience of the participants who experienced childhood sexual abuse is similar to the previous literature and statistics about sexual victimization.

**Adult Sexual Victimization**

The experience of adult sexual victimization included a wider range of perpetrators. This included people they knew, strangers, and both men and women. Instead of manipulation being the only way the sexual victimization occurred, force was also used. Force was less likely to be a part of their experience, given the participants mostly knew their perpetrators. Instead, force was almost exclusively a part of the experience when the individual did not know their perpetrator. This is also in keeping with what is already known about adult sexual victimization. Sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger is more likely to include force and injury (Stermac, Bove, and Addison, 2004). In the following section about participants’ experiences with sexual victimization as adults, the experiences are broken into categories where the participant did not know their perpetrator and experiences where the perpetrator was someone known to the participant. Under this categorization, strangers include perpetrators the participant did not know prior to the experience. This includes sexual victimization that occurred during a robbery as well as sexual...
victimization that occurred while using a phone application for anonymous sex. The sexual victimization where the perpetrator was someone known to the participant includes sexual victimization that occurred on dates, and sexual victimization perpetrated by acquaintances and significant others.

Perpetrated by Strangers

Five participants reported being sexually abused by a stranger through force or manipulation with alcohol and drugs. Ron, a 44 year old, White, gay man experienced forced sexual victimization perpetrated by someone he did not know. During a period of time where Ron was trying to understand his sexuality, he began using an anonymous sex application on his phone called Grinder. This application allows men and women to seek anonymous sex with someone they do not know. During his interview, Ron shared a story of sexual victimization that occurred while using this application. When I asked him about this sexual victimization experience, Ron shared the following:

Ron: I was using an online dating service. I was using Grinder and somebody that I didn’t know, I invited into my home just assuming that he was a friendly individual, but that turned out not to be the case.

Interviewer: Now when you say that it turned out not to be the case, what do you mean?

Ron: He was physically much stronger, larger than I was and sexually overpowered me.

Ron's description highlights sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger because he did not know the perpetrator prior to inviting him over to his house. However, Ron felt comfortable inviting the perpetrator to his home because he read his profile on the anonymous sex application. Ron described blaming himself because he felt like he
should have been able to control the situation, and felt like he should not have invited
the stranger to his home. However, the use of the anonymous sex application made
him feel like it was safe to invite the perpetrator into his home.

The other sexual victimization experiences including a stranger follow a more
standard definition of a stranger. Larry, a 51 year old, White, middle class,
heterosexual man, had the only experience that did not include force or alcohol and
drugs. Instead, Larry talked of being given a ride to campus when he was 22 years old
and being orally raped by the driver who was about 5 to 10 years older than him. In
his description of the incident, Larry did not talk of being forced or manipulated\(^{10}\), and
instead, talked of being shocked and just unable to stop the experience from
happening.

Most of the participants described how they were unable to resist and stop their
sexual victimization experience from happening because they simply froze and were
unable to move. When they told others about what happened to them, they often heard
the person reply “why didn’t you stop them,” or “I would have been able to fight them
off.” For Larry, he did not understand why he was unable to stop it from happening
and remembers thinking he just wanted to get out of the car and get away from the
situation. Lack of resistance was universal for the participants, regardless of any
characteristic of the victimization or perpetrator. Larry’s experience with not resisting
is similar to what both men and women experience with sexual victimization. Most
men and women do not resist their perpetrator during a sexual victimization

\(^{10}\) Manipulation refers to sexual victimization that occurs as a result of coercion. This
includes verbal threats for adults and grooming for children.
experience regardless of whether the perpetrator is someone known to them or a stranger, and instead act in a passive manner (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005).

Larry was the only participant who was sexually victimized by a stranger that did not include some sort of force or alcohol and drugs. The incidents that included force, alcohol, or drugs, often occurred when the individual did not know their perpetrator. Similar to the childhood sexual abuse perpetrated by strangers, these instances also only occurred once and did not happen over a period of time. These experiences were also not specific to a certain group of participants. Both Eric and Jim experienced sexual victimization perpetrated by strangers they did not know at all, and experienced either force or being drugged. When Eric, a 55 year old, White, upper middle class, heterosexual man, was 19-years-old, he was sexually victimized by a stranger who offered him a ride and drugged him before raping him. Eric, who was on leave after serving in Vietnam, described being offered a ride back to the base from a stranger. Eric remembers getting into the car and being offered alcohol. After drinking some of the alcohol, Eric passed out because it was spiked, and remembers regaining consciousness in a hotel room. The perpetrator raping Eric during the course of the night, which made him feel:

“Like his spirit was removed.”

The perpetrator took Eric to a public setting, and Eric shared that he wished he could have asked someone for help, but says he felt too ashamed. Eric described thinking he was going to die and almost wanting to die. The perpetrator dropped him off at the military base the next morning and Eric lied to his Army buddies about where he had been the night before. Instead of telling them what had happened, Eric told them he had been involved in an orgy because the truth was too humiliating for him.
Jim, a 53 year old, multiracial, middle class, gay man, had a similar experience when he was sexually victimized by two men he did not know. While at a car wash, two men approached Jim and forced him into his car with a gun and knife. They made Jim take them back to his house, robbed him, and then took turns raping him during the course of the night. Like Eric, Jim thought he would die that night, but also felt lucky to make it through the night. Jim’s perpetrators took him to an ATM to take money out of his account, and all Jim could think about was that he did not want anyone to see him because he was ashamed about what was happening. In both instances, Eric and Jim had the chance to seek help from bystanders when they were out in public with their perpetrators, but were unable to stop what was happening because of shame and humiliation. For Jim, his shame was connected to being attracted to one of the perpetrators when they first approached him. However, for Eric, it was about being sexually victimized by another man. Even though the participants had different reasons for feeling shame, stigmatization was a major reason for these feelings and helped to create problems for all of them. With the sexual victimization perpetrated by strangers, the participants shared feelings of shame because they were unable to stop it from occurring.

Perpetrated by People Known to Them

The vast majority of participants reported that they knew their perpetrator (N=1811), either someone in a position of power, a friend, or a significant other.

11 Adding together men who experienced sexual victimization perpetrated by a stranger and someone they know does not equal 19 because the majority of the men in this study experienced multiple episodes of sexual victimization.
Unlike the incidents involving strangers, these experiences almost always did not include force, and instead involved manipulation. Even though manipulation was used, these participants also had trouble resisting and were unable to stop what was happening. For John, this involved giving into societal pressures and threats from his perpetrator when a female friend sexually victimized him when they were in college. She used threats of lying about what happened between them to convince him that he was better off just having sex with her instead of resisting. This is a theme that continued for John, and he would give into sex with women because he worried about what would be said about him if he didn’t, especially in regards to his sexuality.

These types of experiences were not exclusive to one-night stands and sometimes happened within a relationship (N=2). Anthony described being sexually victimized while in his first gay relationship during his early twenties. Anthony had just come out of the closet a few years before and had not been involved in a relationship with another man until meeting a man he referred to as his “first love”. During the course of their 10-year relationship, Anthony shared that his boyfriend would often manipulate him into having sex, even when he did not want to. Throughout this period of time, Anthony simply thought this was normal for gay relationships and it was not until he was older that he realized this should not happen in any relationship. This realization was a big catalyst for ending the abusive relationship.

Not every experience of adult sexual victimization was perpetrated by someone the individual was involved with. Some of the experiences were perpetrated by individuals in a position of power (N=3). George was manipulated into a sexual relationship with the female minister of the church he attended while studying abroad
in college and later when they both returned to the United States. George said she used or manipulated her power over him in their minister/parishioner relationship. He also described how she took advantage of him sexually when he was blacked out from medication he was prescribed. At the time, George was prescribed medication for insomnia that he attributed to his relationship with his female minister. He described multiple instances where he does not remember what happened while he was taking the medication as prescribed. However, the female minister did recognize he was not himself while on the medication, but still took advantage of him sexually on numerous occasions. George ended their ‘relationship’ after he realized her misconduct and that she had been keeping their ‘relationship’ a secret from others because she knew it was wrong. In each of these situations, the participant felt they should have been able to do something to stop the abuse.

The adult sexual victimization experienced by the participants was often perpetrated by people they knew, although there were a couple of instances perpetrated by strangers. The participants experienced sexual victimization involving force and manipulation. In both cases, the participants reported having trouble resisting and stopping the experience. Many of the participants talked of wanting to stop what was happening, but felt frozen and unable to stop it. Their experiences and the lack of resistance left them in a troubled state, and led to negative issues, both emotional and psychological for many of them.

The sexual victimization of the participants produced a few themes across the narratives. For experiences involving a perpetrator known to them, victimization often occurred within relationships and participants often felt a need to stop the behavior,
but could not seem to. This inability to prevent the victimization led to emotional and psychological distress.

These experiences are very similar to what women experience. Both men and women are almost exclusively sexually victimized by people they know (Banyard, Ward, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, and Walsh, 2007). They also tend to not resist (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). These experiences often lead to psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Jina and Thomas, 2013; Mezey and King, 1989).

**Hardships and Societal Expectations**

Participants’ experiences with sexual victimization led to a number of issues for them. First, participants experienced negative feelings directly after their experience. These feelings often led to psychological, emotional, and/or behavioral problems. As the participants navigated these issues, they were also making difficult decisions about whether to tell someone about what occurred and report their experience to police. Each of these responses to their experience with sexual victimization is connected to the deviation of societal expectations about gender and sexuality. This section discusses these responses to the sexual victimization experience and how they are related to the internalization of societal expectations associated with masculinity.
Feelings Attributed to Sexual Victimization

Participants who experienced sexual victimization as children described being naïve, innocent, and not understanding what was happening. Mike, a 52 year old, White, poor, heterosexual man, described his feelings in response to my question regarding how the experience made him feel as:

“Bewildered because I didn’t understand what was going on.”

For some of the participants who were sexually abused as children, it elicited a physical response. After being sexually victimized as a child, Larry states that he:

“Remember walking home from school the Monday after happened, and I threw up on the sidewalk.”

For the participants who understood what was happening or figured it out because the abuse lasted for a period of time, they often blocked out their abuse or disassociated with reality. In response to my questions about how his experience made him feel, Steve described:

“Horrible I felt detached from reality. Like I said when it happened I would shut down and forget that it happened like that and in order to just move on to the next day. I would just try to forget that it happened or I just couldn’t believe that it happens. I would always go from this is not really happening to then it would happen, I would be like I can’t believe this happen[ed] again and I would be like is this really happening or like what am I to do.”

Steve further explained what the abuse did to him and how it affected his day-to-day experience:

“I was just very confused and I didn’t know when or what he was going to do next and I was just terrorized by him and felt like I was being stalked or I was very very nervous all the time and now I know I used to wet the bed, I was just, it was just I was a nervous wreck all the time and then trying to pretend that everything was okay with school and with my relatives keeping up that whole façade.”
Hiding what was happening from his family was not specific to Steve. Other participants (N=7) talked of being told by the perpetrator not to tell anyone and even referred to their childhood victimization as something they had to keep from others, and that keeping this secret led to feelings very similar to what Steve endured. The feelings that the participants shared about their childhood victimization were mostly related to not completely understanding their experiences with childhood sexual abuse. These participants were not necessarily following dominant scripts about masculinity and sexuality because they had probably not developed this understanding yet. However, they were groomed into thinking that they could not be victims by the perpetrators, and instead the sexual abuse was something that was special between them and the perpetrator or for another reason the perpetrator gave the participant.

Responsibility and Self-Blame

As adults, the sexual victimization experience also elicited negative feelings, but the context was different from the childhood sexual abuse. Anger, shame, and self-blame were more likely to be feelings that were reported by men as feelings they remembered having immediately following their victimization experience. The idea of self-blame is something that troubled the participants more who were victimized by a perpetrator that aligned with their sexual orientation or if the experience involved a situation they feel like they should have been able to control. John, described threats he received from a female classmate who sexually victimized him in a coercive manner while attending college. She told him that she would lie and tell everyone that he tried to rape her if he didn’t sleep with her, and as a result, John experienced some of these feelings of self-blame. In response to my question asking how his experience made him feel, John shared:
“At that, at that time like immediately following it, it made me feel like I had done something wrong. Like I’d messed up somehow. I mean, I wasn’t the most socially adept at that point and I thought that you know maybe I misread cues. Maybe I had done something wrong. Maybe you know so on so forth and if everyone was so angry at me then maybe you know I had done something really bad and that it was on me.”

Self-blame and guilt was not something that was specific to the heterosexual participants, but was also felt by gay participants who were sexually victimized by another man. These feelings were especially difficult for gay participants who were still trying to understand their sexuality, and sometimes this confusion influenced their feelings. Jim, who was sexually victimized by two male strangers he encountered at a car wash, talked about the self-blame he felt and related it to his sexuality:

“I still get thinking that I could’ve stopped or that I could have done something differently. I kept trying to figure out [if] there was connection to being gay … I was finding my identity, I was putting things together wasn’t hiding anymore and then that happened, … what was it all worth, what was it for, and and being some kind of punishment for being gay, was this the wrath of God?”

The self-blame Jim felt because of his sexuality was not all about feeling like it was a punishment, but it also dealt with his perception of one of the perpetrators when they first approached him:

“The worst part is when I first saw that guy and he was walking towards me in a sleeveless tee … and my first thought was he’s nice looking, he’s quite attractive, he’s cute … I thought I was actually attracted to the guy, I was actually attracted to the guy that raped me, one of the guys that raped me … I think that’s one of the things that really was so hard to deal with for so long was the fact that I was actually attracted to, to him before anything happened and that just kind of took back to well, I was asking for it.”

Jim had a hard time with his sexual victimization because he was attracted to one of the perpetrators when he first saw him. This caused him to blame himself and even think he deserved what happened to him. At the time, he was still working through his
sexuality, and his experience made him think that it was just something that is normal and happens to gay men. These feelings of self-blame are an emotion that affected the day-to-day lives for the participants as they began to process what happened to them.

John’s description of his feelings and confusion about who was to blame could be related to how men are viewed in society. Masculinity is constructed to perpetuate men’s dominance over women. Therefore, John might not have been able to understand how he was not the perpetrator in this situation, even though he knew he was not. Bob, a 36-year-old, White, middle class, heterosexual man, took this connection one step further in his description of how he felt and its relation to society’s and his own view of manhood:

“Because of society we think that the man is always portrayed as being the aggressor and … being the one that’s only out … for sex and he’ll basically sleep with anything that walks and I kind of believe that I did something wrong because you know like I knew she wanted to sleep with me but I took advantage of that game but now I guess it, looking back on it, I did tell her to leave and she refused to and managed to get me to go home with her, so at some point I wasn’t truly the aggressor, or at all”

Bob, a 36 year old, White, middle class, heterosexual man, also mentioned that these ideologies make it difficult for men to make sense of things after they are sexually victimized, especially if the perpetrator is a woman (or aligns with the sexual orientation of the victim), and that this helps to lead to these negative feelings and self-blame. He said that:

“We don’t look at it being possible for men to be raped by woman and we don’t, we don’t address the issue of what happens when a female is the one who is the aggressor and men are the ones that are forced, so the ones that are being a taken advantage of, so it’s not clear society deals with or even considers, so it makes [it] even harder to deal with that.”
The participants who shared they felt responsible for what occurred to them believed they should have been able to control or prevent the abuse. It goes back to what Bob shared about how views of masculinity shaped his feelings. It is thought that men should be able to stop someone from sexually victimizing them, and if they do not stop it, they wanted it to occur. This sets up a situation where individuals might blame themselves if they are sexually victimized, as many of the participants did.

Reduced Self-Worth

The described still having negative feelings from their sexual victimization. Some, like Mike still talked of their own lowered self-worth, something that could be the result of not adhering to societal scripts on masculinity and sexuality. Mike shared:

“Like the only worth I had was for others pleasure. You know, I was an object … I was a thing. My membership card to the human race had been canceled, you know if I don’t even know that it ever had been validated. You know I couldn’t understand why people, what was it about me that attracted these kinds of people that, that felt they had a right to do these things to others.”

The history of childhood sexual victimization caused Mike to have a low level of self-worth. Mike has made great strides in his recovery, but looking back on his experiences still causes him to feel this way. Even the participants who viewed themselves as strong had a hard time coming to grips with what happened to them, still to this day. Larry, a 51 year old, White, middle class, heterosexual man, explained this to me by saying that:

“It’s hard to describe in word what being molested did to me. Even though I’m a strong person, I was also easily hurt. The words, it was easy to take advantage of me because I had a hard time to get out of situations. So, I think how that would make me feel being vulnerable, scared, lonely.”
Looking back, Larry still remembers the emotions he encountered, but could not quite put into words what the overall experience did to him. It was difficult for these participants to put into words their overall feelings of their sexual victimization experiences. However, they did know their experience changed who they were and how they viewed the world. When I asked Steve if he thought his experience changed him, he explained:

“Well I’ll put it like this, I feel like I was changed, the fundamentals of who I was.”

Feelings of reduced self-worth are related to not adhering to dominant societal scripts about masculinity and sexuality. The idea that not adhering to what a ‘real’ man is led the participants to feel like they were less than, thus the feelings of lower self-worth.

**Psychological, Emotional, and Behavioral Problems**

The negative feelings the participants attributed to their experiences with sexual victimization led to psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems like depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, and trouble with relationships. Each of the participants I talked with described some sort of psychological issue they attributed to their sexual victimization experiences, regardless of whether their victimization occurred as a child or an adult. This is not surprising since each of the participants I talked with was either currently receiving treatment or had received treatment during their recovery.

For the participants who experienced both childhood and adult victimization, they had more trouble defining what happened to them as sexual victimization right away, especially if the abuse happened when they were very young. The difficulty
with defining their experience as sexual victimization led to any psychological and emotional issues as untreated, even into adulthood. According to Larry, he:

“ Didn’t realize it happened until I was older, I’ve been abused by five family members.”

Larry’s experience was not uncommon and was a theme that most of the participants echoed. For some participants, their realization did not occur until they were again victimized as adults. Nate, a 22 year old, White, middle class, gay man, explained that he was sexually victimized twice while attending college and the aftermath of these incidents caused him to experience PTSD and the realization of his abuse history:

“That’s when my PTSD emerged and I didn’t know what to do and I remember having to call in sick to work because I just [couldn’t] go in and I did not explain myself because why was I just raped? I didn’t think I would be taken seriously and understood and it was through that day and the following days that made me realize what had been a larger, that I had been victimized, what I had gone through, … really realizing how young I was in understanding what I went through and of course how, how actions and feelings … it was all emerging, it was just flood of emotions and thoughts and triggers and feelings.”

As discussed earlier, it was not uncommon for the participants who were sexually abused as children to shut down and not realize they had been abused until they experienced sexual victimization again as an adult.

While it sometimes took the participants who had only been sexually victimized as adults a period of time to acknowledge and understand what happened to them was sexual victimization, most of these participants knew right away that they had experienced victimization. They too experienced negative issues as a result of their victimization, but they experienced it in a different way. One such way, was through increased risky behavior, including alcohol, drugs, and promiscuous behavior. During his interview, Brett, a 62-year-old, White, upper middle class, bisexual man,
explained that he was involved in promiscuous behavior after his experience with sexual victimization. He described his behavior as:

“I was involved with a lot of heavy cruising and it was not pleasant. I think back on it might terrify myself, a lot of risk of public exposure, risk of criminal, but I didn’t care, I was compelled by this and took a long time to get that sorted out … and it was a real detriment to establishing good relationships because everything became about sex with men.”

Brett explained that the use of alcohol and drugs contributed to this behavior, and that he viewed it as related to his sexual victimization experience. While trying to explain why he continued to be involved in this risky behavior, Brett shared:

“I used to describe it as an uncontrollable force that I could only get rid of the feeling if I did it. So, I guess that’s the definition of a major compulsion. It would, I would be obsessed with the notion of, you know, going out cruising and I couldn’t relieve myself of it until I actually did and then the guilt and fear of it would keep me from going out for a few weeks and it would just repeat itself at it, I think I did it to basically continue to punish myself.”

This notion of punishment for being sexually victimized is something that was talked about by the majority of participants. They felt it necessary to punish themselves because they often blamed themselves for their victimization. For Brett, this meant alcohol and risky behavior, but for others it meant suicide attempts or seclusion. Most of the time, these actions were a call for help, hoping that someone would come to their rescue. In trying to put it into perspective, Brett said:

“Let’s say I wanted to punish myself. I’m not sure, I think there’s sort of two sides of it. I felt guilty about my sexuality, especially as a[ ] apparently heterosexual married man and also [I] had just [thought] that I wanted someone to stop me and the fantasy would often involve going out, doing something, being arrested, and being put away from harm, so like containment fantasy. But I couldn’t stop myself, so I wanted something to stop me.

Brett wanted to be caught and helped because of the shame he felt for not adhering to what he felt he was supposed to as a man. He understood that he was having problems
because of his experience with sexual victimization; only he was unable to seek help himself at that time. The feelings the participants related to the trauma they experienced, as well as not adhering to dominant masculine scripts, led to these psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems they discussed. The negative issues their sexual victimization elicited is similar to the experience for women. Like men, women experience psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems attributed to their sexual victimization (Jina and Thomas, 2013). For both men and women, these problems can be severe and long lasting (Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). These feelings and problems they endured often influenced their initial help seeking behavior.

**Reporting to Police**

The decision to report their experience with sexual victimization to the police is not something that the participants took lightly. If they saw their experience as wrong, they might report it to the police. However, the negative feelings associated with their experiences, as well as how they thought they would be perceived, could lead them to not want to report what happened. Once they did report their victimization to the police, a negative experience only magnified what they were already experiencing. This section discusses the reasons given by participants for either reporting or not reporting what occurred to police and discusses the role dominant perceptions of sexual victimization played.

