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GENDER SCHEMAS AFTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE: WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR CISGENDER WOMEN?

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GENDER SCHEMAS AFTER SEXUAL VIOLENCE: WHAT ARE THE PERCEIVED ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR CISGENDER WOMEN?

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The current study aims to look at the cultural and gender values prevalent in the US that contribute to sexual violence. With such a high occurrence of sexual violence, the qualitative study explores the ways in which worldviews and gender stereotypes may perpetuate sexual assault and rape. Although there is considerable literature on gender role socialization and the prevalence of sexual violence, there is noticeably a gap of qualitative research focusing on the implications of sexual violence on gender schemas. In an effort to understand gender schemas after sexual violence, the present study explored the experiences of 15 cisgender women who experienced sexual violence as an adult. A qualitative grounded theory design employed individual initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and feedback interviews. Through grounded theory analysis procedures, a conceptual model emerged to expand the literature pertaining to gender schemas after sexual violence among cisgender women. The core category is *Gender as Operating Principle.* The women in this study anticipated the consequences of their gender roles by integrating the remaining conceptual categories in their internalized experience of sexual violence. The ways in which they conceptualized the complexities of power included (a) *Performing Gender*; (b) *Internalized Responsibility*; (c) *Normalization of Sexual Violence*; (d) *Reconciling the Self*; (e) *Consistency of Gender Roles; (f) Looking at the Way Context Impacts Women*. I utilize participants' words as illustrative examples of the conceptual model. The conceptual model may be used to inform counseling psychologists about the individual and societal impact of sexual violence.

Chapter 1: Introdution

In the United States, an estimated one in five women has been raped during her lifetime, equating to roughly 20 million women (Bachar & Koss, 2001; Black, Basile, Breiding, & Ryan, 2014; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Cognoscenti, & McCauley, 2007; Layman, Gidycz, & Lynn, 1996). On average, there are 321,500 victims (age 12 or older) of rape and sexual assault each year (Department of Justice, 2015). The number of victims is difficult to estimate due to differences in how sexual assault and rape are defined by researchers. Additionally, an estimated 43.9% of women and 23.4% of men will experience some form of sexual violence during their lifetimes including being made to penetrate, being penetrated, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, and unwanted sexual experiences without contact (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

There are current possible explanations as to why sexual violence occurs and is perpetuated. Thompson and Cracco (2008) found that certain masculinity ideology, especially men's desire to appear tough and confident, predicted college men's self-reported sexual aggression in bars. Similarly, rape myth acceptance, viewing violence as legitimate, a history of violence in the family of origin and hostility toward women are linked to sexual assault perpetration (Abbey et al. 2001; McDermott, et al., 2015 Simons et al. 2012; Yost and Zurbriggen 2006). Gender socialization stands out as one of the most plausible explanation as to why sexual violence occurs.

A growing body of literature has found that current gender role socialization creates cultural reinforcement for sexual violence in the United States (Kahn et al., 2011; Landrine, Bardwell, & Dean, 1988; Ryle, 2012). Utilizing a meta-analysis of 72 studies of rape attitudes and individual differences, Anderson, Cooper, and Okamura (1997) found that men are more likely than women to believe that the victim is to blame for rape or physical violence. Further, other studies support the statement that women are more likely than men to experience interpersonal violence (Elliott, Mok, & Briere, 2004; Tjaden &Thoennes, 1998). The attitudes about violence are reflective of gender norms regarding the domination of men over women as well as a power imbalance between genders (Wigderson & Katz, 2015).

The role that is often defined for men within mainstream culture is one of power, violence, and aggression (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002). As such, traditional masculine roles are often aggressive and aim to objectify women (Markus, Crane, Bernstein, Siladi, & Manis, 1982; Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003). Belief in patriarchal hierarchies and cultural circumstances that promote violence against women often lead to the perpetration of sexual violence (Phillips, 2012).

Unfortunately, a paucity of research addresses the impact of sexual violence on the development of internalized gender schemas. Within the limited research, one study found that feminine gender identity and appearance strongly predicted increased experiences of adult sexual assault (Lehavot et al., 2012; Wigderson & Katz, 2015). Brinkman, Rabenstein, Rosen, and Zimmerman (2014) suggested that children who alter their self-concept to adapt to cultural expectations may experience difficulties later in life, such as harassment. Future research, then, might explore the ways in which

gender expression is related to traumatic experiences and study the impact of gender roles and gender expression on such experiences.

Research has looked at the impact of negative social reactions on the decision to disclose sexual assault but does not discern the impact on gender schemas or identity (Ahrens, 2006). Future research may take a more encompassing look at all social reactions to sexual violence and the consequential impact. There is, however, little focus on the interaction of sexual violence and an individual's gender schemas from a qualitative perspective. Thus, there is a need for qualitative research to contextualize the relationship between sexual violence and gender schemas (Harway, Steel, Levant, & Liu, 2015; McDermott et al, 2015).

Utilizing qualitative methods would be effective in examining how social responses to sexual violence impact one's internalized gender schemas (Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2013). Qualitative methods are most effective for the purpose of the study as to further examine this phenomenon. Constructivist grounded theory provides a deeper understanding of the contextual factors and the impact of social responses to sexual violence (Charmaz, 2014). Kimerling, Rellini, Kelly, Judson, and Learman (2002) suggested that there are gender variances in both vulnerability to sexual violence as well as the characteristics of the sexual violence itself, which support the consideration of gender for research focused on schemas and resources available for victims of sexual violence.

The construct of the impact of sexual violence on internalized gender schemas is worthy of attention and further exploration. Within the field of counseling psychology, it is important to understand the experiences and needs of victims of sexual violence

(DeLamater, 2006). To better serve clients and provide accurate support, it is important to understand the implications of underlying cultural assumptions and attitudes for survivors of sexual violence. This study will provide greater context for fostering an understanding of the influences of sexual violence on gender schemas and for providing more comprehensive, useful counseling services.

Within the outline of feminist ecological theory (Ballaou, Matsumoto, & Wagner, 2002), I will present the impact of these processes on individuals, specifically cisgender women. Noticeably, there is a gap in the literature, with little known research studies the implications of sexual violence on gender schemas. I review relevant literature and scholarly work, propose the purpose of the study, describe the significance of the purposed study, identify the focus of the proposed study, and articulate the rationale for the utilizing qualitative research methods. Next, I define salient terms.

Definition of Terms

This study explores the intersection between sexual violence, gender socialization, and gender schemas to better understand the ways in which a traumatic experience such as sexual violence influences one's understanding of who they are as gendered beings. For purpose of this dissertation, the terms *sexual violence, gender identity, sex identified at birth, gender socialization, and gender schemas* will be utilized. Terms will be conceptually defined in order to situate their use in context of this study as compared to different definitions used in other sources.

Sexual Violence

In the present dissertation, the term sexual violence is used to refer to both sexual assault and rape. Sexual assault is defined as attacks or attempted attacks involving unwanted sexual contact up to, but not including penetration, between a victim and perpetrator (Office on Violence Against Women, 2007). Sexual assault may involve using physical force, weapons, intimidation or occur when a victim is unable to render consent due to disability, age, or being under the influence of substances (Office on Violence Against Women, 2007; US Department of Justice, 2012). Furthermore, rape is defined as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with anybody part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (US Department of Justice, 2012, para. 1). Rape may involve penetration from a foreign object such as a bottle and involves both heterosexual and homosexual incidents.

Gender Identity

The mode in which being feminine or masculine, a woman or a man, becomes an internalized part of the way we think about ourselves is our gender identity (Gender identity, 2017). Merriam and Webster define gender identity as, "a person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male nor female" (Gender identity, n.d). Children are given direct messages about acceptable behavior and are modeled gender roles by observing adults (Brinkman et al., 2014). In turn, children then internalize these messages and begin to develop their identity. Further, gender binary is defined as "a concept or belief that there are only two genders and that one's biological or birth sex will align with traditional social constructs of masculine and feminine identity, expression, and sexuality." (Gender binary, n.d.)

Sex Identified at Birth

Sex identified at birth is a label (i.e., female, male, intersex), which is typically assigned at birth based upon the presence of external genitalia (Carter, 2014). When genitalia may be ambiguous, other characteristics are utilized to assign a sex that has the potential to be congruent with the child's gender identity (APA, 2015). Sex is the status of one's biology and is distinguished as male, female, or intersex. For many individuals, the sex identified at birth is congruent with their gender identity (cisgender), however, for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, gender identity may be different than their sex assigned at birth (their/them/theirs used as singular pronouns when the gender of the subject is ambiguous, whereas she/her/hers and he/him/his are used when the gender of the subject is clear) (APA, 2015).

Gender Socialization

Gender socialization is defined as the "process through which individuals learn the gender norms of their society and come to develop an internal gender identity" (Ryle, 2012, p. 120). Gender socialization includes the cultural enforcement of gender norms, which are guidelines for what is acceptable masculine and feminine behavior in a particular culture. Socialization refers to the "process where naïve individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture" (Conger & Dogan, 2007, p. 3). Adherence to social cues and cultural assumptions of normative gender identity and performance are imperative for one to fit in and flourish within social settings (Hill, 2007). Individuals are trained in a way that prepares them for inclusion within their cultural context.

Gender Schemas

Gender schemas are “hypotheses about the behaviors, traits, and preferences of men and women, girls and boys” (Valian, 1998, p. 11). Schemas help individuals to make meaning out of the stimuli that are presented to them in their surrounding environment (Bem, 1981). Schemas serve as cognitive frameworks or templates for assessing and organizing information that individuals take in (Bem, 1981; Mueller, Rehman, Fallis, & Goodnight, 2016). While individual templates are varied, the larger context of society strongly influences their articulation and maintenance. Certain schemas are widely understood and accessible, such as racial groups (e.g., White, African American, Asian American, Latinx, American Indian) and gender groups (e.g., women, men; Foldy, 2006). Schemas often follow a predictable pattern and serve to attribute certain characteristics to men and other characteristics to women, unless there is a strong level of inconsistency between the assumed gender of a person and displayed behaviors or attributes presented (Hill, 2007). In a gender schema, being a woman or a man is the dominant characteristic, while other gender attributes are present but not as central (Bem, 1981). The labels associated with gender schemas are laden with meaning and help to form a whole, integrated picture of the stimuli presented. Individuals’ unique experiences as well as their identified culture helps to inform gender schemas. Next, I thoroughly review these salient terms through the lens of feminist ecological theory (Ballaou et al., 2002).

Literature Review

The intention of this study is to expand the literature pertaining to gender schemas after sexual violence among cisgender women. To frame the study and provide a relevant foundation for the proposed study, I review the current literature and theory

related to the constructs underlying the present study: sexual assault, rape, gender identity, sex identified at birth, gender socialization, and gender schemas. Therefore, I describe the major themes of the literature, gaps present in the literature, as well as how the present study will advance extant literature to provide a deeper understanding to the intersection of sexual violence and gender schemas. I employ feminist ecological theory (Ballaou et al., 2002) as a framework for related constructs.

Feminist Ecological Theory

Feminist ecological theory integrates ecological theory, feminist therapy theory, multicultural psychology, liberation psychology, and critical psychology (Ballaou et al., 2002; Heise, 1998). The integration of theories allows for a more comprehensive encapsulation of the complexity of being human. The feminist ecological model aims to represent the intricacies of humans and the contextual factors of their existence (Ballaou et al., 2002). This model highlights the multiple dimensions to one's identity and the consequential interaction between social factors and the construction of individual identity. The model emphasizes the influence of varying levels of existence and interaction, starting with the individual and expanding toward the microsystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Heise, 1998). The macrosystem relates to the worldviews and values of a given culture. The exosystem focuses on the cultural scripts, legal systems, and governments in which an individual is a part. The microsystem relates to the elements and structures within an individual's immediate environment, such as social group and community. Through each systematic level, cisgender women interact and socialize; therefore, the cultural views, scripts, and social groups play an important role in shaping internalized gender schemas after sexual violence.

Throughout the literature review, I explore sexual violence through the lens of feminist ecological theory. The theory provides a landscape in which to understand the topics of sexual violence, gender socialization, and gender schemas. I explain the intersection of sexual violence and internalized gender schemas through the United States' cultural values and beliefs and the individual identification with these dominant cultural beliefs. Within the framework of gender schema theory and gender socialization, I present the impact of these processes on an individual, specifically a cisgender woman. There is little known literature on the impact of sexual violence on internalized gender schemas.

Sexual Violence

One in five women will be raped during her lifetime (Kilpatrick et. al., 2007). The lifetime prevalence of rape by an intimate partner is an estimated 8.8% for women and an estimated 0.5% for men (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009). Many victims of sexual violence were first victimized at a young age. Among female victims of completed rape, an estimated 78.7% were first raped before the age of 25 years, with 40.4% experiencing rape before the age of 18 years (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009). The United States (US) Department of Justice (DOJ) stated that from 1995 to 2013, females ages 18 to 24 had the highest rate of rape and sexual assault victimizations in comparison to females in all other age groups (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Similarly, individuals between the ages of 12-34 years are at the highest risk years for rape and sexual assault (Department of Justice, 2015; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). In surveying 2,000 female college age students, 40% indicated receiving disclosure of rape from

someone they knew (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009). Given this glimpse of the pervasiveness and widespread occurrence of sexual violence, a closer look is warranted. I review sexual violence literature providing a national, cultural, and individual perspective.

The major themes that will be discussed are *macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem,* and *individual reactions.* Each of these themes will be discoursed in greater detail below. Then, I critically review known literature on sexual violence.

Macrosystem. The macrosystem consists of the worldviews and values of a given community or culture (Ballaou et al., 2002). Sexual violence and aggression is cited as a reflection or outward manifestation of the core values and perspectives of a given culture. Burt (1980) has offered an explanation, "Rape is the logical and psychological extension of a dominant-submissive, competitive, sex role stereotyped culture" (p. 229). Therefore, rape culture perpetuates and reinforces violence toward women by blaming the victim rather than inquiring about the perpetrator (Hayes, Abbott, & Cook, 2016; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008). Violence is pervasive and prevalent within US culture. The alarmingly high rate of rape and sexual assault (Bachar & Koss, 2001; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Kilpatrick et al., 2007; Layman et al., 1996) within US society is preceded by sex-based stereotypes and cultural tolerance for violent behaviors (Wells et al, 2016). The values of a given society help to determine the rate at which violence occurs and how the society works to prevent and react to violent phenomenon. Violent masculinity is normalized within US culture, where there is a focus on male superiority resulting in gender inequities (Jhally et al., 1999). Gender inequalities that exist within US culture may be exhibited

through behavioral changes that women make in order to protect themselves from the threat of sexual violence (Snedker, 2012).

The National Crime Victimization Survey (2009) explained that most victims of partner violence are women (86%) and that a majority of the perpetrators are men. Another study found that in 3750 domestic violence cases, 84% of them involved a female victim and male defendant, 12% male victim and female defendant (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009). The significant gendered difference may account for the fact that these are only the reported cases rather than all the incidents that do occur yet go unreported (Eisikotivs & Bailey, 2011).

Accordingly, there is consistent agreement on the presence of gender differences in committing acts of violence (Barone, Wolgemuth, & Linder, 2007; Davidson, & Canivez, 2012; Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011; Hamby, 2005). There is evidence that men commit more homicides, acts of partner violence, sexual assaults, and robberies than women, with the male-to-female perpetrator ratio of approximately 9:1 (Gartner & Sterzing, 2016; Hamby, 2005; Staniloui & Markowitsch, 2012). The sexual violence categories of rape and sexual assault include women as the primary victims. Female victims reported predominately male perpetrators, whereas for male victims, the gender of the perpetrators varied depending on the nature of the violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Eisikovits & Bailey, 2011). Males predominantly reported male perpetrators for instances of rape but reported both male and female perpetrators for other forms of sexual violence, such as unwanted sexual contact (Eisikovits & Bailey, 2011).

Many different forms of reporting have resulted in similar, stable patterns in high rates of prevalence of violence toward women (Hamby, 2005). These numbers may produce inaccurate estimates due to the rate at which crimes do or do not get reported. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) in the US reported that approximately 28.3% of rapes and sexual assaults are reported to the police (Rennison, 2002). It is estimated, though, that as many as 90 % of rapes within the US have never been reported (Kilpatrick et.al, 2007; Planty et al, 2013). Furthermore, Chon (2014) estimated that actual incidents of rape are at least 10 times higher than official reports.

There are often many cultural and contextual factors that prevent an individual from reporting an incident of rape or sexual assault (Miller, Canales, Amacker, Backstrom, & Gidycz, 2011; Orchowski et al., 2013; Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith, & Marks, 2010). Rennison (2002) found that among the reasons the individuals cited for choosing not to report included not wanting family or others to know of their experience, fear of retaliation from others, or lack of evidence. Accordingly, sexual violence is more likely to not be reported if the victim knew the perpetrator, if there was no physical weapon involved, if there were no physical injuries sustained, and if the victims blamed themselves for the occurrence of the sexual assault or rape (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015).

The current study aims to look at the cultural and gender values prevalent in the US that contribute to sexual violence. With such a high occurrence of sexual violence, the proposed qualitative study explores the ways in which worldviews and gender stereotypes may perpetuate sexual assault and rape.

Exosystem. The exosystem within the feminist ecological model focuses on cultural scripts, legal systems, and governments in which an individual is a part (Ballaou et al., 2002). In US culture, the notion of rape culture that exists highlights the societal tolerance for the sexual aggression of women, violence toward women, and objectification of women (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Accepting and legitimizing violence against women influences women's ability to trust the criminal justice system and belief that justice will be served. How rape or sexual assault is defined and perceived often lends itself to victim blaming and placing the responsibility of safety on the woman (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). Given the high number of sexual violence experiences that do not get reported to police, greater consideration must be given to how victims are treated throughout this process.

Rape myths are widely held within US culture and help to reinforce a culture in which rape victim-blaming occurs (Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Murnen, 2000). Furthermore, the most common myths that appear within a patriarchal system that tolerates rape are that women ask to be raped and women lie about being raped. Thus, rape happens due to the victim behaving in an improper manner (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011). An estimated five percent of sexual assault cases end up with a criminal conviction (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2014).

Women may be fearful of crimes in which they have the potential to be the victim. Women of all racial, ethnic, and age groups are fearful of rape (Kimerling et al., 2002; Tulloch & Jennett, 2001). Women's fear of vulnerability may be attributed to how women are socialized to think about violence. For example, Drakulich and Rose (2013) have described differences in socialization for men and women: Men are

socialized to not reveal fears and women are encouraged to have heightened levels of fear. Researchers contend that rape is not a rare occurrence and that women may perceive their vulnerability due to the serious consequences of sexual violence (Custers & Van den Bulck, 2013; Gordon & Riger, 1989).