In order to report their victimization to the police, the victimization must be defined by the victim as something that is wrong. Overall, 4 of the participants reported their experience to the police, 2 as children and 2 as adults. Since the participants who were abused as children often took time to understand they had been
abused, it makes sense that the adults were more likely to be at that point where they could report their victimization to the police. However, that does not mean that the participants who were abused as children did not report their victimization to the police. For the participants who were abused as children and reported their victimization to the police, this did not happen right away. Instead, they were often reported after a period of abuse or even years after it occurred. Jacob, a 43 year old, multiracial, middle class, heterosexual man, was sexually abused by his father from a young age and eventually his father started allowing other men to sexually abuse him as well. When Jacob was about 15 years old, a friend of his witnessed his father sexually abusing him and stopped it. Instead of being grateful, Jacob described being mad at his friend. Shortly after the incident, Jacob’s friend was murdered, and Jacob recalled thinking that:

“in my head my dad had something to do with that. I [had] no proof or evidence to suggest [it] at that point because I thought that, that’s when I spoke up, that’s when I collected some stuff that I knew would be good enough to take the, to the police and I spoke up so that was at the age of 15.”

For Jacob, it took his friend being killed after witnessing the abuse to get to the point where he was ready to include the police.

A traumatic event was not the only reason a sexual victimization was reported to police. Sometimes, it was as simple as stopping the perpetrator from abusing another child. After the death of his father, Larry was sexually abused by a man that started out as a mentor. The ongoing abuse ended, but when Larry found out that the man was working with children, he decided he needed to do something. He explained that:

“I actually turned a man, reported to the police. It took me 15 years do that, nothing happened, but he did get fired.”
Even though officially this man was not charged, Larry felt it necessary to stop other children from experiencing what he did. Unfortunately, the vast majority of participants (N=15) in this study did not report their experiences with sexual victimization to the police.

**Reasons for Not Reporting to Police**

While a few participants who decided to report their victimization to the police, most did not. The main reasons that participants gave for not reporting to police included feelings of shame and not thinking they would be believed. This was a belief that was universal to all participants, regardless of perpetrator relationship, age of first victimization, gender of the perpetrator, or sexuality of the participant.

John, a heterosexual White male who had been sexually victimized by a female acquaintance while in college, talked about not reporting the incident to the police because of the reaction of a counselor he talked with at his school. John shared how he attempted suicide right after his experience with sexual victimization. He went a number of days without eating and began to be very sick. One of John’s good female friends stopped by to visit him and talked him into seeing a counselor. John’s experience with the counselor did not go well. Describing the experience and why he did not report his sexual victimization to the police, he said that:

“I thought about it, but I was uh told by the guidance counselor that uh at the college, that male rape isn’t a thing. She raped you, that’s well not rape. She said sexual assault, boys can’t be sexually assaulted or something like that. It was basically like you are wasting your time was the gist of it and coming from an authority figure, it was like well, alright.”
The response John received from the authority figure reinforced his thoughts on sexual victimization of men; that they cannot be victims. This caused him to assume he would not be believed by police if he reported the crime.

Authority figures were not the only reason the participants gave for thinking they would not be believed. Instead, it was about the views of sexual victimization they held. Sometimes the lack of reporting the incident to the police dealt with the respondent still trying to understand their own sexuality. Ron, a 44 year old, White, middle class, gay man, was going through this process and was using an online dating site to meet men anonymously as he was trying to figure things out. He was raped by one of these men and said the following about why he did not report the rape to the police:

“I didn’t feel as though I [would] be believed. I didn’t feel as though anyone would look at the situation as anything but consensual and I was ashamed that I had guilt that it happened, that I let this person into my home and … at the time I felt like I’d got what I deserved for using an anonymous sort of online dating service, it was my own damn fault basically.”

The consensual reason was given by other participants who were in the process of understanding their sexuality and why they did not report. However, not every participant who was victimized had a choice in regards to police contact after their victimization experience. Jim, a 53 year old, multiracial, middle class, gay man who was sexually victimized as an adult by two men after they kidnapped him, robbed him, and made him take money out of his bank account, said about the incident:

“I came across a hotel and so the person work[ing] at the hotel called the police, the police showed up, the the first thing was that one of the first things that they asked is that whether I’d been raped and I lied and said no, and even then they presented evidence … to the contrary, I still wouldn’t admit that I’d been raped.”

When Jim was asked why he didn’t tell the police when they asked, he said:
“There was a lot of shame connected with that. I had never, it wasn’t like I had had sex before, … I’m gay, I just came out a few months before to everybody, and I thought who’s going to believe me. It sounds like a date gone bad … I kept thinking people are gonna think I invited them, and it just turned out bad or who knows … but I kept thinking no one’s gonna believe … believing I was kidnapped, that I was robbed and beaten, that, that happens every day, everywhere, but I never met a man that is been raped, gay, straight, or anything … I just kept thinking the less crap that you take for being gay, would you go and say you’d been raped. I just did not think anybody would believe me.”

Not only did Jim think that no one would believe him because they would view it as consensual, but he also did not think he would be believed because it is not something you hear about. He summed up his feelings by saying:

“yes, I think it was part of a being gay, but that no one would believe me and it’s just not something that something that was out there that that actually happened, something other than poor poorly placed prison jokes, it just doesn’t happen.”

Jim’s reasoning for not reporting his experience to police was directly related to dominant perceptions of men who experience sexual victimization. This is the idea that men cannot be sexually victimized, and that gay men receive pleasure of the experience. These perceptions are based on gender stereotypes, thus suggests that Jim and other participants, were influenced by these dominant masculine scripts.

Police Reaction

The two participants who did report their victimization to the police received both positive and negative responses from them. In an ideal world each of the participants who reported their experience to the police would have received a positive reaction, regardless of whether they were reporting childhood abuse or adult sexual victimization. However, the experiences that included a positive response only dealt with reports of childhood sexual abuse. Both Jacob and Larry reported their childhood abuse experiences to the police. While he did not report it at the time, Larry found out
that the perpetrator of his childhood abuse was running for Sheriff, and he decided that he had to finally report what happened to him. As a result of his report, Larry was able to keep his perpetrator from becoming Sheriff, which made him feel good.

The problem is that the negative reactions by the police greatly outweigh the positive responses, and shed light on how male victims are perceived by the police. Based on the narratives of the participants, the only ones believed by the police were the participants who reported childhood abuse. The two participants, who reported being victimized as adults were not believed, told it could not happen, and were laughed at instead. Lance, a 34-year-old, Black, working class, gay man, was sexually victimized while living in Jamaica and said that:

“After I moved to the United States and I did report it and I was told that because I didn’t have a vagina that I cannot have been raped.”

He was told that what he experienced, and what caused him pain, was not something that happened, and the police would do nothing about it. Alan, a 37 year old, White, middle class, gay man, had a very similar experience with the police. He was sexually victimized in a tourist community and described his experience reporting the incident to the police:

“They laughed when I told, was telling them what happened, especially with the fact that I had [an] orgasm, which I now know is very normal … so they tended to be making fun of me over the fact, that [and] why did I, why did I not report it right away and they were laughing at me and they weren’t sensitive, they weren’t empathetic about any of this experience.”

Alan and other participants said that they did not receive the support they expected when reporting their sexual victimization to the police. For many participants who did report their victimization to the police, the lack of support magnified the problems they were already having, like with Alan. For others, it meant they would not report
additional experiences they had with sexual victimization. For the participants, reporting their victimization to the police was not an option, and when they did, they were laughed at, told it could not happen, and not believed. Their experience with the police did not empower them as they had hoped, and instead caused the opposite feeling. As Lance put it:

“Horrible, I felt horrible, honestly, I felt powerless.”

**Telling Others**

The decision to disclose their experience to another person is not something that was taken lightly, and was not accomplished quickly. Instead, the participants had clear criteria for deciding to disclose, and the response they received helped determine whether they would choose to disclose again. This section discusses this process of disclosing, the importance of a supportive reaction, and the negative consequences when someone was not supportive.

**Decision to Disclose**

Prior to disclosure, many of the participants dealt with their victimization experience by themselves, which often led to psychological and emotional issues they encountered going untreated. Of the 16 participants who shared their experience with family and friends 14 received support from one of the individuals they disclosed. However, not every participant was ready to disclose their experience to someone. For most of the participants, the process of telling others about their victimization experiences did not happen overnight, did not happen immediately following their experience, and was not an easy choice. The participants who were sexually victimized as children took longer to disclose their experience with others compared to
the participants who were sexually victimized as adults only. The reason that the participants gave for taking until they were adults to tell anyone about being sexually abused as children aligned with the difficulty they had with defining and understanding their sexual abuse. Nate, a 22-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, said:

“Not until I was 20 years old, like after it was over, and so keeping on that secret they made me feel very ashamed of my, of what I’d gone through, and I felt very guilty and dirty and wrong. It wasn’t until my assaults as an adult, but I fully came through to terms of my longer history of sexual victimization that was a large, was a big impetus to get me to speak out about generally what happened, both recently and further on in the past.”

For Nate, it took his experience with adult sexual victimization to fully understand that he had this history of sexual abuse as a child, which was a process encountered by other participants. Even for the participants who understood they were being sexually abused as children, few disclosed what happened until they were sexually victimized as adults. Most of the participants who understood they were being sexually abused as children mentioned that their perpetrator coerced them to keep their experience a secret.

The decision to disclose what happened was not always a choice the participants had as children. Steve, a 45-year-old, Black, working class, bisexual man, was sexually abused as a child by his cousin while living with his father. Even though he did not tell anyone about what happened to him as a child until he was in college, Steve was convinced his mother knew something bad happened because of a bad nightmare he had the first night home with her:

“I was yelling and screaming and crying and my mother came in and I was sort of attacking her I suppose you know I couldn’t believe that I had gotten away so I had some sort of visceral … sort of release from all the nightmare but I didn’t realize what it was, I was crying about, or releasing this sort of you
know this emotional sort of response that having made it ... out of my cousin’s reach and my mother was like what happened to you, what is wrong, what happened to you and I just didn’t have the words to say that the time but she knew something.”

Even though Steve did not tell his mother, he thought it was hard for her not to know something happened while he was living with his father. Other participants told about their sexual abuse as children when they decided to report the offense to the police. Disclosure as a child did not happen for most of the participants because they did not understand that what they experienced was wrong until they were adults and they experienced sexual victimization again.

As adults, the participants were more likely to tell others about their experience because they knew what happened to them was wrong, regardless of whether they had a history of childhood sexual abuse. The decision to disclose was not strictly about whether they understood that their experience with sexual victimization was wrong, but more about who to tell when they were ready. Mike, a 52-year-old, White, poor, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, explained this process of deciding who to tell:

“When making the decision to disclose there’s a lot of things that have to be taken into consideration and one is the trustworthiness of the person you are making the disclosure ... the last thing you want to do is be hit with the mess or have the person retort things like men can’t be raped or you must want to do it for you now, any of the other ignorant things and while some may be open to the idea that men are sexually assaulted very few people are aware of the fact that adult males are abused on a consistent basis and that’s not something I have shared with people, you, they know that it did happen they just, they don’t know how frequently.”

The process described by Mike is especially true when the individual is just starting to be comfortable with disclosing their experience to others. None of the men could explain exactly why they decided to tell the first person they did, except that they felt
comfortable with that person. Before telling a friend of his, Nate mentioned that he felt:

“Really ashamed and scared to talk about it and I also felt that I wouldn’t be believed,” and that it wasn’t until “I was with one of my good friends one night because she invited me over to her place and there is just something about her that made me feel comfortable about her [to] talk about my experiences.”

When asked why he felt comfortable talking to his female friend about his experiences with sexual victimization, Nate said:

“There’s just something about her that’s of really down to earth, we just connect, she and I … she comes from an immigrant background like me, shared similar struggles with her family, and so she too open[ed] up to me that she had been victimized once actually.”

Nate talked about feeling comfortable telling his friend because they had similar backgrounds and experiences, which was a reason echoed by other participants. Brett also had shared his experiences with others, but has:

“Limited however the details to a few close friends that I’ve made through my AA program who have similar struggles.”

Comfort and people with similar experiences was vital to the decision making process for disclosing sexual victimization for the participants. This allowed the participants to feel like they were in a safe place and they would not be challenged and instead believed. The act of being believed was important to them because many of the other aspects of their initial help seeking behavior led to responses that supported the dominant perception of men who experience sexual victimization, thus supporting gender stereotypes.

Reactions

Disclosing was important, but so was the response. These reactions were both positive and negative, leading the participants to shut down and not tell anyone else or
to continue to seek out treatment and tell more people. John, a 25 year old, White, upper class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization, had one of these positive experiences, when he disclosed his experience to a couple of close friends and their reactions led him seek treatment. He explained this process in relation to a suicide attempt:

“Alexis came over and was like I haven't seen you, you look like shit, and you also have you know sounded pretty fucked up on Facebook so what's going on? And she walked me through it and I felt like, I don't know, like somebody actually cared to hear and in a way she made sure that you know it couldn't go wrong and she told me that the same thing happened to her, at least something similar at least. That a guy you know invited her over and you know she believed me.”

John ultimately sought treatment because of how his friend reacted. He was not the only participant who reported that they had a positive experience when telling someone else for the first time about their sexual victimization. In fact, about two thirds of the participants reported a positive experience the first time they decided to disclose their experience to another person. The positive experience was often tied to having another person believe what was told to them. Sometimes, the disclosure helped with relationships with family and friends. Eric, a 55-year-old, White, upper middle class, heterosexual man, only experienced sexual victimization as an adult when he was drugged by someone who offered him a ride while he was on military leave. When he disclosed this to his doctor at the VA hospital years later, he was not believed. However, when Eric disclosed his experience to his girlfriend at the time, he said:

“She believed me immediately.”

He went on to explain that they had intimacy issues in their relationship, but his disclosure made sense to her. Explaining his mental state at that time, Eric said:
“No wonder, it makes sense now, and I wasn’t violent but I was very emotionally disconnected, detached, and led to the point where I didn’t feel anything.”

Disclosing their sexual victimization to friends and family helped to build clarity for some participants like John and Eric. However, this was not the experience for everyone. For five of the participants, disclosing their sexual victimization experience led to a negative response, and often changed relationships with the individual they told when the reaction was not positive. A negative response with disclosure always led to relationship issues with the person who provided the response. The reaction of the person to whom the individual decided to disclose their sexual victimization was very important and helped determine whether they would disclose to others and even seek help. It also helped the participants who received a positive response to begin challenging the dominant views of the sexual victimization of men, which ultimately needed to be broken down for them during their recovery.

Supportive Reactions

The support that the majority of participants received when they decided to disclose their experience to someone else was important, both because it meant someone listened to them when they were at their most vulnerable and because it helped to give them meaning. As Ron, a 44-year-old, White, middle class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, put it:

“It was important, it validated my own feelings that I didn’t deserve what happened, that it wasn’t right, that those type of situations are not common, it’s not something that just happens.”

However, even with the support from another individual, it was still sometimes difficult for the individual they told, even when that individual wanted to be supportive. Alan, a White, middle class, gay man who experienced both childhood
and adult sexual victimization, had an experience where he told a female friend of his, and even though she was supportive, he still didn’t feel like she completely understood, which left him feeling guarded:

“She was supportive. Again, it goes back to the fact that people … don’t know how to relate and I think for me, that’s what felt so isolating and that’s why [I] felt like I withdrew from a lot of family and I couldn’t really talk that much about it until I went back into the three week stay by myself seven years ago [I] was actually able to come to terms with it and be open with it and be okay with that and completely accept it but here I didn’t feel any judgment from her at all. I just felt I was always guarded with anybody that, you know, that knew, she was probably the most supportive.”

As Alan, said, when someone else has not been through the situation, it is hard not to feel guarded and it is hard to be completely open with others. For Alan, it took more than support to reach recovery, even though the support was very important.

Importance of Support

Support was very important in the recovery process for the participants because it helped them progress in the process and often led to seeking treatment. As Alan mentioned during his interview, it took more than support to make it through the recovery process. However, support was very important and sometimes viewed as the difference between life and death. The 14 participants who shared that they had received support in some way when they disclosed their experience to someone else talked about the importance of that support, and many shared that they do not think they would still be alive today without that support. For Tim, a 61-year-old, White, lower middle class, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, the support:

“Was everything, it was between life and death, he kept me off the street.”
Not only was the support emotionally important for Tim, but it also provided other support, including food and shelter when he was unable to provide those items for himself.

For Brian, a White, working class, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, the emotional support was enough. Talking about the support he received and looking back at its importance, Brian said that:

“I don’t know what I would’ve done without that. There are, there [have] been times where I would’ve been very depressed and even thought about suicide and if the people who are close to me weren’t supportive, I don’t know what I would’ve done during that time.”

The reason that the support was important to these participants was because it showed that someone cared, that someone believed them. As Lance, a 34-year-old, Black, working class, gay man, shared:

“It was very important to me because it was someone I cared about, somebody that I loved believed me, and that they knew weren’t looking down on me or shunning me, making me feel less than.”

As would be expected, the support these participants received from others helped to improve their relationships with them, which helped to challenge the dominant masculine scripts they internalized. Brett, a 62-year-old, White, upper middle class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization, described this change of relationship as:

“It’s probably deepen[ed] the relationship because you know just trusting and sharing.”

Even when an individual did not receive support right away, it was something that could be provided by the person later. Alan experienced this type of change in support from his brother. After Alan was sexually victimized when he was an adult, he told his brother. At the time, his brother blamed him for what happened because he was
gay and was sexually victimized by another man. Years later, as Alan was going through recovery, his brother began to be supportive. Describing their relationship now and the support he now receives from his brother, Alan says that it:

“Well feels a lot better because we feel a lot. I’m a lot closer to him today, I know he’s done wrong, but we have healed a lot of wounds and it, it’s a different relationship, it, I just feel more at peace, I don’t feel judged and I have since found out a lot more about him … what happened to him. We’ve been able to connect a lot of missing links from our childhood and from our parents and all that, all that history of sexual abuse.”

For Alan and his brother, the experiences they both had with sexual victimization affected their relationship. When Alan told his brother about his experience, the brother was not supportive because he was still working through his own problems. It took until later in life for both of them to be at the point where they could discuss their histories of childhood sexual abuse.

The support these participants received when they were finally ready to tell someone else about their experience with sexual victimization was important. It often meant the difference between life and death for them. And most of all it meant that someone cared about them, believed them, and made them feel like a human being. This made the participants more likely to seek treatment and even disclose other experiences with sexual victimization when they occurred. However, not every participant in this study received support from the person they chose to disclose. The problem with not receiving support is that it sometimes led to not wanting to tell anyone else about their experience or about subsequent experiences with victimization and magnified the problems they were already having. When Nate was not believed as a child, it caused him to:

“Open up less about my adult sexual victimization.”
This meant that Nate was less likely to seek help and was forced to endure and make sense of his experience by himself.

**Summary and Discussion**

The participants’ experiences of sexual victimization led to negative feelings, psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. These issues ultimately helped to influence initial help seeking behavior for the participants.

The results presented some similarities to what we already know about sexual victimization, especially in regards to women who experience sexual victimization. Some of the participant’s experiences with sexual victimization were very similar to women’s. Similar to what we already know about women who experience sexual victimization, the participants only defined their experience as sexual victimization when it caused them problems they defined as severe, as with John and George who described incidents they said could be viewed as sexual victimization, but they did not because the experiences did not cause as many problems as the experiences they defined as sexual (Bondurant, 2001; Orchowski, Untied, and Gidycz, 2013).

In addition to how the sexual victimization is defined, the participants had similar experiences as women and what previous research about men indicates. The participants were almost exclusively victimized by people known to them and were unlikely to resist and fight back, which is in keeping with previous research about women and men (Banyard, Ward, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, and Walsh, 2007; Walker, Archer, and Davies, 2005). Similar to previous research, the participants also experienced psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems they attributed to their experiences with sexual victimization (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Jina and Thomas, 2013; Mezey and King, 1989).
Based on these descriptions, there are very few differences between what the participants experienced and what has already been discussed in previous research about sexual victimization. This is a major finding in and of itself. The fact that participants had similar experiences compared to women indicates that, at least in the initial help seeking phase of recovery, men and women face similar obstacles and issues. The similarities between men and women’s experiences during the initial help seeking phase also indicate that the privilege and power associated with gender does not impact one gender more than another.

Like with women who experience sexual victimization, the participants were unlikely to report their experience to police because they were worried that they would not be believed and taken seriously. However, we see a deviation between the experience for women and the male participants. Previous research about women and reporting their experience to the police indicates that the reason women are unlikely to report their experience to police is because they do not think they will be taken seriously, especially if their victimization was perpetrated by someone known to them. However, women are more likely to report their experience if their experience is similar to stereotypical perceptions of sexual victimization; if they are sexually victimized by a stranger, they were not drinking prior to their experience, or if force was involved.

This is not the case for the participants in this study. It did not matter whether they were sexually victimized by a stranger with force or coerced by someone they knew. Regardless, the participants mentioned that they did not report their experience to police because they thought they would not be believed. For the two participants who did report their experience to police, they were laughed at by police and nothing
happened in their cases. It was only when a participant reported a childhood sexual abuse experience to police that it was taken seriously.

The different experience with police and why men and women do not report their experience may indicate something else entirely. Both men and women label and define their experience with sexual victimization based on factors that may reduce the likelihood of blame (Hammond and Calhoun, 2007; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, and Halvorsen, 2003; Layman, Gidycz, and Lynn, 1996). Men and women are also more likely to report their victimization to police if they feel like they are more likely to be believed. For the participants, the main reason for not reporting what occurred to police deals with not feeling like they would be believed. Based on how men and women define their sexual victimization and whether they report their experience to police, perception and reaction is central to their reasoning. In both cases, women are more likely to define and report their experience if it holds characteristics that make them seem like a ‘worthy’ victim.

However, this does not seem to be the case for men, at least for the participants. Regardless of any characteristics associated with their victimization, the participants described not feeling like they would be believed as the central reason for not reporting their experience to police. This included not being believed because it would be viewed as consensual or because men are not supposed to be victimized by women. Thus, it highlights the importance of gender in these perceptions and decisions made by the participants. Because of characteristics associated with masculinity, there is the perception that men cannot be sexually victimized, and if they are, it is their own fault. This perception of men who experience sexual victimization influenced the experience of the participants.
There are three main reasons this connection can be made. First, previous literature suggests that perception is important in how sexual victimization is defined by the individual who experiences it (Hammond and Callhoun, 2007; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, and Halvorsen, 2003; Layman, Gidycz, and Lynn, 1996). The final two have to do with actions described by the participants. The participants described feeling shame as a result of their experience with sexual victimization. Shame could be a product of feeling like their experience was counter to some perspective or for some other reason. However, the shame felt by the participants, coupled with their reasons for not reporting their experience to police helps to make the connection. The participants used similar language when discussing why they did not report their experience to police and dominant perspective about men who experience sexual victimization; that of not being believed, seeing the experience as consensual, and it would be viewed as their fault. Based on this connection, it can be suggested that the participants allowed the dominant perspective about men who experience sexual victimization to influence how they began to process their experience.