Sexual violence has different implications for men than women. While most of the literature has focused on women as victims of sexual violence there may also be social inequities among certain populations of males, such as sexual minority men (e.g., gay, bisexual, queer), transmen, or racial minority men (Balsam et al., 2005; Heidt et al., 2005; Kalichman et al., 2001; Krahe et al., 2001; Ratner et al., 2003). The social inequality that women experience may leave them at a greater vulnerability or risk of violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; Wells et al., 2016). Women are more likely to suffer injury, experience penetration, develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), experience sexual dysfunction, or catch sexually transmitted diseases than men (Kimerling et al., 2002; Ratner et al., 2003).

In contemporary US culture, there is often discomfort and silence surrounding the occurrence of rape and sexual assault. The taboo nature of sexual violence often perpetuates the occurrence and infiltrates many different contexts across varied institutions or relationships (Zaleski, 2015). Sexual violence survivors reported greater shame and stigma surrounding experiences of sexual assault (Orchowski et al., 2013). The cultural reactions to perpetrators suggested that many individuals are uncomfortable with the idea that individuals can inflict such pain on one another (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015; Zaleski, 2015). The cultural stigma around

interpersonal violence often inhibits the awareness and accountability that is necessary to study and prevent the occurrence of sexual violence (Miller et al., 2011).

Within the social structure of US culture, some privileged voices are highlighted while others become excluded from the conversation around sexual violence (Taylor & Norma, 2012; Washington, 2001). To be silenced and to not have a voice reflects powerlessness, which is reinforced through ignoring women's experiences and not providing justice where justice is due (Lievore, 2005). For example, women who are of a racial minority status have a decreased likelihood of reporting compared to White survivors (Wolitzky-Taylor, 2011). One reason indicated was the need to be emotionally tough and strong in a society that has racial prejudice. Some cultural messages that may prevent individuals from reporting are racism, ignorance of cultural values, cultural taboos regarding discussions of sex, and language barriers (Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Kennedy & Prock, 2017). The level of openness and acceptability of sexual behaviors can dictate how sexual violence is perceived and understood (Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Taylor & Norma, 2012). For example, Lievore (2005) has recommended that "more transparency and accountability among criminal justice system staff, particularly in respect of biases, prejudice, intolerance and apathy," would improve reporting rates (p. 8). If there is silence surrounding such phenomena, there is no room for discussion regarding consent and choice (Ahrens, 2006). The messages that are reinforced throughout a society at every level can often be limiting and devaluing to its very members who are either silenced or discouraged from having a voice.

Relevant to this proposed study, Rudman and Borgida (1995) found that when undergraduate men were exposed to sexist advertisements, they recognized sexually

objectifying words faster than words that describe women in a nonsexual manner. The subsequent finding highlights the notion that under the broad schema of "women," women are either portrayed as nurturers or sex objects (Rudman & Borgida, 1995). For example, once the nurturer schema is activated and primed, the sex object schema moves to the background of one's cognitions. Therefore, when individuals are exposed to rape culture, such as in US culture, the schema that identifies women as sex objects is more readily available (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). A culture that perpetuates violence against women may also activate schemas that affect to whom blame is attributed, with blame often ascribed to the victim.

Furthermore, the schemas that are relevant to victim and perpetrator blame help to shape what an individual deems appropriate behavior and what an individual expects of a given situation (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). Women may be perceived as the gatekeepers of sexuality and it is within the realm of women's power to dictate if a sexual experience occurs or not (Velding, 2017; Wigderson & Katz, 2015). The template of placing the responsibility of sexuality on women is maintained by rape myths that propose that women invite sexual violence and assault through their own decisions and behaviors (Kimerling et al., 2002; Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). Thus, when a woman does not exhibit behaviors that are consistent with culturally constructed scripts and expectations about rape, jurors are less likely to believe a sexual assault took place (Wigderson & Katz, 2015). Further, when a man's behaviors are legitimized by cultural norms and expectations, jurors are also less likely to convict a defendant of committing sexual assault (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010).

Similarly, when gender role expectations are violated, individuals often attribute blame to the victim for the sexual violence that occurred. The cultural values may perpetuate the occurrence of violence and expectations (Nayak et al., 2003). The attitudes and perceptions that individuals have toward how gendered individuals should behave greatly influences their attribution of blame for rape (Viki & Abrams, 2002). Individuals that rate high in benevolent sexism ascribed more blame to women than those with low levels of benevolent sexism. Those that adhere to benevolent sexist beliefs tend to believe that women whom adhere to traditional gender roles are to be honored (Ahrens, 2006). Violation of gender schemas offers some explanation for victim-blaming and helps to explain how individual standards for behavior can vary greatly among individuals.

Current research often focuses on the cultural context in which sexual assault and rape are fostered (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Barone et al., 2007; Pratto &Walker, 2004; Stewart & Levant, 2014). For example, Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney (2006) conducted interviews and observed fraternity members, and they found strong patterns of gendered interactional expectations and how heterosexual scripts directed men to pursue sex. When cisgender women experience sexual violence, their internalized gender schemas may be affected. The violation of schemas may lead to incongruence for women's gender identity. Exploring the social reactions to sexual violence may help to gain understanding surrounding the use and process of gender schemas. Furthermore, the proposed study aims to gain a sense of individual experience of societal expectations and pressures.

Microsystem. The microsystem represents the elements and structures within an individual's immediate environment with whom an individual interacts and is influenced (Ballaou et al., 2002). Social attitudes toward victims of sexual violence may also influence individual choices to report as well as their psychological well-being afterward. In other words, individuals react to situations and other individuals based on cultural expectation and ideals of what is expected behavior (Office on Violence Against Women, 2007). When individual reactions or behaviors do not match the culturally acceptable idea of how one should react, they may be looked down upon (DeLamater, 2006; Stets & Turner, 2006). An individual may adjust their behavior in accordance with the expectations of their peers (Ahrens, 2006). Regarding sexual violence, survivors may be caught between their personal reactions and societal reactions of how to cope. They may feel guilt or shame for thinking they caused the situation to happen and this may be reinforced through social interactions (Rosebrock et al., 2011).

Rosebrock et al. (2011) found that negative social reactions to individuals disclosing sexual assault are related to a (a) stronger likelihood of PTSD; (b) poorer physical health; (c) greater consumption of alcohol; (d) increased self-blame; (e) and greater use of avoidance based coping strategies. The reactions of counselors, friends, and family to an individual may affect their ability to recover and process the traumatic experience (Kennedy & Prock, 2017; Orchowski et al., 2013). This was the first study that highlighted the influence of social reactions on PTSD diagnoses. Furthermore, past research indicated that lesbian and bisexual women have a greater likelihood of reporting adult sexual assault (Lehavot, Molina, & Simoni, 2012). Unfortunately, 75%

of women have received some form of negative reaction from others to their disclosure of sexual assault, with 20% of those regretting their decision to disclose (Orchowski et al., 2013). Survivors have described negative reactions from others as reinforcing their own experience of self-blame and questioning if the survivors experience was actually rape (Ahrens, 2006; Kennedy & Prock, 2017).

Through the process of socialization, individuals may be faced with social reactions that do not match their own thoughts and feelings (Rosebrock et al., 2011). How social groups and communities reinforce or negate toleration of sexual violence toward women can have a profound effect on individuals' ability to feel safe and heard. Particularly, Washington (2001) found that for Black sexual assault survivors, inadequate sexuality socialization often results in women unable to define or articulate an experience of sexual violence. Furthermore, Black women may not have access to quality resources for recovery or the desire to seek out services due to racial inequity within US culture and the service structures (Walker, 1995).

Additionally, many victims who tell others about their experience of sexual violence may endure a second assault in the way of negative reactions, such as victim blaming and suspicion (Kennedy & Prock, 2017; Rosebrock et al., 2011). When victims feel blamed they may experience secondary victimization. This may be demonstrated in ways such as doubting the survivor's story, maximizing the victim's role in the assault, or attributing blame to the victim (Ahrens, 2006). If individuals do not feel like they have the ability or resources to receive help or support, they may remain silent (Gidycz et al., 2011).

The proposed study aims to look at the ways in which individuals may feel silenced. Through utilizing a qualitative lens, I will be able to focus more closely on the perceived openness of cisgender women's experiences. The perception of sexual violence within US culture will be highlighted and will be given space. Furthermore, the study explores the messages that society has given women in the various systems that they navigate.

Individual Reactions. How women react to and recover from sexual violence depends on many factors and tools that they may or may not have within their reach. The path of resilience is paved through previous experiences, closeness of social supports, and available coping skills (Orchowski et al., 2013; Rosebrock et al., 2011). When life is disrupted through an unexpected or traumatic event, Always, Belgrave, and Smith (1998) have suggested that organizing principles such as gender remain stable and continuous. For natural disasters, they suggest that the roles and identities of an individual as well as the societal structures that are established within a culture lure one back to previously held daily routines. Returning to previous routines is also true for how information is shared, how information is interpreted, and how individuals experience their body (Always et al., 1998; Lebowitz & Roth, 1994). Gender may serve as a foundation from which survivors return to normal and re-establish stability.

Through the experience of Hurricane Andrew in Miami, Always et al. (1998) found that individuals engaged in gender-specific behavior and occupied roles that were consistent with previous roles they adhered to. Women typically occupied the role of nurturer or consoler, while men took on the role of physical laborer and safety maker. They found that while the men took care of physical conditions and safety, the women

took care of emotional conditions. Physical expression of emotional agony was more common among women, such as crying. Notably, more women sought professional help to cope with the natural disaster (Always et al., 1998). Furthermore, disasters or traumas seek to disrupt the status quo and interfere with the day-to-day flow of events (Anderson, Simpson-Taylor, & Herrmann, 2004). The reconstruction of individual identity and roles after a traumatic experience often bears itself in resemblance of prior behaviors. In other words, gender roles and schemas are so essential that there is continuity of gendered behavior after a major trauma.

In a similar fashion, the Office on Violence Against Women (2007) argued that individuals' ability to cope and adjust to life after sexual violence may depend on their. level of functioning and relation to self prior to the assault. What behaviors some individuals display reflect their individual perceptions and attitudes about their identity and self-schemas (Orchowski et al., 2013). How individuals view themselves and how they relate to others provides the catalyst influences their choices and outward behaviors after experiencing sexual violence.

Furthermore, sexual violence has long-term effects for the victims. Approximately 94% of women who are raped experience PTSD symptoms during the two weeks following the rape, with one-third reporting PTSD symptoms 9 months after the rape (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Additionally, an estimated one-third of women who are raped have contemplated suicide. Approximately 70% of rape or sexual assault victims experience moderate to severe distress, a larger percentage than for any other violent crime (Department of Justice, 2012; Hamby, 2005). People who have been sexually assaulted have a greater

likelihood of using drugs to cope than the general public (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Kilpatrick et. al., 2007; Hamby, 2005; US DOJ, 2012).

Campbell and Adams (2009) sought to find out what motivated rape survivors to participate in research, in particular in face-to-face interviews. Through interviewing 92 sexual assault survivors, they found some main reasons that women could come forward to talk about their experience. Some women mentioned that the process of talking through their sexual assault experience would aid in their healing process. The authors suggested that this method of research might be particularly engaging for women as they can discuss their experience, reflect on their experience, and receive support from others (Campbell, 2008). Other women noted that they wanted to be able to help other women by raising awareness and the societal need for a shift in perspective. Furthermore, some individuals participated as a way to represent a minority group and bring understanding to their particular experiences of marginalized populations.

Kimerling et al. (2002) suggested that the interpersonal nature of sexual violence be more closely examined to better understand the gender differences among perpetrators and victims. Given the different experience for men and women regarding sexual violence, gender may play a role in these behaviors (Landrine et al., 1988). Given that women are more likely to report experiences of sexual violence, more literature and research has been dedicated to understanding the phenomenon for this population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015).

Given the long-term effects of sexual violence and the impact of social reactions of others, it is important to understand the ways in which gender schemas may also be impacted. The reality that gender roles may remain static throughout the experience of trauma, such as natural disaster, may also be present after experiencing sexual violence. To what extent and what that looks like, in particular for gender schemas, is still unknown and therefore will be explored through this dissertation.

Critical Examination of the Sexual Violence Literature. Currently, the sexual violence literature has a large range of topics explored such as the prevalence rates of sexual violence (Bachar & Koss, 2001; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; Kilpatrick et. al., 2007); the decision to disclose or not (Orchowski et al., 2013); the cultural values that perpetuate violence (Clarke & Lawson, 2009); societal and individual reaction to sexual violence (Rosebrock et al., 2011); and the long-term effects of experiencing sexual violence (Hamby, 2005).

Though there is a significant empirical foundation in the sexual violence literature and some studies have explored the impact of trauma on gender roles and gender expression (Always et al., 1998; Lehavot, Molina, & Simoni, 2012), few authors have combined empirical knowledge into an integrated conceptual model of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas. The current study adds to this knowledge by providing empirical data that may extend the current sexual violence literature by integrating the evidence into a larger conceptual model. Through developing a conceptual model, women may make sense of their experience and the contextual factors that contribute to sexual violence.

Gender Socialization

Given the prevalence of sexual violence, understanding the roles of socialization and cultural values that seem to perpetuate this type of violence is important. The process of socializing individuals to behave in ways that match binary gender norms may perpetuate power inequities between genders. Examination of this imbalance of power may lend itself to generating ideas for greater gender equivalence. The high rates of sexual violence and the recent national attention drawn to the occurrence of sexual violence warrant a closer look at this issue.

The major themes that emerged from the relevant literature are *femininity and masculinity, socialization, gender groups, and gender schemas.* Each of these themes will be discussed in greater detail below within the frame of feminist ecological theory.

Macrosystem: Femininity and Masculinity. Macrosystems involve the dominant worldviews and values of a given community or culture (Ballaou et al., 2002). The core values and perspectives of US society shape the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Men often have more authority than women do and masculinity is identified with power and prestige (Hong, 2000; Wigdersen & Katz, 2015). Men often identify with others who hold power. For example, men tend to associate themselves with an assailant in an attack, rather than the victim in an attack (Mehta and Dementieva, 2016). On the other hand, femininity is often defined in more collective terms and tends to be identified with those that have less power, such as a victim of assault rather than the perpetrator of an assault (Anderson et al., 2004; Crane, Markus, & Manis, 1982). Cisgender women in US society are often held to standards set forth that establish the norms of femininity. Conventionally, women are socialized to rate romantic relationships as valuable, and as such, traditional gender roles create power inequity

between men and women (Wigdersen & Katz, 2015). This suggests that assigning blame is connected to gender stereotypes and the expression of gender roles.

In US society, femininity is awarded a less powerful status than is masculinity (Black et al., 2014; Blair-Loy, & Herron, 2013; Hong, 2000; Merritt, & Harrison, 2006). Given the power differential between the two genders, women may find themselves endorsing masculine traits to associate themselves with a higher status (Fraser, 2015; Hamby, 2005). This inclination has increased in the past few decades as women are becoming more independent and self-reliant than was acceptable in previous generations. The continual value of conventional masculine traits within US society serve to maintain the power differential within the culture (Harway et al., 2015; Mehta & Dementieva, 2016). The endorsement of masculine traits then may cause women to forego some feminine qualities to increase their social status as they strive toward greater power. Women may seek to align themselves with men in order to even the playing field and gain social privilege (Hong, 2000).

Sandra Bem has contributed significantly to the research examining femininity and masculinity (Bem, 1974). The Bem Sex Role Inventory aims to identify how strongly an individual identifies with stereotypical masculine or feminine characteristics. The Bem Sex Role Inventory specifies that feminine items include understanding, sympathy and expressiveness, while masculine items include assertiveness, dominance, and competitiveness (Bem, 1974). Particularly, femininity is related closely to community and relationships, such as caring for others (Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra, 2006). Masculinity often is described in terms of work and efficiency. While research proposed that men are more masculine and women are more feminine,

traits of both masculinity and femininity are displayed by both genders, irrespective of biological sex (Mehta & Dementieva, 2016). Femininity and masculinity may be better defined by the aforementioned traits in which are attributed to them.

Along with Bem, Leinbach and Fagot (1986) illustrated that gender is one of the most significant ways in which humans make sense of incoming information. The labels someone associates with gender schemas are ripe with meaning and contribute to a whole, integrated picture of one's reality (Markus et al, 1982).

Landrine et al. (1988) found that when undergraduate men and women were asked to match adjectives form the Bem Sex Role Inventory to male and female stimuli, they typically associated the male stimuli with masculine traits such as leadership and daredevil. The male stimuli were associated with drinking beer and getting drunk more often than women. On the other hand, the female stimuli were associated with conventional feminine traits such as dependent and delicate (Landrine et al., 1988). The participants indicated that they thought of rape as an action that a man does to a woman.

The characteristics of masculinity and femininity are fluid, ever-moving, and often negotiated within an individual (Harway et al., 2015; Stets & Turner, 2006). Individuals are always demonstrating gender and fulfilling the needs of the identity they choose (Mehta & Dementiev, 2016). The context of a situation requires individuals to perform or demonstrate their gender identity (Hamby & Grych, 2013). The negotiation takes place between remaining consistent and honest with one's gender identity and meeting the requirements of the situation or environment. The practice and expression of gender is not always conscious (Hamby & Grych, 2013). At times, individuals may

not be aware of the demands of the situation and how this reflects their gender presentation.

Research has suggested that the importance of masculinity may increase for men when surrounded by other men, whereas women reported greater expression of femininity when surrounded by men (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Stets and Turner (2006) argued that gender is something that is demonstrated rather than a commodity and therefore is context-dependent. Rather, individuals act out or demonstrate qualities or characteristics that appear cohesive with the demands of the society as well as of relationships. Men and women reported believing that the other gender has more sexual authority within society (Hamby & Grych, 2013; Shea et al., 2014). Men indicated that they are content with the current structure of society, where women indicated that the current dynamic is threatening to women (Fraser, 2015).

Certain traditional feminine beliefs may be related to behaviors that place an individual more at risk or vulnerability to experiencing sexual violence (Wigderson & Katz, 2015). Mehta and Dementiev (2016) found that particular beliefs, such as regarding the salience of feminine purity may increase risk for sexual violence for college age women. Furthermore, they found that an endorsement of feminine submissiveness may promote self-protective behaviors (Shea et al., 2014). Individuals who endorsed traditionally feminine ideological beliefs may feel disempowered and feeble during sexual interactions (Velding, 2017). College women who adhered to conservative feminine ideology had less knowledge about sex, sexual boldness, and confidence in their bodies (Anderson, Simpson-Taylor, & Herrmann, 2004). Similarly, women who believed in a conservative definition of womanhood were more likely to go

along with their partner's wishes for sex rather than refusing to engage in sexual acts (Velding, 2017).

Additionally, there are personal history characteristics that may enhance individuals' susceptibility or risk for adult sexual violence. For example, childhood victimization, such as sexual abuse is a risk factor (Elliot, Mok, & Briere, 2004). Women who have experienced adult sexual violence are twice as likely to have had a history of childhood sexual abuse compared to women with no sexual violence experience.