For both men and women, dominant views of gender influence the initial help seeking behavior. For men, it is the influence of the dominant thinking that they cannot be sexually victimized. How men internalize these dominant perceptions can help to lead to stigmatized encounters and experiences.

The internalization of the dominant the dominant perception of masculinity may lead to stigmatizing experiences. This could be a connection between their experience and Pryor and Reeder’s (2011) conceptualization stigma. According to Pryor and Reeder, public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, and structural stigma interact with one another to create stigma for individuals. For the participants,
the structural stigma, or gender stereotypes, created the perceptions about sexual victimization. Based on these perceptions, the public stigma provided a context for how individuals react to men they know experienced sexual victimization. Context refers to the reaction the participants may assume they will receive if they tell someone about their experience with sexual victimization. Specifically, this context is situated around gender stereotypes that suggest men cannot be sexually victimized, thus leading to blame. The participants could have been influenced by the public stigma, thus going through a process of self-stigma. Thus, this could have led to the psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems they experienced, along with influencing their initial help seeking behavior. The concept of stigma and the management of stigma as participants shifted from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4

THE VICTIM IDENTITY: MASCULINITY AND MANAGING THE STIGMA OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION

“Well I think that goes back to what I said earlier I wish that it never happened but I’ve come to believe that everything happens for a reason you know we go through trials and tribulations. This is a very adult man thing to live your life, to evolve to realize what your reality has been. My reality, although you know childhood sexual abuse is horrible and all that stuff but in the greater scheme of things I survived for [a] reason and you know especially when I was approached by stranger and sexually abuse[d] at a very young age. Something that I can barely remember I could [have] been kidnapped I could have been, you know hurt more severely, killed, what not. So the trials and tribulations that I’ve gone through really made me [a] warrior, the warrior that I am, a strong person that I am, confident person I am, ... the role of these sort of experiences to find out who I really am as a man and to be able to use these life experiences in my art. Writer to write this story, not so much to be the face of this victim, this taboo topic but you know share my truth in the hopes of shedding light on, on this and to show that we can come out of the darkness into the light … having the ability to share the trauma [of] being a victim because you have evolved into a survivor is a good thing.”

- Steve

After being sexually victimized, the participants embraced a “victim” identity. The victim identity refers to a period of time in which the participant views themselves as a victim. This period is characterized by shame, self-blame, and psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. For the participants, it began directly after they experienced sexual victimization and lasted until they underwent a process of identity management that saw them transform from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. Over time, and through treatment, the participants learned to manage this identity and transform themselves into survivors.
Still, the recovery process was not fast or easy. It often involved a period of depression, anxiety, and shame. Once the participants were ready to begin recovery, treatment and group therapy was the main conduit for forward to being a survivor. During treatment, they challenged their shame and guilt in order to see themselves as a survivor instead of a victim. For many of the participants, it meant finding a way to understand their masculinity in relation to the ideologies that caused them to feel the shame and guilt in the first place, thus manage their stigma. For Steve, in his quote above, he talked of issues he had as a result of his experiences with childhood and adult sexual victimization and the importance of taking his life back through art. This chapter focuses on how the participants began to process their sexual victimization experiences, challenge their stigma, and transform into viewing themselves as a survivor. The chapter pays special attention to stigma management and how the participants revised their masculinity in order to make the shift from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. Where there are any differences related to participant or perpetrator characteristics, they are discussed.

**Seeking Treatment**

Seeking and receiving treatment was a survival tactic used to help progress through the recovery process and to begin to understand the shame they attributed to the stigma associated with their experience. This meant processing their issues and feelings of shame, and figuring out a way to move on in their lives. For all the participants, it meant seeking treatment, which included seeing a psychiatrist or psychologist in an individual treatment environment or being involved in group therapy in-person or online. The participants sought treatment regardless of their sexuality, the type of sexual victimization they endured, and perpetrator characteristics.
for various reasons, including wanting their lives back, to fix issues they attributed to their sexual victimization experiences, and to address relationship problems they were having with family and friends. In addition, participants who identified as either bisexual or homosexual reported seeking treatment to help them process and understand their sexuality in addition to the other reasons. Ultimately, seeking and receiving treatment was a way to begin to process their sexual victimization experiences and to help formulate tools for managing stigma and repairing their identity.

Wanting Their Life Back

Universally, the reason for seeking treatment in the first place was about reaching a point where the individual wanted their life back. Ron, a 44-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, talked of his overall reason for seeking treatment after he was sexually victimized as an adult. He said that:

“it took seven months before I spoke to a therapist about it. Essentially I became celibate and just a very isolated, and eventually I wanted my life back and I went to a therapist who specialized in sex therapy. She is a licensed psychologist and she is the first person I spoke to about it.”

Ron did not seek treatment as a result of his childhood sexual abuse, which was common for the participants who experienced childhood sexual abuse. Instead, Ron, like other participants, waited until his adult victimization experience to seek treatment. This could be the result of not understanding what occurred as a child, the feelings of shame he may have internalized, or manipulation from his perpetrator. A few of the participants did know they needed treatment when they were children, but were unable to receive it for various reasons, including access and being unable to find
someone willing to help them. For Mike, a 52-year-old poor, White, heterosexual man who experienced extensive childhood and adult sexual victimization, he wanted to seek treatment as a child. However, because of his circumstances living in a foster home and the emotional and physical abuse perpetrated by his foster mother, he was unable to receive treatment. When I asked Mike why he was unable to receive treatment as a child, he shared a story about trying to find a way to get word to his social worker that something was happening, that he needed help stopping it, and that he wanted treatment. However, his foster mother never gave him the opportunity to be alone with his social worker long enough to tell her, and he had to continue to live in fear. In response to my question about when he knew he needed treatment, Mike said:

“I [knew I] need[ed] help from the time I was in third grade. I wish I could have trust someone back then, but I learned that I couldn’t, I learned it was too dangerous tell the truth. I knew I needed help, you know.”

Trust led Mike to not receive treatment until he was an adult, and was also one of the main reasons the participants kept quiet about their experiences with childhood sexual abuse. In relation to trust, many of the participants who experienced childhood abuse repressed their experience until they progressed through treatment as an adult, meaning they were unaware that they needed treatment in the first place. Previous research indicates that repression of childhood sexual abuse is prevalent for both men and women (Briere and Conte, 1993; Herman and Schatzow, 1987; Loftus, Plonsky, and Fullilove, 1994). This line of research suggests that repression of details associated with childhood sexual abuse, whether it be the repression of the entire episode or just certain details, is more likely when the abuse included violence or occurred at a young age. The act of repression is viewed as a defensive strategy, or a
way to cope with what occurred. According to Briere and Conte (1993), research on cognitive development suggests that younger children might have few other defenses besides forgetting what occurred. Therefore, repression is a way to cope and move forward with their lives.

Treatment for sexual victimization was something that was only experienced during adulthood for participants. However, it took until the individual was at a point where they knew they had to change something in their life in order to progress in their recovery, which could take days, weeks, months, or even years after their experience with sexual victimization. For Bob, a 36-year-old, White middle-class, straight man who experienced adult victimization only, it took until he was ready to gain his life back and knew treatment was a way to accomplish his goal. He said:

“at that point in time just for my own sanity. I think even being able [to] talk … just somebody that would have helped me process it.”

This act of talking about their experience and receiving a positive response was a major catalyst for seeking treatment. It allowed the participants to begin processing their experience and at the same time, begin to take back their lives.

Problems Attributed to Sexual Victimization

The decision to seek treatment was not always made in the general context of wanting their life back and instead sometimes included specific reasons or events that led the individual to treatment. For Lance, a 34-year-old, Black, working-class, gay man, treatment was about receiving help for addiction and risky behavior he attributed to his childhood and adult sexual victimization. Describing this, he said:

“so I struggled, there were things [that came] up, the abuse, I didn’t know how to cope with that so I had alcohol addiction and I had an addiction [to] sex. So every time I need[ed] to resolve an issue or anything I became sexual with
everyone and everything … and I seized alcohol, the means of self-medication.”

Because of his experiences growing up and as an adult, Lance self-medicated with alcohol and sex, like other participants, and sought treatment to work through these problems and behaviors. However, Lance had to view these behaviors as a problem before he was ready and able to seek and receive treatment.

Suicide attempts also led to seeking treatment, which was the case for both Mike and Jim. Jim, a multi-racial, middle-class, gay man, said that:

“yeah, I had made a suicide gesture and ended up seeing a psychologist three times a week for, for a few weeks and so I told him.”

Mike provided a little more context than Jim as to his reasons for seeking treatment related to a suicide attempt. He said:

“I started seeing a therapist, let’s see, it was the result of a suicide attempt for which I was hospitalized … I was 21, was 20, the abuse was going on for a couple years while I was in therapy.”

Both Mike and Jim sought treatment because of suicide attempts, but both were not ready to progress through treatment at the time. For Jim, his first therapist was the first person he told about his experiences with sexual victimization, and it was not until he was ready to share his experience with others that he was ready for the treatment that helped him progress through the recovery process. Mike was also similar in this way. He continued to experience sexual victimization while he was receiving therapy and he needed it to end before he was able to progress through the recovery process. For Mike and Jim, treatment was not what made them ready for recovery, although it helped them.
Relationship Problems

It was not always psychological problems or suicide attempts that led participants to seek treatment. For some (3), problems they were having in relationships with loved ones were the catalyst they needed to seek treatment. These problems were the moment they needed to convince them that treatment was necessary, something that Mike and Jim did not have when they first started treatment. For Steve, a bisexual Black man, his relationship issues were not specific to a certain person, just that the issues he related to his history of childhood and adult sexual victimization were causing him to have difficulty with relationships, which were something he desired. In response to my question about why he sought treatment, Steve said:

“That was one of the main reasons … I had sexuality issues and I believed it stemmed from the sexual abuse so I think that was the primary, so I realize that I wasn’t able to have relationships, I wasn’t able to have any long-term successful relationships because of my hatred against or negative view of man that [were] dating women for me … you know so [I was] very unhappy when I started therapy.”

Steve realized that he was unhappy because he was not able to have meaningful relationships with others, and this troubled him, so he decided to finally seek treatment.

Other participants had specific issues with specific relationships that made them realize they needed to seek treatment. For example, Alan, a 37-year-old highly educated, middle-class, Hispanic, gay man, responded to my question about why he sought treatment by describing a long-term relationship he is still currently involved and intimacy issues they had as a reason for finally seeking treatment:

“I don’t like being touched around the waist … I have a body issue with that and it was around that time I was also doing an autobiography for grad school because I was still finishing of my Masters in school counseling and I was
doing an autobiography on my own self-development so much like the things we’re talking about today, this interview, I was already delving into, not to the same level of awareness … I was already building my own awareness on it and I was ready to face that I wasn’t in the, as ashamed of it anymore and [I] knew it was time to work on it and I was ready, I was ready to go lift this weight off my shoulders.”

Process and Understand Sexuality

The participants sought treatment for the above reasons regardless of their sexuality, type of sexual victimization they endured, or any perpetrator characteristics. However, participants who identified as bisexual or homosexual responded that they also sought treatment because they needed help processing and understanding their sexuality. Steve, a 45 year old, Black, working-class, bisexual man shared with me that he:

“had sexuality issues and I believed it stemmed from the sexual abuse so I think that was the primary [reason]. So I realized that I wasn’t able to have relationships, I wasn’t able to have any long-term successful relationships because of my hatred against or negative view of men that were dating women. For me, I wasn’t [able to] date women and men at the same time … so I [was] very unhappy when I started therapy.”

Steve’s experience and narrative echoes that of other bisexual and homosexual participants. The reason for these experiences could very well mirror the experience gay men have in processing their sexuality and ‘coming out’ to family and friends. However, with the added trauma of sexual victimization, the participants needed to additional catalyst of treatment to help this process.

The reason for seeking treatment was both important and irrelevant for the participants. At some point in their road to recovery, they all sought treatment, and the treatment they received helped to advance their recovery path. Most of the participants were at a point in their lives where they understood that treatment was a
major way they would be helped in the road to recovery. For other participants, they needed something else to occur, as in the case of Jim and Mike. That is not to say that the first treatment encounter was all that was needed or that every participant had a positive experience with treatment.

Treatment Experience

Regardless of the reason for seeking treatment, all of the participants sought treatment to some degree as a way to begin or continue the recovery process. This meant learning how to manage and reduce the stigma they experienced so they could work on transforming from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. Both the treatment experience and the types of treatment did not vary based on any participant or perpetrator characteristics. This is probably due to the fact that all of the participants were currently involved in treatment, either taking part in one on one or group therapy. Even though all of the participants were involved in treatment, it is worth discussing to understand how treatment helped them to process their experience with sexual victimization. Ultimately, as a whole the experience was positive, even if the first experience was not. For John, a 25 year old, White, bisexual man who was sexually victimized by a female acquaintance while in college, he shared his negative experience with a therapist at his college who told him that because he was male, he could not be sexually victimized. In this explanation of his initial treatment experience, John said:

“I tried going off to therapy and that was a disaster, a[n] unmitigated disaster.”

John later tried treatment again after he graduated from college and had a more positive experience that helped with his recovery. Fortunately, John was one of the few participants who shared a negative experience with treatment. Some of the
participants told me that they had to switch therapists or types of treatment, but on average, this intervention was mostly positive.

Types of Treatment

The majority of the participants received both individual and group therapy. The group and individual therapy they received were for both childhood and adult sexual victimization. Some participants went to therapy for their adult sexual victimization experiences, but also worked through their childhood abuse, and vice versa. Alan, a White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization shared his experience with treatment:

“The group work was really powerful because it helped, it really helped because it’s like a family and we’re all men and we could all talk openly … We’re all talking dealing with shame and feeling embarrassed … we grew and we experience the bond together to where we could talk openly about it and discuss the issues related to manhood. Been sexually abused, it was so powerful and I continue.”

In Alan’s narrative, he talked about the community of men in his support group as important to helping him deal with both his childhood and adult sexual victimization. Other participants received treatment for numerous issues they attributed to their sexual victimization experiences, including sexual addiction, substance abuse, and other psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems. For example, Anthony, a 45-year-old, Hispanic, middle-class, gay man, went to treatment for his sexual victimization, a 12-step program for drug abuse, and also couples therapy for intimacy issues he was having with his partner:

“I don’t go to as many 12-step meetings … [than I] used to when I was early in recovery, but I do occasionally go to meetings. I [felt the] … need to use about two years so I’m still very conscious and aware that, that is the sleeping Dragon underneath … and I need today to make sure that my head is clean and
During his interview, Anthony talked about needing each type of treatment to work through his sexual victimization experiences. He also talked about how each type of treatment provided him with something different that helped benefit his road to recovery and beyond.

Regardless of the type of treatment received by the participants, they all talked about the benefits of their treatment. It helped to work through issues and also to understand the larger context of their experiences with sexual victimization. Nate, a 22-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization described this aspect:

“I’ve begun to [see a therapist], he works trauma victims and he’s also gay as well and he’s been working, helping me with my adult victimization as well as my childhood victimization in general … larger stream process of how they affected and he’s been working, mean helping me develop my positive sexuality, made amazing, amazing leaps in my recovery so that been working with [him] and it’s been fantastic. I wouldn’t have thought I would be where I am today this soon as well.”

Nate mentioned that working with a trauma expert helped him not only work through his issues, but also develop healthy aspects of his sexuality and view of self, something that would be important in managing his stigma. For Nate, it also helped that his counselor was also gay, so he felt more comfortable talking about his issues with his sexuality.

The participants felt their experience with treatment was beneficial because it provided a safe space, advice shared by the therapist, and the skills developed during treatment. As Lance, a Black, working-class, gay man said:

“I was in a safe space … it changed everything because now I realize that it wasn’t my fault.”
Feeling safe was important, but also so was the advice provided. According to Jacob, a 43-year-old, multiracial, middle-class, heterosexual man, advice he received from his therapist was extremely beneficial. Jacob’s therapist explained that he cannot blame himself for his body reacting to what occurred. This advice helped Jacob to begin blaming himself less and reduce the pain he felt:

“He said to me the first sentence was the body reacts to stimuli, the sentence, second sentence was that’s not what makes you gay or straight. In the third sentence was it doesn’t matter, whatever way you choose is okay and I remember [it] help[ed] me deeply because I remember those three sentences. Help[ed] me, stuck in my head and a real deep subliminal [way] … told me [to] just start thinking differently.”

Jacob still remembers those three sentences his therapist told him and it has helped him to understand and work through his issues. Jacob told me that he would use those same three sentences if someone disclosed a sexual victimization experience to him in the future. Overall, the participants described treatment as helping them develop skills to understand their experiences and helped them overcome any issues they attributed to their experiences with sexual victimization. To them, treatment was also a way to meet other men who experienced something similar to themselves, understand they are not alone, build a community with other men, and learn from these men. Nate described this experience well when he said:

“I would say overall they’re pretty helpful, pretty positive. I think as well you develop a lot of skills in helping yourself … to have people support you for that and I always look forward to those groups for the days leading up to them. I tried to inventory about what I’ve done that week or what’s going on inside … felt some really great skills that mindfulness and and recovery in general … and able to meet other people [who] have gone through similar experiences, I’ve been able to connect with them.”

Group therapy allowed the participants to meet others who had also experienced sexual victimization and to learn that they are not alone. It also helped them to learn
how to process what happened to them, and to observe how other men like them have progressed through the recovery process. It provided community, bonding, but also taught them about the process, and challenged them to work through any issues they encountered. The experience with treatment was not specific to a certain group of participants, and instead was a universal and beneficial experience.

Victim to Survivor Process

Recovery and transforming into a survivor was mostly about treatment and constructing a healthy identity. This process was a long road for the participants and treatment was needed in order to begin. All of the participants, regardless of any aspect of their victimization, underwent this process. However, some differences were evident from the narratives based on both participant and perpetrator characteristics. These differences are discussed in the appropriate section. In response to a follow-up question asking Brian, a White, working-class, heterosexual man, to describe what made him want to see himself as a survivor instead of a victim, he explained that the victim identity was not healthy or beneficial:

“I recognized that I, through a pattern of me being a victim throughout my life, seemed to be repeating patterns and almost a self-fulfilling prophecy and the realization … that actually allowing myself to be the victim was really harming me and I began to recognize and realize that and so I thought well, I don’t want to stay here … being a victim and out of control that I should bring it to something that I have control over, that I can define the boundaries … and that’s really important to me … [where] I know a life that’s not dominated by anxiety and actually be able to give myself properly to my family.”

For Brian, treatment helped him to recognize that his victimization caused a negative pattern of behavior in his life. He talked of how he viewed himself as a victim, which almost acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The internalization of the victim identity for Brian caused him to act as a victim, and continue behavior that led to more
victimization. The only way to change this pattern and identity was to take control of his life. Taking control meant figuring out how to have a healthy view of himself that did not include the victim identity. For the participants, that was accomplished through the trauma work in therapy and redefining how they viewed their masculinity. This healthy view of themselves led to reduced feelings of shame associated with their stigma and a more positive view of self. However, before progressing to that point, some of the participants talked of needing an event to happen that allowed them to confront their sexual victimization experience. This phenomenon was not specific to a certain group of participants and centered on receiving vindication for what occurred to them.

Moving Forward with Life

For a few of the participants, treatment was not enough to manage stigma, repair their identity, and shift from viewing themselves as a victim to a survivor. Instead, an event to help them move forward was an important aspect. The participants who had this experience referred to it by different terms, which ranged from closure to vindication. The term closure was used by John and Alan to describe their experience. For Ron, he talked of feeling validated during his confrontation with his perpetrator, and referred to “having reached closure” when describing his experience talking with his parents about the sexual abuse perpetrated by his brother. Instead of using the term ‘closure,’ Steve talked of the confrontation allowing him to move on with his life and recovery. While participants referred to this experience in different ways, their descriptions indicated that the experience was helpful in allowing them to begin moving forward with their lives and it was needed in addition to the treatment they received. Not every participant had the opportunity to confront their
sexual victimization experience, but for the few who did (6), it turned out to be very important in their recovery. This experience came in different forms, but always included a direct confrontation with some aspect of their sexual victimization experience, including an apology from the perpetrator or visiting the location where their sexual victimization occurred. Reporting experiences that allowed them to confront an aspect of their sexual victimization and move forward with their lives was not specific to a certain group of participants. It occurred as an apology from the perpetrator, visiting a location of the experience, or by actively seeking out an encounter with the perpetrator. While this experience was only experienced by a small group of the participants, it signified another step in the recovery process for them. Validation was central to these experiences. This experience was not specific to a certain group of participants.

**Apology from Perpetrator**

Receiving an apology from the perpetrator of their sexual victimization provided an opportunity to confront their perpetrator for three participants. To them, it validated their feelings that something was wrong with what happened to them. Once their feelings were validated, these participants felt that they could move on with their lives and begin to put their experiences with sexual victimization behind them. John, a White upper-class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization shared how a female friend of his arranged for a meeting with his female perpetrator. He described being surprised when she apologized for what occurred between them when asked to describe the apology:

“She actually organized and mediated a meeting between her and I and that was, it was uh short, it was brief. She said hi, I said hi, she said she was sorry, I said thank you for saying sorry, and I also apologized because I knew it
couldn’t have been easy for her to have gone through that … it didn’t put an end to the drama in general but it slowed it the hell down and it let me get on with my life.”

For John, the apology from his perpetrator did not make what happened to him go away. In response to my question about what the apology meant to him, he said, it slowed the negative issues he was experiencing down and finally allowed him to begin to move on with his life, which ultimately led to stigma management and transforming from viewing himself as a victim to a survivor.