Through exploring the cultural implications of feminine traits, the proposed study will seek an understanding of individual beliefs about gender. Therefore, the demands of societal expectations may impact how women understand their gender after experiencing sexual violence.

***Exosystem: Socialization*.** The cultural scripts and systems, associated with the exosystem (Ballaou et al., 2002), that individuals interact with strongly influence behavior and thinking patterns. Socialization is a foundational perspective within social psychology (Maccoby, 2006). Within this perspective, an individual's behavior is shaped and taught by observing the actions of others (DeLamater, 2006; Ryle, 2012; Velding, 2017). Behaviorism outlines that we learn behavior from others and that we are taught what are appropriate ways of behaving. Shaping behavior is then accomplished through reinforcement or punishment (Skinner, 1972). Social learning theory suggests that there are certain types of sex-typed behaviors (Bandura, 1977). A specific behavior may be expected and seen as acceptable by one sex, but seen as not

acceptable by the other sex (Hamby, 2005). The cultural expectations illustrate how society categorizes behaviors as appropriate or not for a person's gender.

US society socializes individuals in a way that reinforces feminine and masculine behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs (Bell & Bayliss, 2015; Cross, Markus, Bell, & Sternberg, 1993; Velding, 2017). Gender norms are culturally established, which contribute to one's gender identity and how one defines the self. The categorization of gender allows individuals to make sense of the world around them and what their role is within their given society (Zaleski, 2015). In an attempt to understand where one fits in the larger context of the community, categorizing gender helps to foster this understanding (Maccoby, 2000; Wood, 2011). The process of socialization impacts and influences many different domains of individuals' lives. For example, how one expresses emotion, how one relates to other people, and how one behaves are all filtered through the expectations of one's cultural context (Delamater, 2006; Ryle, 2012; Stockard, 1999).

The way that US society constructs gender differences becomes engrained in individuals' thinking patterns and influences their gender identity (Bell & Bayliss, 2015; Zaleski, 2015). The notion of gender socialization occurs from the time individuals are born in an effort to categorize and make sense of the world (Maccoby, 2000). Individuals are taught behavior from their immediate environment through many different processes, such as modeling and imitation and receiving rewards and punishments for behaviors (DeLamater, 2006). Through socialized gender cognitions, individuals are able to attribute characteristics to others and to define what behavior is

abnormal including stereotypes, or expectations of personality, and physical attributes (Bell, Turchik, & Karpenko, 2014).

Similarly, women, as part of gender socialization, are often expected to pursue and participate in romantic relationships with men. Attitudes toward how women should behave (feminine ideology) focuses on the importance of valuing the opinion of men, often over women's own opinions (Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Consequently, girls learn that reliance on men for social status and protection is an important part of relationships (Murnen et al., 2002). An imbalance of power may influence a woman's sexual interactions and sexual scripts, which may involve being pursued by men and the appropriate female response (Gavey, 2005). Women often connect sex with submission (Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra, 2006). Furthermore, women who outwardly agree with traditional feminine beliefs may become disempowered during sexual interactions, thus increasing their risk for sexual violence (Wigderson & Katz, 2015). Traditional gender scripts encourage men to be violent in adhering to masculine beliefs and women to be passive to fulfill the expectations of femininity.

The socialization process also impacts how crime is viewed and perceived (Snedker, 2012; Staniloiu & Markowitsch, 2012). Gender is a very strong indicator of the risk and fear of crime for individuals. This fear may contribute to changes in behavior, in particular for women (Kimerling, 2002). This perceived fear of violence is reflective of a larger unequal dichotomy between men and women. For instance, gender socialization may encourage passivity and dependence for women to rely on others for safety and protection (Frable et al., 1985). Women may be socialized to outwardly express fear, while men are not socialized to outwardly express fear. Women may take

on the role of defenseless, weak, and powerless in the face of violence while men may take on the role of resilient and forceful when in violent situations (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). This parallel socialization process creates a dynamic where women inherently take on the role of the submissive, powerless individual.

Microsystem: Gender Groups. Individuals are influenced by factors within their immediate environment, or the microsystem (Ballaou et al., 2002). The desire to belong within a gender group or social group may drive behavior. Research on gender identity emerged from the work of Bem (1974) and Spence and Helmreich (1978), who focused on stereotypical traits that were gender specific. Additionally, the newer tradition of understanding gender identity has gravitated toward looking at belongingness to a particular category of men or women (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001; Wood et al, 1997). In US culture, this means there are predominantly two categories that are ascribed to how to think about gender, man or woman. The biological differences among sexes become intertwined with the social construction of gender, which are defined by culturally reinforced roles (Norris, Perilla, Ibanez, & Murphy, 2001).

Sex-typed behaviors are analogous to the idea of gender norms; there are ways of behaving in the world that are perceived to be acceptable for men and there are other behaviors that are seen as acceptable for women (Bem, 1981; Ryle, 2012). Individuals are usually identified as male or female at birth, and society teaches them what is suitable for their assigned sex (Foldy, 2006; Stockard, 1999). The socialization process of reinforcing or punishing behaviors that mirror or subvert, respectively, gender expectations help to create the often-perceived dichotomy of gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Society sends messages that women and men are mutually exclusive

and are dichotomous rather than two ends on a continuum (Stockard, 1999). An individual's sense of identity may lie anywhere along this range (Bell, Turchik, & Karpenko, 2014). Men are often thought and socialized to be assertive, self-reliant, confident, and courageous, while women are taught to be nurturing, emotional, modest, and gentle. Women are often more inclined to find identity within relationships and want to form attachments, while men are often more disposed to seek independence and find worth and identity in work outside the household (Foldy, 2006).

Gender socialization is generated through reinforcing behaviors that are congruent with their sex category. One example is that of expressing emotion (Gavey, 2005). Little girls are often comforted when crying and little boys may be told that they should not be crying. The girl is then reinforced that crying is okay and the boy may be redirected away from his crying behavior (Murnen et al., 2002). Gender-based emotion stereotypes are significant because they help to guide how emotions are expressed and what emotions are deemed appropriate (DeLamater, 2006). This categorization of emotion is reflective of White, heterosexual differences of gender (Merritt, & Harrison, 2006). Through these social interactions, individuals' behavior can be shaped and molded into what is considered culturally acceptable. Gender socialization shapes what girls should consider appropriate feminine characteristics and behaviors. Typically, girls and women are taught to keep an attractive outward appearance, to look after others, to maintain the household duties, and to remain passive (Wigdersen & Katz, 2015).

There has been significant research looking at how individuals "do gender" and how individuals outwardly express their gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; DeLamater, 2006; Fox & Murry, 2000; Hayes et al., 2016; Peterson & Hann, 1999;

West and Zimmerman, 1987). The cultural norms and expectations then define and constrain the way in which gender is expressed. Social identities become entrenched within how they relate to gender and any defiance of the cultural definition can discredit the totality of individuals' identities (Fox & Murry, 2000). Individuals often perform gender in a way that they believe others expect them to (DeLamater, 2006). Individuals may display personality traits that confirm their identity as well as coincide with the compatibility of the role they are taking on.

There is limited research into contextual variations of the expression of sex-typed behaviors and how this affects one's view of the self and others. There is variability among different social contexts that individuals encounter and what expressions and behaviors they deem appropriate (Cross et al., 1993; Frable, Bem, & Hogan, 1985). This variability contributes to how one displays their inner identity and beliefs about themselves as a gendered person. A complete, integrated understanding of gender can only be achieved through investigating and discovering how a given context or situation influences such behaviors (Bem & Estes, 1981). The intersection of the social categories of gender with race and socioeconomic status produces a complex identity (Frable et al., 1985; Settles & Buchanan, 2014). Furthermore, gender identity changes and evolves over time (Stockard, 1999). Social identities founded on ethnicity, sex/gender, ethnicity, class, and disability status are interdependent within individuals (Bowleg, 2013).

While this study only focuses on the experience of those that identify as women, the goal is to obtain a diverse sample of women who have survived sexual violence in the US. In the US, the highest percentage of those who reported rapes are individuals

who identify as multiracial, followed by American Indian women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). The experiences of women from different cultures is valuable and important to provide a richer understanding of the phenomena. Along with that, gender expectations may vary from culture to culture (Fox & Murry, 2000). The experience of gender and how it is socialized can look very different as well. Beginning to understand sexual violence in a cultural context can provide direction for future research and protocols. This study refers to traditional definitions of gender in US society but recognizes that characteristics pertaining to the construction of gender varies by ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and other cultural influences.

For the proposed study, the focus is on the experiences of cisgender women within US culture. The influence of social interactions and interpersonal dynamics may have an impact on their internalized gender schemas following sexual violence. Specifically, socialization may play an important part in women's gender schemas after experiencing sexual violence.

Individual Reactions: Gender Schemas. The tools and resources that individuals have within themselves serve to provide the course for recovery from traumatic experiences. Schemas are cognitive frameworks that are used in processing information that individuals take in from their environment (Crane et al.,1982; Valian, 1998). They represent previous knowledge and ways of processing information based on prior experiences. Schemas may also help to explain how individuals categorize the world and how this process is negotiated with their gender identity (Stockard, 1999). Schemas encompass the interpretation and integration of social performance. Stimuli that are congruent with these internalized thinking patterns are more easily understood

and interpreted (Bem, 1981). The process of matching stimuli with cognitive patterns process is often swift and efficient when stimuli presented are consistent with internal working frameworks.