**Relationships**

Validation was an important part of moving on with their lives for a few of the participants. Each participant who shared a story of confronting their sexual victimization to move forward with their lives emphasized validation. Validation helped to reconcile relationships for 2 of the participants. Ron, a White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization described the validation he received when his partner apologized to him for a violent sexual victimization he perpetrated. When I asked Rob what the apology meant to him, he said he felt:

“Validated, it made me feel that there was a sense of renewed connection with him since it was that he acknowledged what happened, like happened, that he is somebody that I can put my confidence and that it won’t happen again.”

Ron told me that at the time of the interview, he and his partner were trying to reconcile their relationship and Ron talked about his partner’s apology as the only reason he would consider being with him again.

Not every act of “closure” helped to reconcile relationships. Most of the time, relationships were beyond repair because of what the participant had experienced. In
these cases, the experiences simply allowed the participant to receive validation, move along with their lives, and showed them that what happened to them was not right.

Steve, a Black, working-class, bisexual man was sexually victimized as an adolescent by his older male cousin while living with his father. Steve eventually escaped and moved back with his mother, causing the sexual abuse to end. When Steve was an adult, he visited his father’s family so he could confront the family that did not believe him and the cousin who sexually abused him. When I asked Steve how he felt at the time of these meetings, he said he was not sure what would happen when he confronted his perpetrator:

“I had so many ranges of emotions in terms of putting some sort of resolution, resolve to what he’d done. I really wanted acknowledgment and if he [wasn’t] going to do that I thought that it would be physical or I would be so angry that you know I didn’t know what I would do.

Once he did confront his cousin who sexually abused him growing up, he shared that he was surprised that he handled the confrontation so well and was also happy with how his cousin handled the situation. Steve did have to turn the conversation with his cousin from normal pleasantries to the subject of the abuse:

“Right away the look in his face told me everything that I need[ed] to know, he said okay I understand that you need talk about it I said yes, he said well, he wishes that it never happened. He apologize[d], [was] very apologetic, he said … [it] happened so long ago, that I should focus [on] school and move forward … and ironically that was the best response I got from anybody down there and I immediately just put the whole situation once again be, behind me and I forgave him and I start[ed] really working on just getting myself together and I was less angry that the big burden lift[ed] off my shoulder … that sort of process and I think that’s really when I first started becoming more of whom I [am].”

The acknowledgement Steve received allowed him to confront his experience with sexual victimization head on and facilitated growth and moving forward with his life.
Steve is still in awe when he thinks back to his meeting with his cousin, and shared his surprise about the compassion he displayed for his cousin at the time:

“I still had that compassion, even for him as a human being. So when I spoke to him … it wasn’t cursing, I was angry, I was allowed … I have my emotions, put there in check and I just, that a focus on what I wanted to get, which was just, you know, I wanted to speak about it and I wanted him to acknowledge that it actually happened because as I said even talking about it right. Now you know, it still unbelievable that … I went through it and survived and exactly what was, you know, it’s tough replayed my mind without that it wasn’t real, but it was.”

**Visiting Location of Sexual Victimization Experience**

The experience of confronting one’s sexual victimization was not always about confronting the person who sexually victimized them. For 2 of the participants, it meant visiting the location of their sexual victimization. Alan, a White, middle-class, gay man, was sexually victimized while living abroad. He shared how he became involved with a group that used sex to control him. Alan was unable to stop his involvement with the group and it was not until he was home for a holiday that his parents realized what was occurring and barred him from returning. As Alan was going through treatment and the recovery process, he decided to visit the country and city where he experienced his sexual victimization. When I asked him how this experience helped his recovery, Alan shared:

“I wanted to experience the things I never got to experience taking other trips to other parts [of the country] … and it was important for me to heal and it, it really did. I recommend anyone … [with a] traumatic experience to do something, something similar, to face it in terms of what I did, it took a lot of courage, but I needed [it] … it was truly liberating.”

For Alan, this trip helped him to begin moving on with his life. In response to my question about why this experience was important, Alan shared that:
“It helps me get rid of a lot of anxiety … help[ed] me put to rest a lot of my, my issues with … my issues with religion … it help[ed] me with some fears … traveling is my biggest passion, I still do [it] and I just help[ed] me become even more extroverted. I’m not extroverted by nature, a more introverted and it helped me relate [to] people, I broke out of my shell.”

Receiving validation was central allowing participants to challenge an aspect of their sexual victimization. Validation was also something that came up in a couple informal conversations after interviews with participants. During an informal conversation with George after we completed the interview, he began to ask me some questions about what I thought about his story and whether I thought what he endured was sexual victimization. He told me that he has received a lot of negative feedback from friends he shared with the significant other that sexually victimized him. I replied in a supportive way and told him that what he thinks about his experience is what is important and not what he hears from other people. I suggested that he continue to talk with his therapist. The interaction with George really made it seem to me that he was seeking validation because the perpetrator, his former significant other, denied that what happened between them was sexual victimization.

The process of becoming a survivor was not easy for the participants. It involved treatment, re-defining their views on masculinity, their own masculine identity, and sometimes even required an event to confront some aspect of their sexual victimization experience. Regardless of how they made it to the survivor status, or even how long it took them, the participants all agreed that being a survivor was important to their recovery and ultimately to living life how they wanted moving forward.
Masculinity and the Recovery Process

Seeking and receiving treatment was extremely important for the participants because it allowed them to begin working through the issues they attributed to their experiences with sexual victimization. As Chapter 3 discussed, these issues ranged from relationship problems, to behavioral and psychological issues and disorders. Treatment also allowed the participants to work through the shame, guilt, self-blame, and anger they held onto because of their sexual victimization experiences. Developing a masculine identity that allowed the participants to feel like they could embody it, one that did not punish men who experienced sexual victimization was important for the victim to survivor process.

Views of Masculinity Growing Up

When I asked the participants about how they remember learning a viewing masculinity growing up, it is not surprising that the vast majority of the participants described learning from parents and that their views were mostly characterized in a stereotypical manner (based on characteristics they described). These are views that men are strong, powerful over women, always ready for sex, and unable to be sexually dominated. For the most part, it did not matter whether the individual experienced childhood sexual victimization or not. Ron, a 44-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization responded with the following explanation when I asked him about how and what he learned about masculinity as a child:

“My father was very narcissistic, so that I had that example that nobody ever set me down and told me this means to be a man … the example that I got was that it was okay to scream and berate other people whenever it suits you. To put other people down, it’s perfectly acceptable [to] put women down, put minorities down, to put people who are different down … [the] experience I
had and what a man does, he’s the man of the house and by God, nobody challenges them.”

Brett, a 62 year old, White, upper-class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization also described learning a stereotypical view of masculinity growing up. However, he explained that he had issues with male authority figures growing up because he felt that his masculinity was counter to what he was being taught. When I asked Brett how and what he learned about masculinity growing up, part of his response included:

“[they] were quite concerned that I wasn’t macho enough and often tried to intimidate me to do manly things and I didn’t identify with that stuff inside … So, yeah, what I was taught was that the man should be, you know, strong and athletic, you know, big and bold.”

These stereotypical and bigoted views, as Ron described them, is what all of the participants described learning growing up. This can be expected when asking participants to recount their views, especially if they have changed over time. They might relate to stereotypes because stereotypes are the most accessible recollection. However, a small group of the participants (5) who experienced childhood sexual abuse had a different recollection of what they learned growing up. Their views made it difficult to understand masculinity, which I refer to as a confused view of masculinity.

Confused View of Masculinity Growing Up

For a five of the participants who experienced childhood sexual abuse, they reported having a confusing view of masculinity growing up. These participants attributed their views on masculinity to the childhood sexual abuse they experienced. Larry, a 51 year old, White, middle-class, straight man felt that he had good role models and understood what a good man was, but because of the sexual abuse he
experienced, he did not feel that he was loved, which created a confusing idea of masculinity for him:

“Like I think I kind of understood that part but then I think it had more to do with wanting to feel loved and you know not getting what [it] was I needed and instead it was this other thing … [that took the] place of it. That was the sexual abuse … but you know the stereotypes of what men are is not really who we are. Some people might hide behind that I think for the most part though real men are caring nurturing and loving.”

Larry’s experiences growing up led him to have difficulty deciphering feelings and made him question whether he was allowed to have feelings as a man. At the same time, Larry thought he knew what a good man was, but his sexual abuse experience made it difficult for him to completely understand masculinity. His confusion growing up still creates difficulty deciphering exactly how he should portray his masculinity.

A confusing view of masculinity growing up was not attributed to any specific group of men in this study. While Larry is White and heterosexual, Anthony, who is Hispanic and gay, also described developing a confused view of masculinity as a result of his childhood sexual abuse experiences. According to Anthony, his sexuality growing up was in direct contrast to what he was taught about manhood:

“Growing up I was always attracted to men and always felt like I would grow out of it. … I feel like I’m looking at men in a sexual way and hoping that, that [is] something that I will grow out of because I wanted very much to live a straight lifestyle … I really thought that I wanted to live a straight life, I wanted to marry a woman, I wanted to have children, I wanted to do everything that everybody else too. I felt like I was strange, my image of masculinity was always hyper sexualized. I saw men as sexual objects.”

Anthony’s heteronormative view of society created confusion for him as he grew up and was attracted to men. This confusion was only compounded by his experiences with sexual abuse during his childhood.
Sexual Victimization and Re-Defining Masculinity

Through treatment, the participants learned that they needed to re-formulate their identity from a victim to a survivor. This entailed creating a healthy view of self in conjunction with the trauma work in therapy. One way they accomplished this was to redefine their views on masculinity in a healthy way so they embodied the construction, meaning a masculinity that is not characterized by gender stereotypes and is more inclusive. This process entailed managing the stigma associated with their victimization experience, reducing it by redefining their masculinity so it did not exclude their experiences, and ultimately repair their identity as a survivor. The redefined masculinity reduced the self-blame they felt, which led to lower levels of shame and guilt. This allowed the participants to no longer feel like they did something wrong in regards to their victimization. Their revised views of masculinity also provided them with a masculine identity they could embody because it did not contain gender stereotypes. This opened up the door for them to begin the transition from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. The process of redefining their masculinity was a form of stigma management for the participants. It helped them to redefine their stigma as positive, thus repair their identity in an positive way. It also highlights agency the participants had in the process as they made the transition to the more positive survivor identity.

While each participant underwent identity work as they redefined their masculinity and made the transition from viewing themselves as a victim to a survivor, the identity work was not the same for all groups of participants. As Chapter 3 indicates, each participant talked of shame in response to my question about how their sexual victimization made them feel. However, men who identified as heterosexual were more likely to associate this shame directly with their masculinity. Participants
who identified as homosexual or bisexual were more likely to talk about this shame in relation to something they did or did not do in the situation, thus mirroring what we see talked about with women. Since a non-heterosexual masculinity is often viewed as being closer to femininity in stereotypical constructions of gender, this makes sense. This variation in how the participants talked of shame when asked about their feelings associated with their sexual victimization experience, led the participants who identified as heterosexual to view their masculinity as lost, thus the need to re-create their masculinity. However, the participants who identify as homosexual or bisexual have less identity work to undergo related to their masculinity. This section discusses the idea of losing one’s masculinity and what that means for the participants who described this process.

**Losing Masculinity**

The participants who identified as heterosexual were more likely to describe feeling like they lost their masculinity when I asked how their experience affected their masculine identity. The few participants who shared this experience described it as not feeling like they were a man because of their experience. It was felt by heterosexual participants after experiencing adult sexual victimization and also while looking back at childhood sexual abuse. For some of these participants, feeling like they lost their masculinity was connected to not being able to stop what happened to them, while for others it was just something that they never thought about prior to their experience with sexual victimization.

Even though participants who identified as heterosexual were more likely to feel like their masculinity was lost, the feeling was not exclusive to them. Revisiting his experience with childhood sexual abuse after his experience as an adult, Lance, a
Black, working-class, gay man, remembers thinking that his experiences hurt and reduced his standing as a man. In response to a follow-up question about this experience, Lance said this view of masculinity was:

“Not my current definition, but when I was younger, I felt that I was less than, I felt like that I was less of a man because I was sexually abused. It has no bearing … [on] my current definition.”

Although Lance acknowledges that he no longer lets his experiences with sexual victimization influence his views on his masculine identity, he did originally think that his experiences lessened his manhood. Lance had to ultimately redefine his masculinity to no longer feel this way. Lance was the only participant who identified as homosexual who described that he felt like he lost his masculinity. While John, a bisexual man who experienced adult sexual victimization, compared himself to his stronger sister and felt emasculated because he could not defend himself from his female perpetrator, he did not directly talk about feeling like he lost his masculinity.

An explanation for why Lance felt like he lost his masculinity, while other participants who identified as gay or bisexual did not, could be related to variations in masculinity by race and class. Literature about multiple masculinities and the intersection between race, class, and gender suggest that constructs of masculinity vary by race and class, with masculinity associated with men of color and working-class individuals as viewed in a more hegemonic lens. That is not to say that every man of color or member of the working class have these views of masculinity. However, Lance could internalize these perceptions about masculinity and men of color, causing him to feel this way about his own masculinity once he experienced sexual victimization.

Therefore, Lance’s lens for looking at his own victimization could be different than the other men who identify as homosexual since he is the only man of color in the
group. However, since Lance is the only man of color who identifies as homosexual in the sample, further work would need to be undertaken to see if this is the case. For the purpose of this study, I simply wanted to mention Lance’s experience in order to highlight the need for a more diverse sample of participants.

Participants who had on-going trouble with their identity and masculinity also felt like they lost their masculinity. For example, Brian, a White working class, straight man, who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, described difficulties he had with masculinity after being sexually victimized as an adult. He attributed these difficulties to problems he still had with processing his childhood abuse:

“Yeah I think absolutely it was, it was such a defining thing to happen and I just felt that everything was stolen from me, including my masculinity and already I think before it happened that I was someone who is struggling with identity because what [I] had gone [through] before. I didn’t struggle afterwards, I didn’t [feel] like I had it anymore, any identity I didn’t feel like I had a, anything to offer. I didn’t feel like there’s anything left and so I very rarely referred to myself, [my] identity.”

For some of the participants, issues they attributed to their childhood abuse caused trouble for them when they experienced sexual victimization as an adult, like with Brian. They were at a point where they had not fully developed their masculine identity and experiencing sexual victimization again only magnified the issues they already had, much like with the confusing view of masculinity that some participants reported experiencing.

Brett, a White, upper-middle-class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization also felt like his experience reduced his masculinity. Brett felt that because he was unable to stop his victimization from happening, it meant that he
was not a real man. When asked about his masculinity in relation to his sexual victimization experience, Brett said:

“If I think about the part of me that should’ve been strong or should’ve been more resourceful, you accept that on the one he did stop, but I’m ashamed that the fact that I didn’t do it in a more direct forceful way. I did [so] by collapsing emotionally and I feel like that was, I mean intellectually, I know [I] feel this way but emotionally that I keep going over that … if I was stronger, was a real man, you know and that’s just what it is.”

In this instance, Brett was influenced by the hegemonic construction of masculinity that men are strong and powerful, and able to stop someone from sexually dominating him. Because he was not able to stop his perpetrator, Brett felt like he was not a real man.

A few participants reported that they had never thought about their masculinity before their experience with sexual victimization. This led them to feel like it was lost after their experience. For Bob, a 36-year-old, White, middle class, straight man who only experienced adult sexual victimization, this was the case. In response to a follow-up question regarding why he felt like he lost his masculinity, Bob shared that he had never really thought about masculinity before, and how he fit into a masculine identity:

“Before I never identified or I never had to … find it before so … it wasn’t something that I really ever thought about. It was just there, but once it wasn’t there I recognize[d] that it wasn’t there and that’s what I had to go learn … what it meant to me first and then what, how to re-create it. I think that, that’s been the biggest thing for me is re-creating everything … that I didn’t originally define. Images, something that we grow into and it is who we are but we never define it but then learning to define things because [they] are not there.”

According to Bob, he never defined his masculinity and felt like it was just there, and it was not until he experienced something counter to what he assumed masculinity
was, that he felt like it was not there. During his interview, Bob went on to share this process of feeling like his masculinity was lost:

“It wasn’t something that I ever defined in my life before or I can never remember defining. It was just not there as a feeling … I can’t really explain it other than I just didn’t feel like a man. Mean I walk around as a man for several months then when I realized that it was a feeling and an issue that I was dealing with.”

In Bob’s explanation, he described his masculinity as being something that was there, but something that he never really thought of until he felt like it was no longer there. Basically, his masculinity was unquestioned until something happened that was counter to the dominant ideal, like with Brett. For both Brett and Bob, they did not question or even think about their masculinity prior to their experiences with sexual victimization because they never had to think about masculinity. Their standpoint, as White, middle-class, males came with assumptions of masculinity that they did not have to question or think about growing up until they experienced sexual victimization. However, for the other participants who always had to think about their masculine identity because they were marginalized through their race or sexuality, always had to navigate and understand where their masculine identity fit into the larger social construct. So, regardless of how they described viewing masculinity growing up, their membership in a group that is often marginalized meant that they had already thought about and navigated their masculinity in relation to dominant ideologies. Therefore, even though their experiences with sexual victimization could be seen as counter to the construction of masculinity, their experiences navigating their own masculinity meant it did not completely take it away and instead simply challenged it. This could be viewed as the participants who were privileged (White, middle-class, and heterosexual), view themselves as being part of the ‘normal’ group,
while the other marginalized participants (by race or sexuality), are characterized by a masculinity that is viewed as ‘different’ in the stereotypical sense of masculinity, thus they embody a ‘stigmatized masculinity’. Since they already embodied a ‘stigmatized masculinity’, these participants were aware of their masculinity. However, the other participants had to learn and develop their new masculinity completely. Thus, you have participants who must completely recreate their masculinity, and others who need to revise it as they manage the stigma associated with their sexual victimization experiences.

Revising Masculinity

Regardless of whether the participants felt like they lost their masculinity because of their experiences with sexual victimization, all of them had to redefine their masculine identity to some degree. The revised view of their masculinity took on characteristics that did not include stereotypes. Instead, the participants now saw masculinity as more compassionate and less associated with the hegemonic ideal. The revised view on masculinity constructed an identity that the participants felt they could embody. This meant that they no longer viewed their experience as counter to masculinity, which was important for shifting to viewing themselves as a survivor. The changing or evolving masculine identity for the participants centered on emulating role models, not adhering to stereotypes, having a more inclusive and understanding view of masculinity, and most of all, being comfortable with themselves. The revised masculinity was not specific to a certain group of participants. However, certain groups, like the participants who felt like they lost their masculinity, had more identity work to accomplish in order to meet their goal of a
revised masculinity they could embody as someone who experienced sexual victimization as an adult.

**Role Models and Redefined Masculinity**

The participants learned how to redefine their masculinity through their interactions with other men who experienced sexual victimization. Similar to how they learned masculinity growing up, the participants relied on role models in this process. These role models included therapists, friends, family, and other men they encountered in group therapy. For Eric, a White, heterosexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization, his circumstance in life helped to shape and alter his masculinity. He described wanting to be like his father while he was growing up and then after his father left his family, he wanted to be like other father figures who mentored him. Ultimately, Eric learned that manhood meant the lack of stereotypes, and in response to my question about how he viewed his masculinity now, he said:

“I’m not into a lot of the stereotypical stuff.”

In each circumstance, Eric emulated role models in order to develop and change his views on masculinity. At the end, he finally viewed masculinity in a way where he could embody the definition he held because it did not include gender stereotypes.

The less stereotypical construction that Eric described in his description of how he currently thinks of masculinity is a view that was held by most of the participants. This less stereotypical view allowed them to define masculinity in a way where they could embody the definition, be more compassionate towards others, and finally be comfortable with themselves. During his interview when I asked how his view of
masculinity has changed as a result of his experience with sexual victimization, John, a 25-year-old, White, upper-class, bisexual man shared that:

“I used to think it was a man's job to provide for those who were less fortunate than him. A man's duty to, you know always show respect towards women, to show respect towards other men, to at all other times to bend over backwards to be cordial all you know be the sort of image of the perfect gentleman and I think that has gone away. I don't think that I think that anymore.”

In his description, John mentions that he does not think in a stereotypical way. However, when I asked how he views masculinity now, John responded:

“Okay, there is a common phrase that women are and men do. Boys act and it is through actions and through being forged through men. You hear it often you know, through struggle through strife through adversity they become men … scars make us in a way. Whatever those scars are, negative, positive experiences, it does not matter. The fact that we have had experiences, they shape our world view, and then we are expected to make judgment decisions, hard ones. We are the deciders, and the fact that we make those decisions that also means the rights and responsibilities fall on our shoulders. We are expected to be strong and in part because we are physically strong, but I think, we are also expected to be mentally stronger. We are expected to have the authority, whatever else. I don't know if that is right or wrong, but I think that is what it means to be a man.”

John’s new definition of masculinity still contains some of the stereotypical language of masculinity, that of strength, power, and privilege over women. However, his new definition does not contain ideas about sexuality. For John, who was sexually victimized as an adult by a female acquaintance, his new view of masculinity contained some of the hegemonic characteristics, but not the aspects he did not embody. Instead, John’s revised views on masculinity created an identity he could relate to, identify with, and embody. This is a view that did not exclude men who experience sexual victimization, an important aspect of the revised masculinity for the participants.
While John’s revised definition of masculinity contained some stereotypical characteristics, his definition still only contained characteristics he attributed to himself. For the vast majority of the participants, their revised masculinity was more inclusive and equality focused. For example, Jim, a multi-racial, middle-class, gay man who only experienced adult victimization, now saw his masculinity as more about standing up for others than being strong and powerful and shared the following when I asked him how he views masculinity now:

“Now I look at it, if you’re man, if you’ve got, you now, integrity that you’ll stand up for the right things. If you will defend those who cannot defend themselves, you know, honesty, all the kind of cliché words … there I see an inner deeper meaning to manhood than anything about chopping wood, killing. The biggest part or being able to, when, when in a fight, I, I see that, that masculinity has very little to do with doing and it [is] simply about being the best person that you can be if you happen to be a man.”

Jim’s view of masculinity also did not include hegemonic characteristics about what made a man a man, but instead he felt compassion was key. When I asked Jim what was important about his recovery, he shared how he processed and revised his masculinity to view compassion as one of the most important characteristics:

“I think it force[d] me to dig down into myself and dig down myself about others as well and I think I would be, I think it removes a lot of judgmental things for my own life because I was so defensive growing up that I would find things wrong with other people just to make myself feel better and I, still do that somewhat in adulthood and years of growth and years of learning to hate myself … just taught, it taught me a lot about the man is just a man and nothing else.”

Jim’s experience with sexual victimization and his recovery taught him that compassion and not judging others was important, thus it is what he used to redefine his masculinity. He did not want to be judged, so he did not judge others. Like Jim, Alan, a White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult
sexual victimization, described a revised masculinity that was more inclusive and understanding of others in response to a question about how his views of masculinity have changed since his experience with sexual victimization:

“... I don’t have the same view of like gender and sexuality as I used to, you know, genders how you identify, how [you] self-identify, you know ... I’ve come to accept more about differen[ce], you know, just transgender life and generally what people are attracted to ... a lot more comfortable ... lot more at ease ... a lot more accepting of myself ... more accepting of others ... I think having had the experience of talking about my experience and you know being raped has really helped me connect with other people and just about that acceptance a lot more and masculinity, femininity, sexuality, gender role ... I think it does, I don’t think it even matters they’re just labels.”

Inclusive can mean many different things. I refer to their revised masculinity in this way because a common theme throughout the revised masculinity of the participants is that their construction no longer stigmatized individuals for being sexually victimized. The participants also described no longer being judgmental towards others. The main reason I use this term is because the revised masculinity described by the participants is welcoming of anyone, regardless of sexuality, race, class, or experience. Therefore, it is a form of masculinity they felt like they could embody because it is welcoming to all men and does not stigmatize their experience with sexual victimization.

Like with Jim, Alan’s experiences with sexual victimization led him to feel more compassion for others. The stigma Alan internalized as a result of his experience led him to recognize that masculinity is more than the stereotypical characteristics, and instead is about accepting others. Both of their revised masculinities allowed for the acceptance of people who are victimized, viewed as different, and stigmatized. Through this new definition, they were also able to have their own experiences fit into a masculine identity, thus reducing any shame they attributed to their stigma and victimization.
The participants underwent a process where they revised their definition of masculinity. Their re-defined view of masculinity was based on their own experience of feeling shame associated with stigma, leading to masculinity that did not include stereotypes or characteristics that marginalized others. With these new definitions, the men viewed masculinity as being more compassionate and inclusive, thus allowing them to feel like their own experiences could be included in a masculine identity. The identity work involved in this process varied between the participants, with the participants who felt like they lost their masculinity having to recreate their masculinity, while other participants had less work and simply had to situate their experiences within a slightly altered masculine identity. This helped repair their identity because their new views on masculinity had a positive focus and definition of self. Their revised masculinities led them to believe that the most important part of masculinity is feeling comfortable with yourself and what you have experienced.

During his interview, Nate, a 22-year-old, White gay man described this aspect of his masculine identity when asked how his views of masculinity have changed since his experiences with sexual victimization:

“I would say it [has] change[d] from, well, being a lot more confident … in expressing, in being a lot more sexually active in [the] last six months, but they’ve opened positive experiences and so I guess you could, but I think it’s just … just, just raising myself right now. I would like to be an adult man … and I think generally [to] be man to me just means being yourself and not being afraid.”

Nate came to realize that being happy with yourself is the most important part of the masculine identity. For Tim, a White, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, he sees being comfortable with yourself and using your strengths to your advantage in life. According to Tim, masculinity means:
“to be comfortable being sexual, sexually expressive, and to be able to, to be able to do well at a task and to be able to allow yourself in your mind to be calm … so you’re not afraid of learning but also to realize that you can tap into your strengths … tap into your strengths I think those are important points.”

When I asked Tim how he came to redefine his masculinity in this way, he could not, but guessed that it had something to do with both his culture and his experiences with sexual victimization. However, Steve, a 45-year-old, Black, working-class, bisexual man very poignantly described this process:

“Well for me to be a man is dealing with who you are and your issues and taking responsibility for your life, coming to terms with, and dealing with reality. I think to me [it] is what my manhood has been, becoming a man because I was very naïve and very immature in my 20s … and denial about what I was going through and so I let things fester, I let things boil and sort of bubble underneath before they exploded in different ways so when I started dealing with myself in going to therapy you know and doing with my health and you know finding spirituality and taking care of my physical body I think that’s what it meant to be man you know that’s what it means to be a man.”

The revised definitions created through treatment and the recovery process allowed the participants to create a masculine identity they felt they could embody and apply to their own lives and identity because it does not punish or stigmatize someone for experiencing sexual victimization. These inclusive definitions of masculinity were important to moving forward in the recovery process and helped the participants to manage their stigma and repair their identity. Once the participants revised and constructed a masculine identity that they themselves embodied, they were ready to take the next step in the recovery process, transforming their identity from a victim to a survivor.

**Summary and Discussion**

The aim of this chapter is to provide insight into the victim to survivor process for men who experience sexual victimization. The narratives described highlight the
victim identity and the process of shifting from viewing oneself as a victim to a survivor. The process included recognizing that one was having problems associated with their personal history of sexual victimization. Once they acknowledged having these problems, including psychological issues, drug and alcohol addiction, relationship issues with friends and family, problems understanding their sexuality, and feelings of shame, self-blame, guilt, and anger, they sought help. The time spent receiving treatment allowed the participants to tackle the issues they were having head-on, and learn how to manage and reduce the negative feelings they were having, including shame. Through this process, the participants were able to manage and reduce the stigma associated with their sexual victimization by revising their personal masculine identity, whether through completely recreating their masculine identity or slightly altering it. Standpoint theory may provide insight into why this is the case. According to standpoint theory, individuals characterized by marginalized traits better understand the complete picture between the lives of those who are privileged and their own (Harding, 1987; Collins, 2000). However, individuals characterized by privilege, have a harder time recognizing how their lives are privileged because the privilege is often seen as invisible (Collins, 2000). This reasoning could be the reason that the participants who identified as homosexual did not have as much identity work to do in regards to their masculine identity, compared to the participants who identified as heterosexual and felt like their masculinity was lost. The dominant construction of masculinity conceptualizes masculinity as heterosexual, and marginalizes the masculinity of men who are not heterosexual (Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, the participants who identified as homosexual were already coming from a marginalized position, and had more of an
understanding of how masculinity works in that marginalized position. In contrast, the participants who identified as heterosexual were more likely to have seen their privileged masculinity as invisible. Thus, they felt it was lost and had to completely recreate it instead of a less major revision. In both cases, this allowed the participants to shift from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor.

Not everything included in this chapter is new information. The takeaway from this chapter is the process of revising masculinity to make the shift from the victim to survivor identity and how this fits into the idea of stigma management. According to Goffman (1963), individuals who are stigmatized, attempt to manage their stigma by becoming ‘normal’ or ‘passing’ as ‘normal’ unless they are unable to because of a stigmatized trait that is noticeable. In his work, Goffman also writes about how stigmatized individuals associate with sympathetic others, other individuals who also share the stigmatized trait, to learn how to cope with their stigmatization, receive social support, understand the stigma, and learn alternate interpretations of the stigma. Finally, Goffman mentions that stigmatized individuals often redefine the stigmatized trait as positive.

The participants follow a model of stigma management during the victim identity stage of their recovery. Since experiencing sexual victimization is not a characteristic that is visually recognized, they managed their stigmatization by deciding who to tell and wait until it is someone they could trust. Through treatment and support groups, the participants learned strategies for coping with their sexual victimization and other important information from other group members. Within this social network of other men who experienced sexual victimization, the participants
learned that they could develop a positive view of themselves and ultimately transform their identity from a victim to a survivor.

The act of redefining their masculinity was an important part of the recovery phase for the participants. This process encompassed the recognition that the current label of victim was not what they wanted and instead they sought a positive view of self. This meant that the participants had to develop a view of masculinity that they could embody, did not include stereotypical language, and was healthy, inclusive, and compassionate. For some participants, this meant that they simply did not connect sexuality with masculinity so that their experience was no longer counter to their views on masculinity. For other participants, it meant completely changing their views on masculinity, or even defining masculinity for the first time.

The revised view of masculinity situated their masculine identity into a ‘normal’ view for the participants, thus allowing them to reduce the shame they associated with any stigma. The identity work conducted through managing their stigma during the victim identity stage of recovery led to a turning point. Without learning how to manage the stigma of experiencing sexual victimization as a man, the participants would not have experienced a turning point and progressed from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. Once they repaired their identity through this work, they were ready to transform from a victim to a survivor.

The process of stigma management and revising masculinity for the participants highlights some important issues. For one, it brings to light how power and privilege work within this model to create slightly different recovery experiences for men who experience sexual victimization. Masculinity was central to recovery and making that transition from the victim identity to the survivor identity. Even before
making this transition, masculinity was central to why certain participants sought
treatment. While the participants who identified as heterosexual sought treatment to
help with problems they associated with their sexual victimization, like psychological,
substance abuse, and relationship, the participants who identified as homosexual or
bisexual were more likely to also seek treatment to help them understand and process
their sexuality. While the idea of needing to seek therapy to help process sexuality is
not a new concept, it has not been associated men’s recovery from sexual
victimization. The majority of the research on women who experience sexual
victimization discusses help-seeking more in the context of the other reasons described
by participants, and not in the context of processing and understanding sexuality. This
suggests some practical contributions in addition to what this says about gender and
masculinity, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

In addition to highlighting the intersection of sexuality and masculinity as a
catalyst for seeking treatment, the process of stigma management undertaken by the
participants also shows how masculinity provides a different context for understanding
the victim to survivor process for men versus women. Research on women and the
victim and survivor process also indicates that identity is important in making that
shift and from the victim to survivor identity. The work about women discusses how
gender, structure, politics, and identity transformation are an important part of the
process and discourse about the victim and survivor dichotomy (Naples, 2003;
Harned, 2005). Based on the results of this study, these same aspects are important to
the process for men as well, and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter
that focuses on victim versus survivor discourse for the participants.
The process of stigma management undertaken by the participants highlights the difference in the process for men and women. For women, this process is about being viewed as a ‘deserving’ victim in the context of how femininity is viewed in relation to masculinity. With the process for women, we see how recovery and the victim to survivor process works from a marginalized perspective when examining gender. However, the participants highlight this process from a privileged identity when it comes to gender, as well as varying identities when examining the intersection of sexuality and gender. Thus, the process of stigma management and revising masculinity varies depending on the intersections of gender and sexuality. For participants who identified as heterosexual, the victim to survivor process included more of a revision of their masculinity, with some completely having to redo their masculine identity. However, from the slightly less privileged identity, the participants who identified as homosexual did not have to revise their masculinity as much. In this context, this chapter highlights how privilege and power work differently in the process for men compared to women. For men, it became more about understanding their own masculine identity in the context of shifting from the victim to survivor identity. While for women, research suggests it is more about navigating behavior associated with their feminine identity in order to make the transition and be viewed as a ‘deserving’ victim.
“I think I have for most my life seen myself as a victim. The word survivor is one that I only really discovered when I started seeking help and then I realized that a lot of people call themselves survivors and I think survivor is a strange word. We can survive a lot of things, you know, physical, emotional, people we love dying, that sort of thing. We can survive the mall. I think there’s a big difference between survive and thrive and I want to thrive. It’s okay being a survivor but being a survivor doesn’t necessarily mean you’re living well, that you’re living fully, and I want to be more than a survivor, I want to thrive. I am a survivor so I will say that I am a survivor, but I’m not saying that’s good enough. I want to thrive, want to live life, and I want to feel like I’m participating to the fullest and that’s part of my journey and I, that for certainly. The victim mentality is one that I can fall, fall into very quickly so someone is hostile or critical in a, a very difficult, when I, I can quickly go into victim mode, anchor very low, very quickly and actually interesting because … this time I’m actually going through a thing where I am really working to express my own emotions and literally over the last three weeks with the help of my counselor … been able to get angry three times, get angry with abusers, with my dad, … my mom and I’ve never done that so it’s like I’m learning now that I’m beginning to learn that the victim of, can actually stand up and say no, that was wrong. I think I’m beginning to learn to move away from that victim mentality and say no, … I’m going to be a survivor and that I’m going to thrive.”

- Brian

Brian’s description of the survivor identity and what it has meant to his recovery is a narrative that was heard throughout the interviews of the participants. Receiving treatment allowed them to re-evaluate their lives and realize they were not to blame for what happened to them. During the process, the participants redefined their views on masculinity to one that was more inclusive and did not stigmatize
individuals who experience sexual victimization. The revised masculinity reduced the feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and self-blame. The positive view of self, led the participants to no longer view themselves as a victim and instead as a survivor, thus progressing further in recovery. This new identity as a survivor has been important to these participants, and has allowed many of them to put their experiences with sexual victimization behind them, for the most part. Ultimately, the survivor identity was about reducing stigma, and transforming their identity away from a victim mentality to one that they viewed as positive. This chapter examines how the participants discuss their changed definition of self in response to their experiences with sexual victimization. The chapter pays special attention to the survivor identity, including what it means to the participants, how it differs from the victim identity, the ongoing nature of the recovery process, and how this discourse compares and contrasts to research that has focused on women and the survivor identity.

Recovery

Prior to receiving treatment, the participants did not know that they would one day view themselves as a survivor instead of a victim, and the importance of this transformation for their recovery. Although the recovery process is always ongoing for these participants, the survivor identity symbolized an important step in the process. It often meant a healthy, positive view of self, and their sexual victimization was not the main focus of their identity. In response to my question about why viewing himself as a survivor was important, Lance said, it has:

“been very, very important in looking [at] myself as [a] survivor because if I look at myself as a victim, it means I’ve not let go of my past and I cannot let, allow my past [to] hold me hostage.”
Ultimately, the survivor identity meant moving forward for the participants, and not allowing their experiences with sexual victimization to define who they are or what they can accomplish.

Recovery was not accomplished overnight. Instead it was an ongoing process that took years and involved different stages. Nate, a 22-year-old, gay, middle-class man, who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization talked about these stages during his interview:

“You’ll kind of go through different stages.”

These stages were not linear for the participants, and sometimes involved steps forward, followed by steps back. Or in the case of Nate, included bad days or trying experiences during the process. However, the process was typically forward on the whole, even when an individual felt overwhelmed. In response to my follow-up question asking Nate what he meant by different stage, he shared what he meant:

“The recovery journey [has] bumps along the way and sometimes this can make you feel that overwhelmed … you’ll never get over it and so forth and what really helped me was [to] look at myself [and] my progress.”

Nate also talked of the positives of helping others and how that has helped him through the recovery process:

“I’ve been doing a lot of volunteer work … I have a conference next week and may be speaking and I think that as well has been very positive and … I can make my life better and live more healthy and be a lot more mindful.”

The key to these stages in the recovery process was treatment to learn how to manage their stigma associated with their sexual victimization. It helped the
participants to process and understand their sexual victimization experience, and to ultimately transform their identity. As Nate’s narrative illustrates, treatment can also be empowering because it allowed the participants to meet and help other men in similar situations, especially when involved in a group environment. Once the transformation from recovery was complete, the participants saw themselves as a survivor instead of a victim.

**Survivor Identity: What is it?**

The survivor identity meant different things for the participants, ranging from the absence of being seen as a victim to a positive identity that led them to advocate on behalf of others. For two of the participants, the survivor identity simply represented that others would not see them as victims. Regardless of how each individual defined the survivor identity, they always talked about their survivor identity in a positive manner.

**Positive View of Self**

All but two of the participants saw being a survivor as positive. The survivor status for Tim, a White, middle-class, straight man, is positive because it creates a healthy mind for him, despite everything that has happened in his life. Tim described this feeling to me as:

“to see myself as a survivor really, you know I mean I’ve been able [to] … find things to do, keep my mind interest and keep my mind healthy so I see myself. My psychologist told me that I was that, I what, what was the word that area she said I was a real activist so I see myself now as a survivor really.”
The healthy feelings the survivor status created for Tim is something that he views as powerful and beneficial to his overall well-being. His psychologist referred to him as an activist because Tim was involved in working with other men who experienced sexual victimization and speaking out to give victims a voice. This positive feedback helped Tim to see himself as a survivor and not a victim.

Similar to seeing the survivor status as positive, the rest of the participants (N=17) saw it as strength, especially strength in character. Once again, this view allowed them to move forward with their lives. Brett, a White, bisexual man, described the survivor status as not wasting his strong character:

“I think I have reached the point where I feel that am stronger because of it. I think that like [with] my character, I don’t waste my character … I feel angry but it’s like, a, the anger of injustice versus the anger of rage and it’s the kind of anger that drives me to want to do things like, this interview, to write my story and to be available … so you know I’m not a victim. [I’m] called a survivor and [I] move[d] from victim to survivor and I think that was the biggest up and so I feel proud of being a survivor I feel humbled about being [a] survivor.”

According to Brett, a survivor is about not wasting his potential and not allowing his experience to engulf his life with anger. Being a survivor is about strength and moving forward for the participants. It signifies their resiliency for growth. By distancing themselves from their victim identity and the shame they associated with their stigma, the participants were able to take back their lives.
The Absence of Victimhood

For John, a White, upper-class, bisexual man, who only experienced sexual victimization once as an adult, the idea of being a survivor was described as the absence of being a victim:

“Thankfully none of them responded, oh you poor thing, because I don't think I could have handled that. I think I probably would have, I don't know, I don't want to be seen as a victim too much. I don't want to be, I didn't, I don't especially now. It has been years, I don't. I have made my peace with her, she friended me on Facebook, all that crap … I don't want to kick up more shit about this thing again because I’m so fucking done with this that it is just there and we're just going to have to get used to it and that will be that.”

John did not want others to see him as a victim because being seen as a victim would not allow him to move on with his life, especially after so much time had gone by. John felt more comfortable with simply moving on with his life. A survivor identity for John was a positive step for his overall identity and recovery. However, this identity was more about not being seen as a victim. In addition to John, the other participant who viewed the survivor identity as the absence of being seen as a victim also only experienced sexual victimization once. Eric, a 55 year old, White, heterosexual man, only experienced sexual victimization once in his life. Throughout his interview, Eric made sure to add an extra few words in his answers about his victimization to make it clear that he was:

“100 percent heterosexual”

Or that the:

“Ladies were a fan of his.”
Eric made it abundantly clear that he, and others, view him as very masculine. He also made it clear that he had moved on from his experience with sexual victimization and did not see himself as a victim. This is similar to John. John, like Eric, did not talk about being a survivor, but instead talked about not being a victim and moving on with his life. These two participants described currently holding views of masculinity that were similar to hegemonic characteristics. Describing his views on masculinity and referring to men as the deciders, John shared:

“We are the deciders, and the fact that we make those decisions that also means the rights and responsibilities fall on our shoulders. We are expected to be strong and in part because we are physically strong, but I think, we are also expected to be mentally stronger. We are expected to have the authority, whatever else. I don't know if that is right or wrong, but I think that is what it means to be a man.”

In addition to these views, John replied to my question about how he views himself by telling me he tries to:

“be constantly the one who is the acting force. Never let anybody act upon you, act instead towards others. Be the instigator that pushes things forward and never be weak.”

This quote from John is representative of actions that could be characterized as close to hegemonic masculinity, especially the description of not being weak.

John and Eric describe views of masculinity that are closely related to hegemonic characteristics, and they are the only two participants who talk of survivorhood as being the absence of being a victim. Every other participant in the study described the term survivor as positive compared to the victim identity. These participants also shared less judgmental views of masculinity, ones that would be
viewed as being farther away from characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. It could be that men who hold more hegemonic views of masculinity are less likely to use terms like survivor and would simply want to not be seen as a victim. Often, the term survivor is associated with working through feelings and being inclusive of others regardless of sexuality or other characteristics. This view is counter to the hegemonic construction of masculinity, which is more associated with heteronormativity and privilege of men over women, as well as masculinity that holds similar characteristics as femininity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, men who hold views of masculinity closely related to hegemonic masculinity, like John and Eric, are less likely to use the term survivor and are more likely to just not want to be seen as victims. Counter to this, men who hold views of masculinity that are farther away from hegemonic masculinity, like the rest of the participants, are more likely to use the term survivor when describing themselves to emphasize the work they have done. Their views on masculinity do not ‘other’ men who talk about their feelings or accept others regardless of any of their characteristics. Thus, they embrace the survivor identity.

**Difference from Victim Identity**

The positive nature of the survivor identity is in contrast to how the participants felt when they still viewed themselves as a victim. The participants spoke of the survivor identity as empowering them, showing them they deserved to be loved, to finally move forward from what happened to them, and most importantly, it
provided an overall positive outlook on life. The participants who talked about the survivor identity as different from the victim identity included every participant except for John and Eric. Besides describing views of masculinity that were far from being viewed as hegemonic, there were no specific aspects of the participant that made them more likely to feel this way. These participants included variation across sexuality, type of sexual victimization, and any perpetrator characteristics.

Positive

When the participants saw themselves as victims, they felt like they had no power in their lives. They felt like their experiences with victimization defined who they were and affected every aspect of their lives. The survivor identity took this power away from their experiences and gave it back to them. They were now able to do something about it and through their recovery, understood that their experiences were no longer going to control their lives. In essence, their transformation was about managing stigma and repairing their identities. Alan, a White, middle-class, queer man, talked of the power that the survivor identity provided him:

“I do see a difference between the two terms. I don’t often use the term victim because I don’t want to feel like I, I have no power … survivor is a better term because that, even though I was victimized, I can do something, I can work through things, I can, I can overcome and I tend to feel that the word victim is very limiting and doesn’t really do justice to what the experience is, really what, when you do the work … one year working when I’m healing. I feel now because I am a survivor.”

The power the survivor identity provided to the participants gave them agency to live their lives how they wanted. As was mentioned in the previous section, the
agency they received by taking back their lives and having power once again led to the participants being able to let go of what happened and move on with their lives. This agency included stigma management, repairing their identity, and transforming their identity to a survivor.