Schemas help to simplify information by grouping into specific categories (Valian, 1998). Schemas direct thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through guiding an individual to attend to certain things in each situation and ignore other stimuli (Hamby & Grych, 2013). The implication of integrating information into internal working cognitions are useful to allow individuals to focus their attention and to observe their environment without requiring a lot of energy. At the same time, attentional filtering via schemas may perpetuate stereotypical ways of interacting and processing information that contribute to power inequities between genders and races (Stockard, 1999).

Children and adults both acquire and utilize gender schemas in multidimensional ways (DeLamater, 2006). Schemas may lead to stereotyping, may facilitate ways of expressing oneself, and may buttress ways of evaluating oneself and others, as well as may undergird ways of describing the symbolic qualities another individual (Valian, 1998). Basic gender identity forms around ages 2-3 years, where differences between sexes are emphasized, children start to experience similar interests with their gender in-group, and children make assumptions about the gender out-group (Tobin et. al., 2010). Children quickly acquire gender stereotypes and use them to gauge one's own behavior and to understand the behavior of others around the individual (Crane et al., 1982; DeLamater, 2006). Individuals also tend to remember information that is consistent with gendered stereotypes they hold to be true and tend to disregard or forget information that is inconsistent with held gendered stereotypes.

Mehta and Dementieva (2016) suggested that gender has both trait and state qualities. They indicated that gender is a state that is affected by interpersonal contexts and differing environments. Cultural processes of dichotomizing gender and cognitive processes of self-socialization through gender schemas aid in illustrating the development of gender. Crane et al. (1982) would argue that individuals who have described masculine self-schemata intake information in a different way than those who have feminine self-schemata. Furthermore, these individuals are able to remember their own feminine attributes more easily, can more easily identify with femininity, and can articulate their own feminine behaviors and outward expressions. Information is then organized around these gendered self-schemata and integrated into the self-concept.

Gender schema theory provides a theoretical framework from which to explore the cognitive processing of information regarding gender (Crane et al., 1982; Tenenbaum, Hill, Joseph, & Roche, 2010). This process may account for how one organizes and comprehends gender-specific information. If a gender schema is readily available, the individual is more likely to attend to and represent evidence related to gender (Bem, 1981). There may be bias in the ways that individuals process information, which may account for the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. In agreement with previous scholars, Bussey and Bandura (1999) reiterate that gender is varied and context-dependent. For example, an individual may display different salient qualities and characteristics at work versus at home.

A traumatic event may override more positive operating schemas to make sense of the incoming information (Anderson et al., 2004). Older "latent" schemas may be activated if they offer explanatory power for the event. Specifically, cultural

constructions that women may have internalized about rape may be activated after experiencing sexual violence (Anderson et al., 2004). Preexisting schemas about the role and value of women may be confirmed through being victimized. The internalized schemas that appear to fit with the rape may be activated (Lebowitz & Roth, 1994). Similarly, bereavement may activate previous negative self-images and relational schemas that provide explanation in the event of traumatic loss (Horowitz, Wilner, Marmar, & Krupnick, 1980). Lebowitz and Roth (1994) found that rape may bring to light previous unseen components of individuals' cultural beliefs. The normative social structures that perpetuate sexual violence may be brought to the forefront.

The experience of a traumatic event can reshape individual meaning making structures (Roth & Newman, 1991). In response to experiencing trauma, an individual must work through the meaning that the traumatic event has for the individual (Herman, 1992; Roth & Newman, 1991). The integration of previous experience, individual characteristics and specifics of the traumatic event must be pieced together to convey meaning. Furthermore, the social context in which individuals live provides an understanding of the foundation in which to understand a traumatic experience (Lebowitz & Roth, 1994). Specifically, US ideology often portrays women in reference to their sexual appeal (Velding, 2017). Through different avenues of dissemination, such as advertisements, this ideal is upheld within the culture.

Furthermore, research has shown that schema-based expectations influence memory and interpretation (Bem, 1981). Schemas, or mental representations, provide a way of interlocking experiences with present environmental stimuli that we are presented with. The way in which individuals interpret their behavior and expression is

dictated by the meaning they have made of what it means to be masculine or feminine (Hamby & Grych, 2013). Schemas are used to make suppositions and to draw inferences about other conceptions (Markus et al., 1982). A script is a series of linked schemas that are linked to a particular event, such as sexual violence. A script outlines the behaviors which one believes are appropriate, as well as the order of events one expects or anticipates. Through rich social interactions and interpersonal relationships, an individual forms connections and definitions about what it means to a woman or man.

The present research seeks to develop an understanding of gender schemas and how schemas influence individuals' perception of themselves and the interactions to which they engage. Individuals seek to make meaning out of their experiences and research shows that, particularly after a traumatic event, integration of new experiences is often essential in recovery (Horowitz, Wilner, Marmar, & Krupnick, 1980; Lebowitz & Roth, 1994). The literature, however, lacks in providing exploration of the process of making meaning and integration of individual gender schemas with the experience of sexual violence.

Critical Examination of the Gender Socialization Literature. This study will increase the empirical and conceptual literature related to gender socialization. Major contributions to the empirical base of gender socialization include Bem (1974) and Spence and Helmreich (1978) on gender schemas and sex-typed behaviors, along with Leinbach and Fagot (1986) on the significant role gender plays in the lives of individuals. Furthermore, Leibowitz and Roth (1994) studied the influence of cultural beliefs on recovery from rape. Research explored the ways in which gender

socialization impacted the way individuals view their world and their experiences, such as how individuals are socialized to exhibit emotions or to display acts of violence. However, the current literature base falls short in providing a qualitative exploration of gender schemas and the ways in which cisgender women are socialized to respond to acts of sexual violence. The current study adds to the existing knowledge base by supplying a focus on the impact of sexual violence on internalized gender schemas.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to both expand the literature pertaining to gender schemas after sexual violence among cisgender women and to gain a complex understanding of the implications of sexual violence for gender socialization, identity, and schemas. A complex understanding was accomplished by developing an empirically based conceptual model explaining the influence of sexual violence on gender socialization, identity, and schemas, grounded in the data of individuals who have experienced sexual violence. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to explore and understand the process of socialization that occurs within US culture and how this information is integrated into cisgender women's experience as gendered beings. This was explored, through qualitative methods, by gaining an understanding of how they conceptualize the impact of sexual violence on their individual gender schemas.

Research Question

The intention of this study was to answer the question: How are a cisgender woman's internalized gender schemas influenced by the experience of sexual violence? Further, the central question may be broken down into two subquestions:

1. What do survivors perceive to be the social expectations for reacting to sexual violence?
2. What behaviors do survivors perceive to be reinforced or negated following the experience of sexual violence?

Rationale for Qualitative Methods

The historical focus has primarily been to capture experiences of sexual violence through surveys to obtain accounts of prevalence (Black et. al., 2014; Breiding, 2015; Elliott et al., 2004; United States Department of Justice, 2014). The White House has introduced a Task Force to cultivate more effective ways of preventing and reacting to the experience of sexual violence on college campuses in the US (Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Sutton & Simons, 2015). Grant programs such as the Sexual Assault Services Formula Grant Program provide federal funding dedicated to helping victims of sexual violence (US Department of Justice, 2014).

The prevalence and occurrence of sexual violence is a topic that is often highlighted in the news, through newscasts focused on court trials or focused on how institutions choose to respond to allegations of sexual violence (Hayes et al., 2016; Lonsway & Archambault, 2012). The capacity to look at this phenomenon from a qualitative lens helps engender greater depth and representations of the individual, versus institutional, experience. Qualitative methods help to illustrate the ways in which sexual violence impacts the survivors by providing a medium for survivors to share their story rather than just looking at aggregate rates of prevalence or incidence.

Qualitative methods are appropriate for examining the influence of sexual violence on cis-women's gender schemas because of the complex nature of gender socialization and internalized schemas (Creswell, 1998; Morrow & Smith, 2000). Quantitative methods are inadequate to deliver a multi-layered picture of what happens during the process of gender socialization before or after experiencing sexual violence. Additionally, given the limited empirical support for the influences of sexual violence on gender schemas, qualitative methods aid in explaining the beliefs, principles, values, and actions associated with this phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). An emergent qualitative design promotes the collection of dense, in-depth data, provided by participants who have experienced sexual violence, resulting in a rich explanation of the phenomenon. Lastly, because little research has explored the impact of sexual violence on a cisgender woman's gender schemas (Hill, 2007; Lebowitz, & Roth, 1994; Lehavot et al., 2012; Tenenbaum, Hill, Joseph, & Roche, 2010), the findings of this study makes it possible to develop an inductive conceptual model, harnessed out of the experiences of participants. An inductive process is a trademark of qualitative methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and helps to provide a thorough and meaningful understanding of internalized gender schemas for cisgender women who have experienced sexual assault or rape.

Summary

With the intention of understanding and conceptualizing the influence of sexual violence, the present study explored the experiences of cisgender women and how the experience of sexual violence helped to shape their gender schemas. In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature on sexual violence and the intersection of gender.

Within the framework of gender schema theory and gender socialization, I presented the impact of these processes on an individual, specifically a cisgender woman. Markedly, there is a gap in the literature; little known research examines the implications of sexual violence on gender schemas. I presented the purpose of the study, relevant literature and scholarly work, the significance of the present study, the focus of the study, and the rationale for utilizing qualitative research methods. In the next chapter, I describe the methods used to develop a grounded theory conceptual model of the influences of sexual violence on gender schemas.