Lance, a Black, working-class, gay man, talked about a life-changing event that helped him to begin viewing himself as a survivor instead of a victim. He was hit by a car while crossing the street in the city where he lived and it made him take a long look at his life, and he realized he needed help. At that point, Lance understood that he could no longer go through the recovery process on his own. Lance displayed his agency as he began to challenge his victim identity in what would be a process of identity transformation. He shared how the survivor mindset made him feel when I asked him to describe the difference between the two terms:

“I can’t keep torturing myself to be a victim because when you’re a victim it means that the pain [is] emotional and [a] violent struggle that a victim goes through. It means that you’re still holding onto that and as a survivor it means that you haven’t forgotten about the abuse or forgotten about the struggles and the hardships and the emotional struggles that you[’ve been through] … but you’re at a point where you’re complete, have complete access to the knowledge that it was not your fault and accepting that it was not my fault. I was able to forgive myself for believing that I had any contribution to my abuse over the years and I was able to forgive my abusers because the most important part in, in healing and becoming a survivor … is having the ability to forgive your abuser.”

Lance’s transformation to the survivor identity meant he could move on with his life. He talked at length about how he had not forgotten what happened to him, but that now seeing himself as a survivor, he could let go of what happened, and forgive himself for thinking it was his fault, thus reducing the power of the stigma associated
with his sexual victimization experience. Forgiving both himself and his perpetrators allowed him to take charge and move forward in his recovery.

Relationships

In addition to moving forward and recognizing that their experience with sexual victimization was not their fault, the survivor status also showed the participants that they were worthy of love from another human being. So many of the participants were abused at an early age or used in some way as adults causing them to have poor self-worth. Feeling empowered and letting go of their experiences as a survivor allowed them to have a positive view of themselves again or for the very first time, and it showed them that they could love and be loved by others. Anthony, a Hispanic, middle-class, gay man, talked about being a survivor and how a new relationship showed him he could be loved by someone else when I asked him about the biggest difference in his life since he started viewing himself as a survivor:

“Oh my goodness, absolutely my whole life, my whole entire life until I met, until I met the man who … change[d] my life and show[ed] me that … that I was … deserving of love and respect and to be in a healthy and monogamous relationship that [is] equally beneficial to both partners and that we could be equal partners together and have fun together and have sex together and that it could be normal and natural and beautiful and he taught me that.”

This relationship made Anthony realize he no longer wanted to be a victim. Looking back, he shared:

“But it wasn’t until eight years ago that I really felt like not a victim … who wants to live the rest of their life that way and [I] have at least a good 20 to 30 years left. I hope and I want to live happy and live a happy life. These abusers
have taken away a lot of my happiness … [I am] tired of paying the price for something that I never wanted to buy in the first place.”

Viewing himself as a survivor reduced the trauma and stigma Anthony felt and reinforced the idea that there was nothing wrong with him and was worthy of love. This process made Anthony happy and illustrated the harm of living like a victim.

Positive Outlook on Life

The biggest difference between the victim identity and the survivor identity for the participants was their overall outlook on life. For all of the participants, the victim identity was characterized by stigmatization, low self-worth and an overall negative view of their lives and future. Once they received treatment and underwent the identity work to change their views on masculinity and how they viewed their experiences, their new identity as a survivor enabled them to have a positive view on life. Ron, a White, middle-class, gay man, talked of this transformation and overall view on life once he began to view himself as a survivor:

“I view myself as a survivor of sexual victimization. I was a victim for a long time and that’s how I saw myself. I don’t see myself in that way anymore because I think I have a positive outlook in the sense that is taught me some things about myself. There were lessons learned in life that cannot of gone any other way and I just use those experiences to make me into frankly a better person than what I was, so I think it has been, I mean I don’t think I would wish on anybody, but I, with them, certainly a survivor of those things and I think whenever I talk to the victims of abuse often times I see them trying to find a sense of resiliency to overcome.”

Ron, who has experience talking with both men and women who have experienced sexual victimization shared the differences he saw between the groups. When I asked
him whether he views men and women who experience sexual victimization as similar or different, he responded with:

“Women, especially women tend to see themselves as survivor. Men often tend to see themselves as victims but men seem to be more suicidal, they tend to be more homicidal. Has been my experience they just, they just have a much more difficult time getting across that victimhood scenario but I was there too, I saw myself as a victim for a long time and it came out in a way I live my life where I was essentially shut down emotionally to anyone.”

Instead of viewing himself in a negative light as a victim, Ron began to notice his resiliency and this caused him to not dwell on what happened to him and to focus on the positive aspects of his life. For Ron, his resiliency consisted of being more emotionally open to others and seeing the positive each day instead of always assuming the worst. Reaching the survivor status was not easy for the participants, and there was a definitive process, one that has been discussed in Chapter 4.

The participants saw the victim identity as positive or as the absence of victimhood. Regardless, it provided a more positive outlook on life and led to renewed relationships with other people. Most of all, the survivor identity meant that the lives of the participants from this study were no longer defined by their victimization. Instead of having their lives defined by their experiences with sexual victimization, their experiences were now just something that happened to them, and was not what defined their identity.

The way the participants described the survivor identity is very similar to the way it is described in research about women who experience sexual victimization and domestic violence. Much like with the participants, the victim identity is often
associated with blame, lack of power, and weakness (Leisenring, 2006). In contrast, the survivor identity is often described in a more positive manner, with the emphasis on recovery, resistance, coping, and agency (Dunn, 2005). The participants mirror these descriptions in the way they discuss how their lives have changed as a result of viewing themselves as a survivor instead of a victim. Many of the participants associated the victim identity with being stuck and feeling like they were responsible for what occurred. Once they transformed into viewing themselves as a survivor, they were able to understand that it was not their fault that they could move forward with their lives and they no longer felt shame associated with the stigma of their experience. This is what Dunn (2005) describes as an important aspect of the survivor identity, reducing the stigma associated with the victimization by highlighting traits that are often valued more in society. The participants of this study view the survivor identity in a similar manner as is outlined in previous literature. All but two of the participants make a differentiation between the survivor identity and the victim identity. The two participants, John and Jim referenced previously in this section, who see it as only the absence of being viewed as a victim still associate it with characteristics that are viewed as valuable by society.

**Importance of Survivor Identity**

The survivor identity has been important to the participants for a number of reasons, including it allowed them to have meaningful relationships with other people,
it illustrated their strength as a person, and it kept them from going back to the victim mentality that caused them so much pain.

Relationships

Relationships with other people are important to the participants. The pain they endured often led to issues with relationships, and even was the catalyst for seeking treatment at the beginning of the recovery process. Through recovery and actively transforming into viewing themselves as a survivor, they were able to have meaningful relationships with other people. For Ron, a 44-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man, the survivor status meant being able to be in a loving relationship with a man, something he had trouble with until that point. In a response to my question about the most positive thing to happen to him during his recovery, Ron responded with the following:

“[Had it] not been for the fact that I was able to make the transition to see myself differently and to experience myself differently I would never of been able to make myself put that way and I would’ve been stuck in that shame spiral the … guilt and shame that would’ve prevented me from having any … relationship, so I think that’s been the biggest thing that the survivor mentality has given me is being relational with other people.”

Relationships were important because they showed the participants that things did get better and that the issues they attributed to sexual victimization were something they could overcome.
Strength

Probably the most important aspect of being a survivor instead of a victim dealt with the strength and sense of accomplishment it gave the participants. All but three of the participants experienced multiple acts of sexual victimization throughout their lives. So, making it through the recovery process and viewing themselves as a survivor meant they accomplished something important. For Anthony, a 45-year-old, Hispanic, middle-class, gay man, the accomplishment was not only his survivor status, but all the great things that have occurred in his personal and professional life as a result. In response to my question about the most important aspect of his recovery, Anthony shared the following:

“I’ve come out on the other side, my God, when you think about how many of us are sexually abused and then fall into a lifetime cycle of drug and alcohol abuse and ultimately death and you look at me and not only am I Hispanic, but I’m Hispanic, I’m a gay male, and I have achieved … I’ve made it to the other side of that, admitted to [a] place that I dreamed of being in for a long, long time, but I never thought that I would have the opportunity … I think that’s what makes a survivor. Somebody [who] can see the future, who can see that the future is bright and happy and healthy and authentic and not gloomy and depressing and victimized.”

Anthony has been very successful in his life. He has a doctorate, is gainfully employed, and is engaged to his partner. In Anthony’s mind, none of this would have been possible if he still viewed himself as a victim and let stigma rule his life. Instead, he actively transformed his identity and his positive outlook has led him to fulfill his dreams, and to make new ones.

The feeling of strength and accomplishment of being a survivor highlights to the participants that they will not go backwards in their recovery. As a survivor there
are still periods where their sexual victimization still hurts. However, the survivor status helps to minimize this. For Brett, a 62-year-old, White, upper-middle-class, bisexual man, he sees strength from his survivor status. He explained that he used to see himself as stuck in a vicious cycle of victimization when he saw himself as a victim:

“I think victim’s stuck and victimization only keeps you a victim and it sets you up to be continuously victimized and I think in my case I learn to gain strength from understanding that while I was victimized, I am a survivor and that gives me strength.”

The survivor status, therefore, helped to make Brett and the other participants who they are today. As Brett says:

“so I totally [know], who I am today is often times goes back to being a survivor, and I’m a survivor not just [of] sexual abuse, but also, you know, being abused because of who I was, in ourselves, and it’s never [going] to happen to me again.”

Most importantly, the survivor status means the participants are able to leave what happened to them behind and instead look ahead. According to Lance, a 34-year-old, Black, working-class, gay man, it allows him to move forward in his life and not let his experiences with sexual victimization define who he is:

“been very, very important in looking myself as survivor because if I look at myself as a victim, it means I’ve not let go of my past and I cannot let, allow my past [to] hold me hostage.”

**Changing View of Self**

Looking back at their lives, the participants acknowledged that their experiences with sexual victimization changed their lives immensely, and ultimately
changed who they were as people. As Chapter 4 outlines, their changing views of masculinity allowed them to be more compassionate and inclusive to others. Now, as a survivor, the participants perform advocacy work and overall try to help others whenever they can. It took time for these participants to be involved in advocacy work and have a healthy view of themselves. For most of the participants, they felt that their experiences with sexual victimization changed who they were, and that it was not only because they saw themselves as survivors. For Steve, a Black, working-class, bisexual man, his experiences with childhood and adult sexual victimization fundamentally changed who he was. In response to my question about whether his experiences with sexual victimization changed any aspects of his life, Steve responded with the following:

“Well I’ll put it like this, I feel like I was changed, the fundamentals of who I was before that happen … became at the time, the way I say this and unanswerable question I don’t know whether I was born gay or not or whether I’m gay as a result or whatever, my sexuality is as a result of the child abuse.”

Steve’s experience with sexual victimization completely changed him. It caused him to have confusion regarding his sexuality. Through the recovery process, he has begun to understand his own identity and the hardships his experiences with sexual victimization caused him to endure. However, at the time, his whole life was turned upside down. The other participants acknowledged that their definition of self changed as a result of their experiences. They described that their experiences caused them to realize bad things could happen and being hesitant and anxious around other people. Through the active transformation to a survivor, they began to have a
Realize Bad Things Could Happen

The changes that occurred through recovery were not always positive. While the participants were able to manage the stigma associated with their experiences with sexual victimization and embody the survivor identity, some were still more fearful because of what occurred. For Jim, a multi-racial, middle-class, gay man who was only sexually victimized as an adult, his experience with sexual victimization caused him to be more anxious around other people even after his transformation into a survivor. In response to my question about how his life has changed, Jim shared:

“Yeah, I, I have a constant, [a] decided negativity on certain levels that things are going to work out that things are kind of just [going to] fall apart again, I mean I’ve come a long way, stills [have] a panic attack and become fearful and worrisome about how the outcomes of the things I have to watch.”

Jim’s experiences caused him to act out and not be trusting of others. It is not that he cannot trust others; just that it takes longer for him to trust someone else.

The negative view could be something as simple as the experience causing the individual to realize that bad things can happen, as is the case with John, a White, upper-class, bisexual man who only experienced adult sexual victimization. John had a certain view of himself and thought that if he acted a certain way, good things would happen. However, after he was sexually victimized, John no longer felt that way. In
response to my question about whether any aspect of his life has changed since his experience with sexual victimization, John said:

“I used to be convinced that I was the nicest guy, that I was, you know, that I could do it if I was just nice to people, just always offered to take their dishes, be the perfect gentleman, do this, do that, that people would like me, and that not that nobody would go out there to hurt me and that it would be okay and that at the very least they will like you. It might not always be the perfect way, what you want to do, but it is the way to do it, it is the way things should be done, it is the way society says it should be done, it is what we hear should be done, so we're going to do it this way and it has certainly changed that perspective and point of view. I don't think it is accurate anymore.”

John’s experience with sexual victimization turned his world upside down. Before he felt like he could be nice to everyone and nothing would go wrong. However, after his experience with sexual victimization, John was no longer optimistic. John talked about how this view of himself caused him to change how he acts on a day-to-day basis:

“Do what you like, be constantly the one who is the acting force. Never let anybody act upon you, act instead towards others. Be the instigator that pushes things forward and never be weak, never be along. Surround yourself with those who are like you, if you can, a mob is a terrible thing to behold.”

Since he was sexually victimized with force, but feels like he could have stopped the perpetrator, John now ‘acts upon’ others and does not let them act upon him. This means John does not allow others to dictate his experience, and instead makes sure he does everything on his own terms. His experience with sexual victimization caused him to change how he acted so that he could control the situation. For both John and Jim, their experiences made them less trusting and more controlling of others. They felt that they needed to be in control so that they could not be victimized again. This
new view of self is something that only Jim and John experienced. They both only experienced sexual victimization once as adults, and both instances involved a degree of force. John was sexually victimized by a female acquaintance while in college. He described her verbally threatening him if he did not do what she wanted, which caused John to go along with her. Jim also only experienced sexual victimization as an adult. He was sexually victimized by two men during a robbery that progressed to sexual victimization. John and Jim were not the only participants to experience threats and force. However, they were the only participants to experience this as their only sexual victimization. Since it was a one-time event that happened as adults, it could have led them to associate more harm with the experience. Thus, causing them to be anxious or not trusting of other people. It could also be that they felt they should be able to control their situation as adult men, and when they could not, they vowed to change their overall mentality. This could also be tied to their thoughts on masculinity. For example, John described views that could be characterized as similar to hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the sexual victimization he endured caused him to be more guarded and less trusting of others because he felt like he always had to be on guard since he had to be able to protect himself. Even though John was sexually victimized by someone known to him and Jim by two strangers, they both saw their experiences with sexual victimization as proof that bad things could happen because they could not control the situation, something they thought they should be able to do as men.
Healthy, More Understanding Self

There was a positive transformation in the definition of self for the rest of the participants. The transformation into a survivor identity and the identity work involved in this process produced a healthy, more understanding self. For Mike, a 52-year-old, White, poor, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, this was an important transformation. Mike grew up living in a foster home and was a favorite target of his foster mother, who Mike referred to as the ‘foster monster’. During his childhood, Mike experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, which created a lot of pain and suffering. Mike shared how childhood abuse and adult victimization made him feel, and how his definition of self changed through extensive work in treatment. In response to my question about how his experiences with sexual victimization made him feel, Mike shared:

“It just reinforced, all the messages I receive from the foster monster, how I was worthless and no good, I would never amount to anything, you know, how basically I was on this Earth to fulfill these needs for others, you know, just reinforced the, the, the, the being worthless and having no, no purpose other than what I could do for others and stuff.”

Mike began to think differently about himself once he went through treatment and shared the following when I asked him how he made the transition to viewing himself as a survivor:

“In therapy, you know, that my mindset changed significantly, healthfully, you now, that I wasn’t on this earth to be objects for other peoples use and abuse, you know, that I had value, I was a human being and not [an] object. I had the right to say no, I had the right to set boundaries with other people, I had the right to make them respect those boundaries, you know. I mean these were all foreign concepts … from a very early age I was conditioned to allow people to do what they wanted that, that they had all the rights and I had none.”
Mike’s history of victimization led to a very negative view of himself, and the continued victimization during childhood and adulthood only reinforced this message. Through treatment, Mike was able to change his view of himself and as a result developed a much more positive definition of himself.

Having a positive view of self led the participants to not see dangers everywhere they looked. In the previous section, John and Jim still view danger, and do not trust people as a result. However, the rest of the participants now understand that danger is not behind every corner. Throughout their experiences, they became used to being victimized and assumed it would continue to occur. Through treatment and actively transforming how they view themselves, they began to see that this is not the case. Tim, a 61-year-old, White, lower-middle-class, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, talked about this change in how he viewed danger:

“I can approach people more positively and not suspiciously. I’m not as suspicious as I used to [be] so that’s one good [thing] … it takes my, away my cynicism, have had a lot of cynicism with my life and that’s been mitigated, not completely … to have to keep your ears open but eat out I don’t see evil lurking behind each corner.”

Tim became less suspicious of others and does not always think bad things will happen to him. He acknowledges that he still has work to do, but his changing view of himself has led to an overall positive day-to-day life.

The active transformation to viewing themselves as a survivor was also important because it helped them to understand what was going on inside them,
including understanding psychological issues they encountered. For Alan, a 37-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, the survivor identity made him more understanding of his anxiety. In response to my question about the benefits of viewing himself as a survivor, Alan shared the following:

“I understand my reactions, I understand my anxiety a lot more, it helps paint a picture of where this all comes from and my family origin is a huge thing in all of our lives and I know I don’t have control over everything. That it happened but I do have control over how I react to things and that’s hard … able to put things in perspective where before that was really possible it just wasn’t possible at all, it all jumbled up, it [was] all suppressed, it was all hidden.”

The new understanding has helped Alan to see the bigger picture, including why he feels anxious, thus allowing him to develop strategies for managing his anxiety and not overreacting. Even though Alan still experiences anxiety that he attributes to his sexual victimization, treatment and identifying as a survivor provides insight for managing his anxiety in relation to his transformed identity.

The active transformation into a positive view of self provided the participants with a new understanding of the bigger picture, including how certain issues they were still experiencing fit into the picture. This understanding meant they could manage their lives better so that any issues they were having would not take over their lives. This created a more comfortable day to day life. Brian, a White, working-class, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, described this feeling of being more comfortable with his life and his process of making it to this position:
“I think the thing that change[d] has been that [I] am actually a very much more tolerant person and knowing how hard pain [is] … and what I’ve been through … how can I judge others, I can’t. I can’t because all that I’ve been through [has] had such a profound effect on me. I could [have] ended up, … ended up an alcoholic, I didn’t, but I know people who survived that have ended up like that … that is one thing … I’m far more accepting of people.”

Brian used his identity work and his revised masculinity to realize that he should not be judgmental of others because he did not like being judged. This new definition of self has allowed him to work on issues that arise on a day to day basis, including how to connect with other people. Instead of judging others and being down on himself, Brian is more comfortable developing his interactions with others and managing how he comes across in these interactions. His new positive definition of self has shifted outward and led to work on relationships with other people.

The more positive view of self has allowed the participants to have better relationships with other people. As a result of working on their inner self, they became more understanding and accepting of other people. According to George, a 37-year-old, Asian, middle-class, heterosexual man, this includes recognizing gender issues, and speaking out when others talked in a stereotypical manner about gender and other social issues:

“[I’m] much more sensitive to gender issues in general like heteronormativity, misogyny, the objectification of women, like one small example.”

Recognizing the heteronormative nature of society is not something that George would have noticed prior to his experiences with victimization. Since his victimization, George recognized how others are marginalized. His own stigmatization as a man
who experienced sexual victimization caused him to see the world differently, to view it in a broader context, and to recognize the hardships of others.

Move Forward with Life

The more compassionate identity the participants actively transformed into has had its benefits. It has allowed them to understand issues they attributed to their sexual victimization, provided them with a broader view of society, and helped them to recognize how others are marginalized. The positive nature of their transformed identity helped the participants create a framework for living as survivors instead of allowing their experiences with sexual victimization to dictate how they lived. This does not mean that their experiences with sexual victimization do not continue to affect them, it just means that they manage their feelings, and any stigma that pops up.

Larry, a 51-year-old, White, middle-class, heterosexual man, described how he manages his experiences and his life moving forward:

“Trying to live my life in spite of the abuse. The abuse really is, … is just what happened, was just something happened to me, so I tend to try to live my life in ways where I don’t let it affect who I am, you know. I’m trying to live my life the best I can as if I was never abused, it’s hard at times … and I didn’t do anything wrong kind of how I look at [it], you know.”

The participants recognized that their lives had changed as a result of their experiences with sexual victimization. For two of the participants, this included viewing the world as a dangerous place. While the rest of the participants grew through treatment and now felt like their survivor identity led them to less judgmental and more understanding of others. Much of the work was accomplished through
treatment, both one on one and group. Without criminal justice involvement, the participants were able to decide who to disclose their experience, which allowed them to be strategic. Their progress from the victim identity to the survivor identity was discussed as a private manner. It was not something that the participants discussed going through with others or the public, unless they were helped by a partner or close friend. Much of the identity work associated with making the transformation from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor dealt with internal definitions of self. The major catalyst for the participants was the revision of their views on masculinity so their experience with sexual victimization could be incorporated into their own masculine identity. This allowed them to take away blame, an important aspect of the survivor identity. This can be seen as becoming credible in their own view and construction of their identity. Because being sexually victimized is not a part of the hegemonic ideal of masculinity, the participants shifted their view to a more inclusive masculinity, simply a masculinity that was accepting of men who experienced sexual victimization, to create a masculine identity they could embody, thus provide credibility in their own eyes. This process is how the participants navigated their own masculine identity in accordance with the transition from the victim to survivor identity.

Ongoing Recovery Process: Advocacy Work

Even though the participants progressed through treatment, managed the stigma they associated with their sexual victimization experiences, and actively
transformed their identity into a survivor, it does not mean the recovery process is complete. The recovery process is always ongoing. While they have learned the work necessary to live a positive, healthy life and leave their victimization behind, there is always the possibility of experiencing triggers that lead to negative consequences, including feeling the victim mentality again. In order to combat this possibility, the participants engage in advocacy work to some degree, which includes extensive involvement in a group that advocates on behalf of men who experience sexual victimization or simply speaking out when they hear someone make a comment or joke on the subject. Regardless of the type of advocacy work these participants are involved, the work provides them with additional treatment and also a way to give back and help others who have not made it as far in the recovery process.

Advocacy Work

All of the participants are involved in advocacy work to some degree. This work ranged from running advocacy groups, to supporting causes, to speaking to organizations, to speaking up when someone tells a joke about rape. As the following section describes, the participants are involved in advocacy work because it helps others, but also because it helps them.

Advocacy work is not only about being involved in a formal group that advocates on behalf of men who have been sexually victimized, but it is also about standing up for people with similar experiences. John, a 25-year-old, White, upper-
class, bisexual man, shared how he stands up for men with similar experiences when
he speaks out after hearing offensive language:

“Prison rape jokes aren't fucking funny. People shouldn't have to deal with
that. You know, whenever. There was a girl who says you could just say that
you know he raped you and I flipped out on them pretty hard like they are not
my friends anymore.”

Even though John has not been officially involved with an advocacy group, he
described his advocacy work as letting people know if they are being offensive
regarding men who have experienced sexual victimization. For John, it does not
matter if speaking out causes him friendships because he would rather not be friends
with people who joke about something that happened to him and caused him a lot of
pain.

The next degree of advocacy the participants were involved in was to be
openly involved in supporting a specific group or cause. This could be through actual
work or through posting information online, including on Facebook groups. Brian, a
White, working-class, heterosexual man, felt that it was important to support causes
online, and used his Facebook profile to show his support. In response to my question
about how he advocates on behalf of men who experience sexual victimization, Brian
shared:

“I guess the thing is that you don’t even have to talk to people to be an
advocate. I think I know that I have actively supported causes and … then
things like my Facebook profile, you know. So when we had I think it started
in the states but survivors’ week, survivors’ month with blue ribbon.”

At the time of his interview, Brian was still at the point where he could only be
involved in what he referred to as ‘small things’, which included showing support on
Facebook and wearing a blue ribbon to show his support for people who have been sexually victimized. Brian does wish he was at a point where he was ready to share his story in an advocacy oriented way:

“I wear [a] blue-ribbon, I used the blue ribbon on my Facebook [profile], and it’s relatively small things but … [it is all] I can do at the moment. I hope that once I become more confident, once I get to that, get healthy perspective on things that I would be able to stand up and be counted and fight for the right of [others].”

Some of the participants performed advocacy work through telling their stories to others and advising men who need help. For Brett, a 62-year-old, White, upper-middle-class, bisexual man, this involves mostly posting his story on Facebook and talking to other men who need help. He shared the following in response to my question about the advocacy work he is involved in:

“I post postings on Facebook. … when I meet people I try to counsel them and give them some strength … and I’ve been involved in support groups and I tried to be an example, powerful example to other people that you know can move on and I moved on and, it won’t be easy, but you can move on.”

Other men speak in public about their experiences in order to spread awareness. Jim, a 53-year-old, multiracial, middle-class, gay man, actively seeks opportunities to speak in public:

“This, is the first positive thing I’ve done in a long time. For years I have called local universities. I’ve called different departments of social services. I ask and say this is what’s needed and I was up front. These are strangers, … no problem saying that I’d been raped and I then, I you know I talked to them, I worked with them we’ve tried to anyway and it was minimal … I get … discourage[d], I’d quit for a while, I[‘ll] pick up the banner again, it’s been a long time.”
The participants are involved in this advocacy work because it helps others. For Nate, a White, middle-class, gay man, spreading awareness is important because it can reach others:

“It’s been very important, meaningful to me to want to promote awareness on this issue … and [I’m] thinking of … switch[ing] my career to work with survivors of abuse … I can make my life better and live more healthy and be a lot more mindful … as recover from the abuse itself and also taught me so many amazing lessons, have been connected with incredible people to hold out with amazing friendships, with people.”

Advocacy Work as Treatment

The previous section describes how the participants are involved in advocacy work because it helps others. However, the participants also perform advocacy work because it helps them continue their recovery, which they see as an on-going process. For Larry, a 51-year-old, White, middle-class, heterosexual man who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization, working with boys has helped him to believe that good things could happen. He shared the following when I asked him why he is involved in advocacy work:

“Well another thing that I’m doing is [I] am working with teenagers and I guess yesterday I was in a group with some kids … the kids were in the same group as me at last month’s [meeting] and one of them asked me to be their sponsor and I said yes … this is going to be a good experience for both of us and I was just really shocked … I think it just helps me believe that, that [good] things can happen.”

Not only is Larry providing mentorship for the boys he works with, but he also has established good relationships and sees that something good can happen.
The advocacy work also helps the participants deal with issues they attribute to their sexual victimization. For Ron, a 44-year-old, White, middle-class, gay man, his involvement in advocacy work helps him deal with pain and shared the following when asked about why he is involved in advocacy work:

“The advocacy work I do, so you know I don’t tell my story, I never do that. I just think that [is] inappropriate but it’s what drives me … I am making a difference by being more compassionate to somebody else and it helps me to deal with my own pain.”

Ron recognized the work he does not only helps others, but also helps himself. The vast majority of the participants did realize that they were helping themselves through their involvement in advocacy work. For Nate, a White, middle-class, gay man, advocacy work helped him to push his fears and anxieties, but at the same time, educating others about his experience:

“I think to my healing … to push some [of] my fears and anxieties on and deal with them … I’m working on projects for developing [a] program for offenders of sexual abuse and so having developed programs for them and help[ed] them and so [I’ll] be meeting them next week and [it] makes me have to confront them to work with that and some of them have been victimized at some point in their life … such a common theme and I think to some, my close friends, their understanding and how that much they’ve learned and grown from me, and my experience.”

Advocacy work was something that motivated the participants. They felt it was their obligation to help others because so many of them did not have a compassionate person to talk to for years after their experiences with sexual victimization. This could be why every participant that was interviewed for this study had compassionate advice for other men who have experienced sexual victimization.

The advice ranged from extensive advice on a myriad of things the individual should
do, to simply listening and letting them share their experience. Overall, this advice included some degree of what Larry said he would advise a man who was just sexually victimized:

“Make sure they get help, find friends. I can help them and get professional help, it’s not easy getting it and that I cared about them and that if they had any questions or wanted help with anything that, you know, I would do what I could and find some help I would just want to make sure that they had help.”

The participants recognized the importance of treatment in their own recovery, and they would want another individual to make it through the process. As Brian shared with his advice:

“I think the first thing that I would say is that I am so sorry that, that happened, I know where you’re at right now, and there’s nothing I say right now, the moment that can change anything but I’m here and if there is anything I can do, if you ever want to talk, if you ever want to, I would want to be there, I would want to help a person through it, to help them recognize that it is their own journey and it’s a journey that you can’t rush, you can’t hurry, you don’t have to delay it like I did by not talking about it and [for] someone [who] it happened to recently, the one thing I would really want to encourage them to do is not to do what I did, is to shut it away, and instead to keep talking and, and seek recovery, to become a survivor.”

**Summary and Discussion**

This chapter provides insight into how the participants viewed the survivor identity. To make it to this stage, the men undertook an identity transformation. The process involved stigma management to repair their identity and make the shift from a victim to a survivor. As a survivor, the participants felt free to move on with their lives. However, they understood that recovery was always ongoing and chose to participate in advocacy work to both help others and themselves.
The survivor identity provided many similarities with what research already suggests about women who embrace the identity. Like with the participants, women who experience sexual victimization and domestic violence see the victim identity as associated with blame, weakness, and lack of power (Leisenring, 2006). In contrast, the survivor identity is characterized by its emphasis on recovery, coping, and agency (Dunn, 2005). It is meant to reduce stigma associated with the victimization by the survivor traits being associated with positive characteristics (Dunn, 2005). Literature also suggests that individuals learn about the survivor identity through treatment and interaction with other individuals who have experienced victimization and made the transformation from a victim to a survivor, much like how the participants progressed through recovery (Naples, 2003).

These aspects of what we know about women and the survivor identity is very similar to what the participants encountered. However, there is one notable difference, that of becoming a credible victim. For women, especially women who experience domestic violence, becoming a survivor is also about being seen as a credible victim (Dunn, 2001). This means that she will have her story challenged by others. One aspect of this literature is that credibility is often gained through the response of perception of others. However, this is not the case for the participants. Gaining credibility and becoming a survivor is more about an internal struggle. For these participants, it was about understanding their experience within their own personal masculine identity. To gain credibility, the participants had to revise their masculinity
so that their experience with sexual victimization was able to fit into their masculine identity.

This difference between gaining credibility for men and women could be tied to how victimization is viewed differently for men and women. Both men and women receive blame for their own victimization. The participants even blamed themselves, as often happens with sexual victimization. However, the type of blame is often different for men and women. For women, this blame is typically centered on character (Davies and Rogers, 2006). This means that women are often seen as careless and too trusting of their perpetrators. Women can also be blamed for what they wore, whether they were drinking alcohol, and other characteristics seen to be ‘careless’. On the other hand, men typically receive behavioral blame (Howard, 1984). This is the idea that they should have been able to fight back and stop their sexual victimization from occurring. Therefore, to be seen as credible, different things occur for men and women. Women must show that they were not careless and that it was not their fault. This leads to becoming credible in the eyes of others, so changing the response of others. However, as the participants highlight, becoming credible and a survivor is more about navigating masculinity for men. For the participants, it was about understanding their victimization within a negotiated masculine identity, thus a more internal response. Since this blame is related to gender stereotypes (Davies, Pollard, Archer, 2001), the construction of gender influences how the individual reaches the survivor identity and what it means to be credible as a survivor. Further contributions and implications of this are discussed in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The body of research about men who have experienced sexual victimization indicates that men experience negative outcomes attributed to their experience and are unlikely to report their victimization. More specifically, research suggests that men who experience sexual victimization question their sexuality and have high degrees of mental health problems (especially depression and anxiety) and substance abuse after they are victimized. However, few studies examine how men view and process their victimization, and instead primarily focus on prevalence and characteristics of the victimization experience (Weiss, 2010a). Research that has explored how men view and make sense of their sexual victimization suggests that men describe their sexual victimization in the context of hegemonic masculine characteristics (Weiss, 2010a). Unfortunately, these studies fail to take the next step and examine the process that men undertake to understand their experience with sexual victimization and move through recovery.

This study fills in the gaps of the previous research and examines how men make sense of their sexual victimization as they proceed through the recovery process. In doing so, this study highlights the role dominant masculine scripts play in creating shame and self-blame for men, which leads to psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems and influences initial help seeking behavior. This study also sheds light on the importance of understanding victimization in relation to the
masculine identity during the transition from a victim to a survivor. Finally, this study examines the survivor and victim discourse for men. This study reports on data from 19 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with men over the age of 18 who experienced sexual victimization as an adult. The sample consisted of participants who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization as well as participants who only experienced sexual victimization as an adult. Through these interviews with participants who experienced sexual victimization as adults, I answer the following questions: 1) how does sexual victimization influence men’s definition of self and their relationships with friends and family, and 2) how do ideas about masculinity influence men’s help seeking behavior and recovery work? This chapter provides a summary of the findings and includes contributions to the larger body of research, a discussion of limitations, and implications for future research.

Summary of Findings

This study examines how men make sense of their sexual victimization. It pays special attention to why men experience psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems, the identity work conducted to shift from viewing oneself as a victim to a survivor, and the importance of the survivor identity for the participants.

Stigmatization

After experiencing sexual victimization the participants experienced feelings of shame, guilt, self-blame, and anger. These feelings were related to the trauma of their experience and the dominant perceptions associated with the sexual victimization of men. These perceptions are based on gender stereotypes that suggest that men are
unable to be sexually victimized. The participants internalized these views, causing the feelings of shame, along with influencing their initial help seeking behavior.

Influenced by the dominant perspective of men who experience sexual victimization, the participants allowed that to create feelings of shame, helping to lead to psychological, emotional, and behavior problems. The dominant perspectives associated with sexual victimization, which are based on stereotypical views of masculinity, also influenced participants’ initial help seeking behavior. This process can be viewed as stigma associated with their sexual victimization experience. This study conceptualizes this stigma using Pryor and Reeder’s (2011) conceptualization of stigma, which examines the interplay between their conceptualization of structural stigma, public stigma, and self-stigma. Basically, the gender stereotypes (structural stigma) influence the creation of the dominant perspectives associated with sexual victimization. These perspectives provide a negative reaction (public stigma) towards individuals who experience sexual victimization. Individuals can internalize the expected public reaction and stigmatize themselves. Based on the shame, guilt, and self-blame the participants report feeling after their experience with sexual victimization, it can be suggested that they went through the process of self-stigma, especially based on using some of the dominant perspectives (not feeling like they would be believed) when explaining why they did not report their experience to police. The self-stigma they experienced, helped to also lead towards the psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems they reported, although the trauma from their experiences also caused these issues.
Stigma Management

The participants did not continue to experience feelings of shame from their stigma throughout their recovery. At a certain point, the participants sought treatment for the psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems they were experiencing. During treatment, the participants learned to manage their feelings and adjust their identity. Through this process of stigma management, the participants actively worked to transform from viewing themselves as a victim to viewing themselves as a survivor. A central part of the stigma management involved the participants navigating masculinity based on their experiences with sexual victimization, which ultimately led to some degree of revision to their own masculine identity that did not stigmatize an individual for experiencing sexual victimization.

Stigma management was possible for the participants because they learned strategies for making the transition from a victim to a survivor from therapists and other men they encountered in group therapy. This helped the participants to reduce the shame they felt, and repair their identity through the transformation into a survivor. The survivor identity can be viewed as a repaired identity for the participants because it helped them to redefine their stigma in a positive way. This process emphasizes the participant’s agency as they took back their lives and underwent identity transformation. In order to transform their identity, the participants had to reduce the shame they felt. Since the shame they felt was related to stigma and gender stereotypes, the participants revised their masculinity so their experience was not viewed in a negative way. This helped them reduce the feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame. Once those feelings were reduced, the participants were able to see themselves as a survivor instead of a victim.
Survivor Identity and Positive View of Self

The survivor identity for the participants was about being positive about their lives and not allowing their lives to be defined by their experiences with sexual victimization. The identity also meant that they were at a place in their lives where they could help other people through advocacy work. Although, advocacy work was not only about helping others, but also about continuing to help themselves and manage any negative thoughts that challenged their transformed identity. The participants understood that even though they viewed themselves as a survivor, they were still in recovery, and would continue to be recovering. The survivor identity just meant that the participants did not allow their experience with sexual victimization to define them anymore.

The participants view the survivor identity in a similar manner as women who have experienced sexual victimization. Both groups view the survivor identity as positive, instead of the passive nature of the victim identity (Best, 1997). Like with women, the participants emphasized their agency to view the victim label as stuck, seek help, and recover from their experience (Dunn, 2005). They also used very similar methods to reach the survivor identity as women. Both groups sought therapy, talked about their experience, and learned from others who experienced sexual victimization (Leisenring, 2006). Most of all, the survivor identity meant that they would not experience self-blame because of the shift to having a more positive outlook on life (Leisenring, 2006).

In addition, the survivor identity for the participants was connected to their views of masculinity. For them, the survivor identity was not possible without their revised masculinity. It meant a masculinity that could be embodied by men who had experienced sexual victimization instead of a masculinity that was counter to their
experience. Without their revised masculinity, the participants would have been unable to reach a point of feeling like they could begin to put their experience with sexual victimization behind them. Instead, they would have been stuck as a victim and unable to resist the negative label. The survivor identity was important because it stressed a positive and healthy view of self.

**Research Contributions**

Study findings provide contributions to the larger body of literature in a number of ways. It builds on work about stigma, and illustrates the interplay between gender stereotypes and different types of stigma (structural stigma, public stigma, and self-stigma that Pryor and Reeder (2011) introduced). This study also provides support and builds on the hegemonic masculinity concept. In addition, this study contributes to the sexual victimization literature in general through comparing and contrasting the sexual victimization for men and women. Finally, this study provides some practical contributions for men who have experienced sexual victimization.

**Stigma**

The results of this study provide contributions to the literature on stigma. The study highlights how stigma works at different levels of analysis and how dominant ideologies help to create stigma. In addition, the results the role stigma management can play during recovery.

**Stigma at Different Levels of Analysis**

This study provides further insight into the interplay between different types of stigma (structural stigma, public stigma, and self-stigma). As described in the review of the stigma literature, Pryor and Reeder (2011) contend that there are four types of
stigma: structural stigma, public stigma, stigma by association, and self-stigma. Each of these forms of stigma is interrelated. Public stigma is the backbone of Pryor and Reeder’s model of stigma, and is conceptualized as how people react and perceive people who have a stigmatized trait. Self-stigma includes both the social and psychological impact of having a stigmatized trait. It can manifest itself through worrying that the stigmatized trait will become known by others and internalizing negative connotation of the stigmatized trait. Self-stigma can be created based on internalizing public stigma. Basically, knowing how others will react to a certain trait can lead to self-stigma. This can be viewed as a form of labeling. However, a discredited identity does not have to occur for self-stigmatization to happen. Instead, it can simply be based on knowing how others will react based on a certain trait, thus an individual stigmatizes the trait they hold themselves. Stigma by association is the same as Goffman’s (1963) courtesy stigma; stigma received from being associated with stigmatized individuals. The final type of stigma conceptualized by Pryor and Reeder (2011) is structural stigma. Structural stigma is legitimizing stigma through social institutions and systems of power. The four types of stigma that Pryor and Reeder (2011) outline provides insight into how stigma works on different levels of analysis.

The results of this study illustrate how public stigma, structural stigma, and self-stigma are interrelated. The public stigma associated with men who experience sexual victimization provides a negative reaction to the victim because it is based on dominant perceptions of sexual victimization. These perceptions help lead to blaming the victim (Sleath and Bull, 2009). Therefore, public stigma situates the sexual victimization of men as their own fault. The participants felt shame, guilt, and self-
blame as a result of their sexual victimization. They worried police would not believe them if they reported their experience, thus all but two of the participants kept quiet. Even when two participants reported what occurred to them, the police laughed at them, and supported the dominant perspective. The feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame coupled with why participants did not report their experience to the police indicate that the participants were influenced by the dominant perspective of men who experience sexual victimization. However, the participants did not have a discredited identity because besides a few close friends or family, no one knew about their experience. Thus, they could hide what occurred. The fact that they felt this way and allowed it to influence their initial help seeking behavior seems to indicate internalized, or self-stigma. This study highlights how structural stigma (dominant constructions of masculinity) influence public stigma (how people react to traits deemed different), and can lead to self-stigma (internalization of public stigma). Therefore, this study provides insight into how stigma works at the societal, interpersonal, and individual levels, and how each level influences one another.

**Stigma Management**

This study also contributes to literature in the area of stigma management, and highlights the role identity transformation plays in the process. According to Goffman (1963), an individual manages stigma by trying to become normal and repair their identity. They can do this through learning how to cope with the stigma, receive support and alternative ideas of the stigma from sympathetic others (individuals who share the stigma). Through this bonding, individuals can learn how to redefine their stigma as positive and develop a life and a social network that supports their identity.
The participants followed this idea of stigma management outlined by Goffman. They received treatment and became involved with other men who experienced sexual victimization (sympathetic others), and through them learned coping strategies and how to view their identity as positive. Through this process, the participants actively transformed their identity from a victim to a survivor by revising their masculine identity so that their experience as someone who experienced sexual victimization could fit. Their revised masculinity was more inclusive and emphasized their strength and resiliency. However, not every participant had to completely reconstruct their masculine identity. For the participants who identified as homosexual, this process was more about some minor changes. The participants who identified as heterosexual were more likely to feel like they lost their masculinity as a result of their experience, and had to relearn and recreate their masculine identity. Regardless, the participants developed a masculine identity that did not stigmatize their experience. Through this process, the participants were able to transform into a survivor and have a more positive outlook on life. Their experiences helped to illustrate that agency is integral to stigma management. Without the choice to transform their identity, the participants would not have become survivors.

Masculinity

The results from this study provide support for hegemonic masculinity. In addition, the results provide insight into the connection between masculinity and processing sexual victimization for men.
Hegemonic Masculinity

The participants felt shame as the result of stigma associated with how men who experience sexual victimization are perceived, which is influenced by stereotypical constructions of masculinity. These perceptions are based on the hegemonic construction of masculinity; an idealized form that very few men embody, but all men are theoretically supposed to strive towards (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In American society this idealized form of masculinity is characterized by power, strength, and insatiable sexuality. It is present in popular culture, and in such it works to perpetuate this dominant masculinity as hierarchically above other forms of masculinity as well as femininity.

Hegemonic masculinity perpetuates the ‘traditional’ gender order and privileges a certain masculine identity over others. In this context, trauma that is counter to the hegemonic masculine identity is stigmatized. For the participants, it meant a process of self-stigmatizing themselves based on their internalization of the dominant perspective associated with men who experience sexual victimization (structural stigma), and the reactions they would receive from others (public stigma). This supports Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) conceptualization that hegemonic masculinity works to continue the gender hierarchy status quo. Without the internalization of the dominant perspective of men who experience sexual victimization, the participants might not have been influenced by hegemonic masculinity. Instead, their experiences illustrate how pervasive the dominant forms of
gender are in society and the harm they can cause when individuals go through traumatic events.

**Masculinity and Sexual Victimization**

The results of this study support the pervasive nature of hegemonic masculinity, especially how the dominant construction can influence views society holds related to traits that are deemed as deviating from it. The study supports previous research that suggests masculinity is key to how men discuss and understand their experience with sexual victimization (Weiss, 2010a). However, it builds on this literature by examining how masculinity plays into the equation. As chapters 3 through 5 indicate, masculinity is central to defining and labeling sexual victimization, initial help seeking behavior, and stigma management as men progress through recovery. This indicates that the masculine identity is important in all aspects of the process from victimization to initial processing to recovery.