Chapter 2: Method

In the present study of gender schemas, my objective was to understand how women conceptualize and make sense of their gender identity after experiencing sexual violence. The qualitative grounded theory research design relied on a constructivist paradigm. In the following sections, I describe the research paradigm, the research design, the role of the researcher, the participants of the study, the sources of data, and the data analysis procedures used in this study. Then, I outline the trustworthiness of the proposed methods and define relevant ethical and multicultural considerations. Therefore, my aim was to develop a constructivist grounded theory conceptual model of the phenomenon.

Paradigm Underpinning the Research

A constructivist grounded theory serves as the foundation for the current study (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Ponterotto, 2005). Grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the researcher generates a general explanation of a process, action, or interaction molded by the views of participants (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As such, the research is guided by a mutual construction of meaning and a mutual recreation of story involving a partnership between participant and researcher. Exploring the meaning that cisgender women attribute to their experiences of sexual violence is understood through the interaction between researcher and participant coupled with a constructivist appreciation of multiple truths and realities. In the current study, the worldviews of cisgender women participants are taken into consideration through the exploration of gender in the context of influential societal structures.

Acceptance of multiple realities constructed through social interactions and mutuality generated between researcher and participant provides the foundation for the constructivist grounded theory that guides this research in terms of process, content, and report. In accordance with constructivist grounded theory, the explicitness of the researcher's own biases and worldviews are incorporated into the study to corroborate and strive for rich narratives.

A constructivism paradigm provides answers to ontology (multiple, constructed realities), epistemology (relationship between researcher and participant), axiology (the values of the researcher), and rhetorical structure (language implemented to present the study findings) (Ponterotto, 2005). These are outlined below, followed by a discussion of hermeneutic (interpretative) and dialectical (comparisons between constructions) methodologies.

Ontology

At the core of ontology is the way in which an individual understands the nature of reality (Ponterotto, 2005). A constructivist paradigm, emerging from a relativist ontology, posits that each research participant has had experiences that are unique; and even if two individuals experience the same event, there will be two different accounts and interpretations (Fassinger, 2005). Life events are interpreted through the lens in which one has construed their understanding of reality (Fassinger, 2005). Reality is constructed through individual perspectives as well as through their social interactions. Subjectivity is an intrinsic part of the research process and generates depth of the subsequent findings (Ponterotto, 2005).

One central component of the constructivist ontology is an assumption that there is no way to filter out a subjective reality. Thus, the individual is always connected and always participating in labeling and processing the world around them (Ponterotto, 2005). The separation of individuals from their experiences and their understanding of reality does not exist. Subjectivity is always present, filters reality, and aids an individual in making sense of their experiences and circumstances.

The constructivist paradigm is amenable and suitable for understanding issues prevalent in counseling psychology due to the central role of constructed realities within this field. It is appropriate in the context of the present study, which aims to explore how the experience of sexual violence informs and is interpreted through the subjective reality of the participants. I focus on cisgender women's experiences of sexual violence, their subsequent understanding of reality, and implications for gender schemas.

Epistemology

Epistemology is how an individual comes to know their reality (Creswell, 1998; Ponterotto, 2005). The relationship between the knower and the known helps to formulate the foundation for understanding the reality of one's experience. Constructivists promote an interactional and dynamic approach that advocates for collaboration in constructing meaning between two or more subjective realities. The transactional relationship between the researcher and participant can foster a mutual connection that gives voice to the experiences of the participants. Extensive and consistent contact between the researcher and the participant, filtered through the broad inquiry of the research questions, promotes the potential for self-disclosure and a deep narrative (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The interaction and rapport between researcher and

participant has the potential to foster the acquisition of meaningful information (Fassinger, 2005). The participant and researcher work collaboratively to develop rich ideas and to construct meaning of the participant's lived experience.

The interview process and various data sources allow for patterns and relationships of significance to become established. Reality is understood, through a constructivist perspective, as created within the mind of an individual (Fassinger, 2005). Only through deep reflection is meaning understood and exposed. Reflection may be encouraged through the interview via the ensuing dialogue that takes place between researcher and participant (Polkinghorne, 2005). Through interview procedures, the researcher and participant are able to construct a significant and meaningful narrative. Thus, the interaction is the central point in which the depth of dialogue and material is discovered. Reality is dependent on contextual factors, such as individual perceptions and attitudes, social interactions, and the interface between researcher and participant.

A constructivist transactional and subjective epistemology is particularly relevant for the phenomenon under study. There is often a justice gap for survivors of sexual violence, wherein either the individual does not feel safe in reporting to law enforcement or very few cases result in conviction (Temkin & Krahe, 2008). Furthermore, the negative reactions received after disclosure of sexual assault and the socialization around sexuality for cisgender women may influence a survivor's ability to be heard or believed (Orchowski, 2010; Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith, & Marks, 2010). The connection and interaction between participant and researcher gives voice to the participant's experience that might otherwise be silenced or ignored.

Axiology

Axiology refers to the role of values in the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). Through a constructivist paradigm, researcher biases are assumed to be a part of the research process and are encouraged to be expressed (Charmaz, 2000). Constructivism suggests that the biases and perceptions of the researcher have an inevitable influence on the research process and outcome and may help to inform the understanding of the collected data (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The researcher's own experiences are an important consideration, as they influence the way in which the study is conducted and the data is interpreted. Researchers must then gain an awareness of how their own values may impact their perspectives and attitudes toward the phenomenon being studied (Ponterotto, 2005). Through interactions with participants, the researcher's values and biases cannot be eliminated or ignored. To manage my values and biases, I employed a constant, explicit process of reflexivity. To explicate consistent self-reflection, I recognize that these values and biases are applied to the way I collect, analyze, and interpret the data (Smith, 1996; Strauss, 1987). As new categories and conceptualizations surfaced, I wrote them down and justified with raw data to explore their implications to the unfolding analysis.

The values of the researcher are brought into the conversation and given space to situate the perspective in which the researcher understands reality. Researchers must do their best to not infer their own experiences into the study, as to leave room for a greater understanding of the participants' own words (Creswell, 2009). Individuals have their own values and experiences, thus lending complexity to the exploratory nature of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Unique individual experiences are important to study in order to promote social change and justice. The process is done inductively, meaning

the researcher approaches the study with a broad idea of the kind of information they are seeking. As the study goes on, the researcher begins to more narrowly define what is meaningful for the participants. The design emerges throughout the course of the study to adapt to the information gained from each participant and accurately portray the experience of individual participants. The shared subjectivity between researcher and participant promotes the co-construction of the experience of the participants. In the context of this study, I worked to be transparent about my values as they pertain to sexual violence by presenting them openly both to the reader and to participants (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). I was explicit about my values and biases related to sexual violence and gender schemas. I was, consequently, active in the creation of knowledge with participants and was engaged in the interview process.

Method and Rhetorical Structure

The method employed for the proposed study, a hermeneutic (interpretative) and dialectical (comparisons between constructions) method, primarily relied on the voices of the participants through first-hand accounts, to create an understanding of their experiences (Ponterotto, 2005). Individual constructions were compared and contrasted so that each participant interrelated with constructions of other participants. The method represented individual constructions as accurately as possible. The interactive dynamic between researcher and participant promoted and fostered the exploration of the actual lived experiences of the participants. The nature of the constructivist stance relies on the personal experience of the phenomenon, in this case the implications of sexual violence on gender schemas. The constructivist method is particularly relevant for understanding the lived experience of sexual violence for a cisgender woman. The co-construction of

the participants' experiences in the interview dialogue and via data analysis allows for connectedness with other individuals who have had similar experiences. Participants are able to gain an understanding of other cisgender women who have experienced sexual violence.

A constructivist rhetorical structure, a subjective and interactive approach, lends itself to explicating the participants' individual experiences and describing the rich context in which individuals live (Ponterotto, 2005). A constructivist writing strategy and structure involves first person accounts of the experiences of the researcher and interactive researchers who utilizes their own perspectives to personalize the research process. The voices of the participants are highlighted through providing direct quotations and careful examination of accuracy of the interview data accrued, thus explicating first-person accounts of their experiences. I offered space and power to participant experiences by providing direct quotations and summaries of their experiences provided in the interviews (Ponterotto, 2005). The space and power was further explicated through detailing the participant accounts. Through using language that exemplifies how I co-constructed meaning with the participants, I clarify how I as the researcher became entrenched in the community of the participating individuals.

The constructivist paradigm provides an understanding of the nature of reality, how knowledge is gained, the role that values play in the qualitative research process, the approach to meaning making, and the writing strategy involved in research. A constructivist understanding helps to define how the data will be collected, analyzed, and presented. Thus, the data for this study are informed by the complex, lived experiences of the participants and collected via dialogue to achieve an understanding

of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas. The constructivist perspective outlines the foundation for grounded theory methods that were utilized in this study (Charmaz, 2006).

Research Design

In the present study, I utilized a qualitative grounded theory research design. The theoretical underpinning of grounded theory is represented through the notion of *symbolic interactionism*, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which suggests that meaning is based on social interactions and the meaning we attribute to them. These shared symbols are utilized to convey meaning and connectedness within a particular culture. Therefore, the role of the researcher is to understand and convey the experiences of relational interactions as conveyed by the participants (Fassinger, 2005). The shared realities of a group of people are then explored in order to gain an understanding of complex, intricate issues. The meaning and connection that individuals of a particular culture ascribe to language, customs, and values provide the backdrop to cultural attitudes and perspectives. Though exploring individual perceptions of cultural attitudes in mainstream US culture, this can shed some light on the intersection of gender and sexual violence.