**Men and Sexual Victimization**

In keeping with the contributions discussed in the previous section regarding masculinity and sexual victimization, the results of this study provide other contributions within the body of literature on sexual victimization. In addition to the role masculinity plays in the process, the results make comparisons to the experience for women and help to develop an area of literature regarding the recovery process for men.
Comparison to Women’s Experiences

The results of this study provide evidence to suggest that men and women have similar experiences with sexual victimization. This is not only in terms of how victimization occurs, but also problems they encounter, their help seeking behavior, and the importance of the survivor identity. For both men and women, these experiences are often related to gender and how it is conceptualized. Both men and women have to challenge preconceived notions of sexual victimization. For women, this includes being seen as a ‘worthy’ victim in the eyes of a public and Criminal Justice System that often blames them. For men, at least for the participants in this study, the experience was about being seen as a victim at all. The participants often internalized the dominant viewpoint and allowed it to influence how they sought help initially. During the recovery period, it was about finding a healthy view of masculinity that they could embody and feel like they could put their victimization behind them. A major contribution is that this study highlighted the importance of overcoming gender stereotypes in order to process sexual victimization for men.

Overall, this highlights the similarities between the experience for men and women, just with different gender stereotypes to overcome.

This study also highlights some of the differences between the experience for men and women. Most importantly, the role stigma plays in the sexual victimization and recovery experience for men. Women do experience stigma associated with their sexual victimization, but it manifests itself in different ways. As Stemple and Meyer (2014) suggested, this could be the result of feminist work that highlights the sexual
victimization of women as a social problem. Through their extensive work, the narrative for women is not only associated with rape myths. Instead, there is an alternate narrative that describes resiliency, positive self-image, and survivorhood. According to Stemple and Meyer (2014), this alternate narrative is not there yet for men. While this study cannot create this alternate narrative, it can help provide men who have experienced sexual victimization a voice and help to influence the narrative. Therefore, stigma works in a different way for men and women. For women, there is an alternative to the stigma, and this alternative narrative is readily accepted. However, this alternative is not available for men, and the stigma associated with their experience helps to define them.

**Survivor v. Victim Discourse**

The results of this study suggest that the sexual victimization of men may need to be examined in a different context than women. The process of recovery that the participants endured was about managing their identity through stigma management and transforming into a survivor. This seems to indicate that the sexual victimization of men is more about identity than power, at least when examining recovery through the eyes of the victim. While these results provide support for Clark’s (2014) claim that the sexual victimization of men is an attack on their identity because of how masculinity is constructed, it might just be a result of how the study was structured. Taking a victim-centered approach that follows a feminist methodology situates the results in the narratives of the victim. Therefore, it is impossible to say that the sexual
victimization of these participants did not have anything to do with power. In fact, themes of power were present in the narratives of the actual experience. However, this study was more interested in how the participants processed their sexual victimization as opposed to the actual sexual victimization. Further research would have to examine whether the sexual victimization of men is more about power or identity. The results of this study indicate that it is a combination of both.

**Victim to Survivor Process**

This study provides further contributions to the literature on sexual victimization by helping to create an area of literature for men that examines the victim to survivor process. Previous literature on the subject has primarily focused on prevalence (Pino and Meier, 1999; Weiss, 2010a; Weiss, 2010b), characteristics of the incident (Banyard, Ward, Cohn, Plante, Moorhead, and Walsh, 2007; Stترmac, Bove, and Addison, 2004), and negative consequences of their victimization (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984; Groth and Burgess, 1980; Mezey and King, 1989). This study began to connect these subjects and provide a larger picture of how men process their sexual victimization. I took this area of literature further by examining the entire recovery process. Through this examination, I highlighted the importance of overcoming dominant stereotypes of masculinity in order to make the transition from the victim to survivor identity.
Practical Contributions

The results from this study not only contribute to the body of academic literature about men who experience sexual victimization, but also provide some practical contributions. Little work has been conducted that examines the entire process of the sexual victimization of men through recovery. This study provides an overview of the process and suggests the importance of overcoming stigma during recovery. While the results of this study cannot provide explicit clinical suggestions, it does highlight the importance of treatment and bonding with other men who have experienced sexual victimization during the recovery process. Further research needs to be conducted to determine exactly how the bonds formed during group work guide the men through the recovery process. Regardless, treatment is important and helpful for these men and future research needs to continue to take a practical look at this important issue to help determine how to make treatment a possibility earlier in the process, considering many of the participants did not receive treatment until years after their experience. This study provides practical contributions because it begins to provide men who have been sexually victimized a voice and future research needs to continue to take a victim centered approach so that hopefully the shame they attributed to their stigma is reduced and the recovery process becomes shorter and easier.

Study Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study provides contributions within the body of literature on men who have been sexually victimized, but it has some limitations. One of the limitations is a result of the sample of men who participated, and is evident in a number of ways. First, the sample is skewed towards a White and middle-class individual. As the methodology chapter explains, this could be a result of the recruitment strategy. This
study recruited participants through advocacy groups (both local and national) and online resources (discussion boards and Facebook groups), meaning that the men who saw the recruitment flyer had access to advocacy groups and the internet. The recruitment strategy also meant that the majority of the men who saw the recruitment flyer were men who had already sought and received treatment, something that can be very expensive. Because of the recruitment strategy, the study participants were skewed to a middle-class sample. Men who were working class or poor might not have access to the internet or might have difficulty paying for treatment, thus would have no knowledge of this study. The men who participated were all men who had received treatment. Therefore, the narratives they shared were based on the fact that they had received treatment. This could act as a filter and could influence the results of this study.

The next aspect of the sample limitation dealt with the size of the sample. Originally, this study planned to interview a diverse sample of approximately 30 men who experienced sexual victimization since turning 18-years-old. However, between interview 12 and interview 15, the narrative obtained from the participants was similar and no new information was provided between interview 15 and interview 19. While the number of respondents was ultimately less than the planned amount, the amount of repeated information obtained from the participants led me to view the data related to the research questions as saturated. Reaching saturation with only 19 interviews could be a result of the skewed sample and lack of diversity in the sample, but also the broad exploratory nature of this study. Since this study was focused on such a broad question of how men process their sexual victimization experience, a broad pattern could be developed with a smaller sample. However, it is important that future
research ask more focused questions on the subject that will need a larger and more diverse sample. Literature about sample size in qualitative research provides a wide range of thoughts on the appropriate size of a sample. In a review of the debate, Mason (2010) examined some of these arguments. He found that advice ranged from at least 15 (Bertaux, 1981), to between 20 and 30 (Creswell, 1998), to over 30 (Morse, 1994). However, Mason (2010) found that samples did not always follow this advice. He examined the sample size of studies that implemented a grounded theory approach. Mason’s (2010) results indicated that 34 percent of the studies had a sample size between 20 and 30, 22 percent had a sample size of over 30, and 44 percent had a sample size less than 20. The use of 19 participants is in line with other studies that have used a grounded theory approach, and is a result of a heavily White, middle-class sample.

The final aspect of the sample limitation dealt with the fact that the data cannot speak to comparisons across racial or types of sexual victimization. The sample of men provided two different groups: men who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization and men who only experienced adult sexual victimization. However, very little differences were found between the groups of men, besides characteristics of their sexual victimization experiences and issues they encountered up until they sought treatment. It would be beneficial to examine differences between men who experienced sexual victimization as adults and men who only experienced childhood sexual abuse. The lack of diversity in the sample also made it difficult to make comparisons across race, class, or sexuality. Therefore, the results have limited generalizability. In addition, the sampling strategy did not include random sampling and instead relied on purposive and snowball sampling. Since the study was
conducted as exploratory, the purposive and snowball sampling strategy was adequate and the contributions of the results outweigh the lack of generalizability.

**Implications for Future Research**

The results and limitations of this study help to guide areas for future research on the subject of men who have experienced sexual victimization. The majority of limitations of this study relate to the sample and its lack of diversity. Moving forward, it is important that future research on this subject recruit a diverse sample, especially across race, socioeconomic class, and sexuality. Literature suggests that an individual’s race, class, gender, and sexuality interlock to influence their lived experiences. Future research should examine whether different intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality influence the process of proceeding from the sexual victimization experience to the survivor identity. In addition to recruiting a more diverse sample, future research should contain comparison groups of men who only experienced sexual victimization as children, along with the groups of men included in this study (men who experienced both childhood and adult sexual victimization and men who only experienced adult sexual victimization). The inclusion of a more diverse sample and an additional comparison group would provide researchers with a larger picture of how men make sense of their sexual victimization and would lead to a greater understanding of how masculinity and stigma management might work differently depending on the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Future research needs to examine how men learn to manage their stigma. While the men in this study bonded with other broken men who had also experienced sexual victimization and learned about stigma management and the survival identity from them, little else is known. This study originally planned on observing men in
support groups. However, the only support groups in the area consisted of men who were sexually victimized as adults, as well as men who were only experienced sexual victimization as children. Since the population of this study was exclusively men who experienced sexual victimization as adults, I was unable to observe support groups. With the addition of men who only experienced sexual victimization as children in the sample, support group observations could be included. In addition to the support group observations, the bonding aspect of the recovery model could be studied through online message boards and Facebook groups that were used for recruitment in this study. A combination of both methods would provide more insight into how bonding with other men who have experienced sexual victimization helps the men proceed through recovery than the narratives in this study could ascertain.

The sexual victimization of men does not only occur in a non-institutionalized population. Therefore, it is important to examine the process of recovery for men who experience sexual victimization in other settings, especially in settings where masculinity may be viewed differently. Two ways to examine masculinity, stigma management, and the recovery process for men who have experienced sexual victimization is to include men who were sexually victimized in the military and men who were sexually victimized while incarcerated. Both the military and prison/jail are characterized as hyper-masculine environments, and could provide insight into differences in recovery and stigma management. In addition to examining sexual victimization in other social institutions, it is important that future research also examine whether this model of recovery can be applied to other forms of victimization or is it specific to the experiences outlined in this study. This study relied on a non-institutionalized population because data suggested that rates of sexual victimization
for men were almost equal to rates for women. As a result, this study thought it important to limit the sample to men who were sexually victimized in a non-institutionalized context. However, future research would benefit from examining the process in an institutionalized context to make comparisons across social institutions.

Ultimately, future research should incorporate practical policy and treatment contributions. The men who participated in this study did so because they wanted to help other men who experienced sexual victimization and to begin changing the dialogue about the subject. To them, research is important because it can help spread the word about an issue and can provide issues with a spotlight that they did not already have. Following their ideology, future research should examine the effectiveness of treatment available for men and to also include the practitioner side of treatment to examine how perceptions and beliefs about men who have been sexually victimized influence their work and what they provide.

**Conclusion**

This study provides insights into how multiple levels of inquiry influence stigmatization, stigma management, and how recovery is both similar and different for men and women who experience sexual victimization. However, the men who participated are at its core. Through this study, they were provided a voice to talk about their journey from experiencing sexual victimization, to being stigmatized and feeling shame, managing the stigma, repairing their identity, and transforming their identity into a survivor. Since this study followed a feminist epistemology, the narratives these participants shared were what drove this study and its results. This design helped to continue to make these men feel a positive view of self as survivors. Their narratives helped to highlight the process of stigmatization and the negative
issues that can ensue. However, through survival tactics, these men showed that they are resilient, and through hard work and time, can transform their identity and become survivors. This study provided insights into entering and exiting the victim identity for men who were sexually victimized. Most importantly, this study provided a voice to men that are often invisible. It helped to show that men do experience sexual victimization and that it affects them in profound ways. Through hard work and choice, they can go on to live happy, healthy lives, and help to make a difference for others.

Moving forward, it is important that the sexual victimization of men continue to be highlighted as a social problem. Through highlighting it as a social problem, current idealized forms of masculinity can be challenged and hopefully amended. It is important to help create a new narrative that is not based on gender stereotypes and accepts that men can experience sexual victimization. The participants challenged their own views of masculinity and ultimately redefined their masculine identities to be more inclusive, and felt positive in their new role as a survivor. Further research needs to be administered to illustrate how real men are not characterized by gender stereotypes. Men need to understand that they can be vulnerable and should not experience stigma for deviating from what they see portrayed in popular culture. Through challenging our current views on masculinity and gender, we can help to build a better society that focuses less on violence and difference and more on equality.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Male Survivors’ Stories of Sexual Victimization
Principle Investigator: Kevin Ralston

Victim Interview Guide
Thank you for agreeing to answer my questions. I will start with background information, and will then move back and forth between more general questions and personal ones about sexual victimization. Please feel free to ask for a break at any time. If there are any questions you do not feel comfortable answering, just say pass.

Demographics
Age________

Gender ____________

Do you consider yourself?

Straight                  Gay      Bi-sexual

Marital status (circle one): Single       Married       Divorced       Separated
Widowed

Racial group ______________________________

Ethnic group ______________________________

Number of children ______ Their ages
_________________________________________

Parents’ marital status: 1) Married   2) divorced   3) widowed   4) separated   5) both deceased
Father’s education:
1. 6th grade or less                          5. High school graduate
2. 7th or 8th grade                            6. Some college
3. Freshman or sophomore            7. College graduate
4. GED                                           8. Graduate degree

Mother’s education:
1. 6th grade or less                          5. High school graduate
2. 7th or 8th grade                            6. Some college
3. Freshman or sophomore            7. College graduate
4. GED                                           8. Graduate degree

Questions to provide information about their life prior to victimization:

Briefly describe for me what growing up in your family was like:

Can you talk about your education? How was your experience with school?

Have you had many close friends in your life? How have these relationships been?

Victimization Interview
This information may be uncomfortable or difficult for you to talk about. Once again, feel free to let me know if you need to take a break at any time. You may also pass on any question if you become uncomfortable.

Have you ever had sexual intercourse (or engaged in some sexual act) without wanting to?

Has this happened more than once?

How old were the first time this occurred?

Could you tell me a little about the first time it happened? Follow-up with more pointed questions if he does not provide it, including: how old were you? The relationship to the perpetrator? How long of a period it happened for (did it happen more than once or more of an on-going problem)? How did it happen? Where did it occur?

- Make sure they provide a description of the sexual victimization experience. If they only had one sexual victimization experience, move to the next section and begin with questions about how it made them feel. If they experienced multiple sexual victimization, make sure to ask how it made them feel and then move to the next experience.
If the participant mentioned that they had experienced sexual victimization more than once, follow-up with questions about each experience and build a chronology of their sexual victimization experiences. For each one, make sure to obtain information about the following:

- Their age
- Relationship to the perpetrator
- Whether the perpetrator sexually victimized them more than once
- How it happened
- Where it happened
- A description of the sexual victimization experience
- How it made them feel
- ***Make sure to follow-up and probe any important information that the participant provides***

Their view of themselves and construct their identity (especially in regards to masculinity and sexuality)

How did being sexually victimized make you feel?
- If the participant experienced multiple sexual victimizations, this will be covered in the above information I want to capture from each experience.

Did you or do you feel responsible for what you went through? Why?

Did you ever envision this could happen to you? Why/why not?

How has going through what you did changed how you view yourself?

Are there any aspects of your life that you view differently since being sexually victimized? Can you talk a little bit about that?

How they report and seek help for their sexual victimization

Did you talk with any professional?

- **If no, do you wish you could have talked to someone?** Who would you have liked to talk to and why?

What types of services do you think would have been helpful for you? Why?

Have you told others about what you went through? Who and what relation were they to you?
Their relationships with other

How did they react? (talking about telling others)

Have your interactions with them changed since then? How? (referring to telling others)

Their view of other men who have been sexually victimized

How has your experience changed how you view other men who have gone through what you have?

How are men and women who have been sexually victimized similar? Different?

What does the general public think about men who have experienced what you have? Please explain.

How does this make you feel? Do you agree with them? How/How not?

Their work in advocacy groups

What has been the most positive thing to happen to you since being sexually victimized?

Do you advocate on behalf of other men who have been sexually victimized? How?

What would be the one thing you would like to say to someone who has just gone through an experience similar to your own?

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank the Respondent for Participating and Provide them with Referral Information.
Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

University of Delaware

Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

Principal Investigator: Kevin Ralston

Advisor: Dr. Tammy Anderson

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form tells you about the study, including its purpose, what you will do if you decide to participate, and any risks and benefits of being in the study. Please read the information below. If you have any questions, Mr. Ralston will be happy to answer them. Your signature on this form indicates your agreement to participate in this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you to keep for your reference.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this dissertation project is to learn about how male victims of sexual assault experience their lives after being victimized. By asking about sexual assault victimization after the event, we hope to obtain a better understanding of how male victims view themselves and other victims, what types of support services they might need, and what other areas of research might be needed.

This may help inform advocacy and service oriented establishments knowledge and could eventually be used to help improve services available to male victims.

Eligibility

To participate in this study, you must be a male and have been a victim of sexual assault after you turned 18-years old and not while you were incarcerated, meaning you must be at least 18-years-old. You are not excluded if you were also a
victim of sexual assault before you turned 18-years-old. However, you must have been a victim of sexual assault after you turned 18-years-old and it must not have occurred while incarcerated. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may end your participation in the research at any time. There will be approximately 30-45 people involved in this research.

**Procedures**

Mr. Ralston will meet with you in a private location so the conversation will not be overheard. He will ask you a series of questions about your personal history (e.g., your demographics and family background), the details about being sexually assaulted (inappropriate or unwanted touching of your genitals), your experiences post victimization, and your perceptions about your sexual assault victimization. The interview will take between 1-2 hours to complete. Some of the questions will involve reporting how often you experience certain feelings or behaviors. Other questions will ask you to provide examples or details about some of your experiences surrounding your sexual assault victimization episode/s. You can refuse to answer any question, at any time. The interview will be audio recorded and by signing this form, you agree to have it audio recorded. You will also have the opportunity to consent to be contacted in the future for a follow-up interview. In addition, Mr. Ralston will be taking notes during the interview to make an accurate record of what is said. There are no correct or wrong answers to the questions that will be asked. The important thing is for you to share your experience.

There is no cost for you to participate in the research and you will receive no compensation for participating.

**Risks and Protections**

There is a chance that you may experience discomfort or emotional stress during the interview when asked to answer questions about your personal history and sexual assault victimization. Some of the questions are open-ended because Mr. Ralston does not simply want a yes or a no answer, but we want to understand your story. Mr. Ralston will remind you throughout the interview that you can refuse to answer any question at any time without penalty. Furthermore, he will encourage you to ask questions and raise issues that you think are important. If the information Mr. Ralston asks you about during the interview causes you discomfort or emotional stress, he will provide you with a list of agencies you can call to obtain services and help you through your discomfort.

Also, confidentiality breaches are other risks, albeit minimal. Mr. Ralston has established procedures to ensure the confidentiality of the information you share. The information you share today will be securely transported back to the University offices.
in sealed envelopes. Furthermore, no information from the audio-recorded interview will be shared with anyone outside of Mr. Ralston and his advisor Dr. Tammy Anderson, for example your employers, family, or friends. The audio recordings will be transcribed by Mr. Ralston. When transcribing the tapes, he will use “R1” in place of your name, so your name will never appear on the tape transcript (paper copy or electronic file), and he will place a numeric identification code on the transcript. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored separately and will be kept in locked cabinets in P.I. Ralston’s campus offices for 3-years. These materials will be destroyed at the end of 3-years or when they are deemed to no longer have research value. At that point, paper documents will be shredded, audio recordings will be deleted, and electronic files will be deleted and purged. Personal identifiers will be stored separately from your interview information. Identifying information will also be kept for 3-years in case Mr. Ralston wishes to contact you in the future. You will have the opportunity to decide whether you consent to being contacted in the future or not. However, personal identifying information too will be destroyed after 3-years or when Mr. Ralston deems it to no longer have research value. In the event of any publications or presentations resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Instead, you will be given a pseudonym, or fake name. In addition, some of your stories or direct quotes may be used in publications and presentations. However, any information that could be used to identify you or anyone else will not be used. University investigators have used these procedures in the past with few breaches of confidentiality.

Your research records may be viewed by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board, but the confidentiality of your records will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Delaware law requires that any person knowing about or suspecting child abuse or neglect to make a report to the appropriate authority. There are similar laws in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey. If you have questions about the specific laws, Mr. Ralston can inform and discuss them with you. Throughout the interview process, it is important that you do not mention specific people or places.

Benefits

You will receive no direct benefits for participating in this research. However, the results of the research may be useful in informing advocacy groups and service agencies about the resources male victims may require after their sexual victimization episode. If you are interested, Mr. Ralston will give you a referral list for sexual victimization resources that you may find helpful. It is important to understand that the interview is not meant to be counseling or treatment of any kind. If you are interested in speaking with someone about your sexual assault experiences, Mr. Ralston can provide you with a list of agencies in the area that can provide these services.
Right to Withdraw

Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you decide to stop taking part in the research at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. However, any information that you have provided up to this point will still be used. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate and withdrawing from the project will have no effect on you. Your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with the University of Delaware. If you are a student at the University of Delaware and you decide to not take part in this research, your choice will have no effect on your academic status. Also, Mr. Ralston reserves the right to remove you from the study without your consent if necessary.

Contacts and Consent

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Kevin Ralston at 302-547-8001 or kralston@udel.edu or at 325 Smith Hall, Newark, DE 19716. You can also contact Mr. Ralston’s dissertation advisor, Dr. Tammy Anderson at 302-831-2291 or tammya@udel.edu. You will be given a copy of this for your records.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board at 302-831-2137.

Your signature below indicates that you are agreeing to be contacted in the future for follow-up interviews or research.

________________________________                             ______________
Signature of Participant     Date

________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Your signature below indicates that you are agreeing to take part in this research study. You have been informed about the study’s purpose, procedures, possible risks and benefits. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and those questions have been answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

________________________________                               ______________
Signature of Participant                                                            Date

_________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Appendix C

IRB APPROVAL LETTERS
DATE: July 23, 2013

TO: Kevin Ralston
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [477038-1] Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 23, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: June 18, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.
If you have any questions, please contact Jody-Lynn Berg at (302) 831-1119 or jjberg@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
DATE: February 21, 2014

TO: Kevin Ralston
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [477039-2] Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 19, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: June 18, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.
If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1110 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
DATE: March 14, 2014

TO: Kevin Ralston
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [477030-3] Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: March 14, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: June 18, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.
If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1110 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
DATE: June 19, 2014

TO: Kevin Ralston
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [477039-4] Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 18, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: June 18, 2015
REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.
If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1110 or nicolefm@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
DATE: June 18, 2015

TO: Kevin Ralston
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [477039-5] Navigating the Post Sexual Assault Victimization Episode for Male Victims

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: Approved for Data Analysis Only

APPROVAL DATE: June 17, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE: June 18, 2016

REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.
If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Famese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or nicolef@udel.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.