The nature of qualitative inquiry is to study the lived and first-hand experiences of individuals. Qualitative research is a way "is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). Through the use of qualitative methods, the researcher can gain a depth of experience that might otherwise be unfounded and inaccessible when utilizing quantitative methods. Exploration of variables that are complex and difficult to define are at the basis of qualitative inquiry

(Ponterotto, Hansen, Haverkamp, & Morrow, 2005). While seeking to understand the breadth and profound complexity of interactional and interpersonal interactions, the qualitative researcher can gain an understanding of the experiences of a specific population. The researcher can then inductively explain the processes and meaning that individuals attribute to events that occur within the context of their culture.

The intention of qualitative methods is to understand the "*life-world* as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 84). The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to clarify lived experiences and to situate them within an individual and cultural awareness. The complexity and complicated nature of human experience can be challenging to define and understand. A research study is only able to capture a glimpse into the dynamic, ever-changing explanation of human experience. Through investigating experience, qualitative methods seek to uncover layers of lived events that contribute to one's existence and identity as a relational being. In order to access the unique exposure of individuals, first-person accounts are vital in making the unknown known. To ascertain and interpret the individual and collective accounts of the participants, the present study utilizes grounded theory.

Grounded theory, with its roots in sociology, originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, focuses on inductively building theory from the collected data. Inductive analysis is the process of condensing extensive raw data into a summarized format and establishing a link between the research question and the subsequent data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory was a method of research that diverged from quantitative approaches to rely on the data to drive the motivation of the study rather

than having a theory or assumption drive analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1998) have recommended a funnel-like approach to research, which starts with broad questions and moves toward questions that are more specific in nature to provide clarification. Grounded theory has expanded to be utilized in fields beyond sociology, such as nursing and counseling psychology (Fassinger, 2005). Morrow and Smith (2000) and Ponterotto (2005) have situated grounded theory within the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm, and Charmaz (2000) has argued for a constructivist approach for grounded theory. A constructivist approach will be utilized for purposes of the present study (Charmaz, 2014).

A constructivist grounded theory research design begins with research questions that seek a deeper understanding of a phenomena (Byrne, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through social interactions and relationships, individuals define their reality. Grounded theory aims to understand individual definitions of reality (Fassinger, 2005). Utilizing grounded theory, the research process seeks to explain the process and nature of social situations and the meaning derived from social interactions. The underlying process of social interactions guide the phenomenon being studied and provides connection to other processes that might occur (Byrne, 2001).

Qualitative research, generally, and grounded theory qualitative research, particularly, employ an *emergent design.* There is great flexibility in a grounded theory research design, as the goal is to seek explanatory and rich data. The data analysis process is completed through the analyzing, comparing, and contrasting new and existing data (Morrow, 2007). Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously and enhance future data collection and analysis to prevent repetitive or inessential data.

Emergent design allows for changes in design and procedures. Additionally, the emergent findings may alter the research question.

The researcher engages and interacts with the data in order to develop *theoretical sensitivity*. Theoretical sensitivity is the researchers' awareness of themselves, others, and the area in which they are researching (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher exhibits this by recognizing distinctions in the data, extracting relevant components, and reconstructing meaning that is abstracted from the participant's experiences. The implementation of memoing reinforces the development of theoretical sensitivity. The researcher can record and reflect upon their thoughts, feelings, and decisions. A researcher's theoretical sensitivity evolves and emerges throughout the grounded theory research design (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Simultaneous data collection and analysis, which is core to grounded theory, seeks to link the categories, ideas, and concepts that present themselves within the data.

I employed the *constant comparative method*, or the iterative, dynamic process involved in comparing and contrasting new and existing data during the analysis process (Charmaz, 2014). The constant comparative method utilizes creating categories of data, forming boundaries of established categories, summarizing each delineated category, and pursuing any disconfirming evidence via the process of comparing new and existing incidences of data, participant experiences, and analytic explanations. The purpose of this method is to uncover any patterns and to discover theoretical similarities in missing phrases (Charmaz, 2014). The researcher must be open and flexible to develop and create emerging theories. As new data are gathered, it is compared to the previous data. The analytic categories should be chosen carefully as to answer any

questions that emerge and to promote the progress of the analysis process (Charmaz, 2014). Comparing and reflecting on previous and new data is often repeated many times throughout the research process. Through reintegration and refinement, the data are then able to be encapsulated into explanatory analytic categories.

Openness to new ideas and experiences are what drives the notion of *theoretical sampling* (Fassinger, 2005). Theoretical sampling involves the process of challenging, elaborating, and adding variation to developing categories and concepts through sampling new data that is specific to gaps and thin spots identified in the analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Questions are then able to be answered that may have arisen from the analysis of and reflection on the data, because newly sampled data or participants may be able to directly speak to missing pieces, incongruences, or seemingly disconfirming evidence.

A substantive conceptual model was developed through the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. A substantive conceptual model is a preliminary empirical understanding that needs more data collection and analysis to form a substantive theory or formal theory (Glaser, 2007). A substantive theory may focus on a specific area of study, such as the influence of sexual violence on gender schemas, whereas a formal theory may focus more broadly, such as gender socialization. I generated a substantive conceptual model on the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas, grounded in the experiences of cisgender women. I described my engagement in the data collection and analytic process and strategies to increase insight into my own biases and expectations. The constructive paradigm was substantiated in guiding the research through exploring the multiple, constructed realities of cisgender women. Next, I describe the methods I

utilized to manage my subjectivity. Furthermore, I enhanced my awareness of my subjectivity through reflexivity.

Researcher as Instrument

Qualitative researchers have questioned the notion that researchers can attain objectivity and qualitative approaches have acknowledged and incorporated the nature of subjectivity into the process (Morrow, 2006). Through qualitative inquiry, the researchers work to manage subjectivity and foster awareness of the underlying perspective they hold in relation to the phenomenon under study (Morrow, 2005). The concept of managing subjectivity within qualitative research has been referred to as bracketing, monitoring the self, or being inherently subjective (Peshkin, 1988), which is quite different from post-positivist paradigms that seek to control and remove biases from the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). For this study, utilizing a constructivist paradigm, I embraced the positions that I hold as the researcher, saw myself as a co-constructor of meaning with participants, and was a vital part of the analyzing process (Morrow, 2005).

Researchers must then position themselves as a contributor within the collection of data and data analysis but must also to maintain distance to distinguish their own conceptualizations from the constructed realities of the participants. The researcher enters the targeted community in a manner that protects the integrity and values of the members of that group (Yeh & Inman, 2007). The connection between the investigator and the participant is essential to facilitate collaboration and data adequacy.

Thus, through practicing *reflexivity*, the researcher aims to maintain consistent awareness of their perspectives and biases. Reflexivity helps researchers to reflect how

their own biographies and theoretical locations inform what they choose to study and how they choose to examine the topic of interest (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2012). The mutual process of reflexivity encourages focus on how the cultural and structural contexts of the researcher and participants affect the research study. The researcher must then examine his or her own biography as well as the power dynamics present between researcher and participant (Coffey, 1999), to avoid making false assumptions or not recognizing significant insights because of the researcher's preconceptions and privileged experiences, for example. To decrease the power differential between researcher and participant, it is important for researchers to recognize the presumptions and position that they carry with them into the interview process. Additionally, as suggested by Coffey (1999), it is valuable to take a reflective look at how the field has shaped the researcher and how the researcher has shaped the field.

The personal life experiences of the researcher as well as the researcher's interactions with participants have the potential to elicit assumptions for the researcher that must be acknowledged and worked through. Through practicing thoughtful and intentional self-awareness, the researcher may be able to demonstrate agency within the research process (Rennie, 2004). Through participatory consciousness, the researcher, or knower, is empathic, fully engaged, and mutual in the construction of reality with the participant (Morrow, 2005). Through the utilization of constructivism, the researcher focuses on intersubjectivity, which means a shared, foundational understanding of communication and interactions between researcher and participant (Ernest, 1999). Social meanings and knowledge are formed and changed though communication among groups. Knowledge may be gained through the interaction between researcher and

participant within the interview setting. Culture and history of communities and individuals help to construct knowledge (Prawat & Floden, 1994).

Mutuality positions the researcher directly in the interactive process and reality of the interviewee. The processes of mutuality, intersubjectivity, and reflexivity help to co-construct knowledge by recognizing differences between researcher and participant and speaking transparently about the matrix of social locations of the individual researcher and participant as well as within the research dyad (Prawat & Floden, 1994). To pursue research that is inclusive and accurate, researchers must understand their location within the shifting networks of relationships with participants (Banks, 1998).

To accurately represent participant meanings, Morrow (2006) emphasized that researchers make known and examine their own biases about the area of study. Therefore, to make my subjectivities known, it important to articulate my background and social locations. Due to the highly subjective nature of qualitative research, there is always the potential for the researcher's own perspective to muddle the analyzed data. In order to prevent this from happening, I describe my personal social statuses that may have impacted the dynamic between the researcher and participant, my previous experience with and understanding of qualitative research, and my prior work with individuals who experienced sexual violence. This process helps to illuminate my experiences as a cisgender woman and as a professional who worked closely with individuals who experienced sexual violence. Last, I express my preconceived assumptions about the area of study.

Horizons of Understanding

I utilize the term *horizons of understanding* to explain my individual background, previous experiences, and understanding of sexual violence (Rennie, 1994) to provide context in which to help the reader understand my various social locations and identities, as the researcher, and how these may impact the research process. Acknowledging the power or privilege that I have experienced may influence my perceptions and dynamics with the participants. Through outlining these various identities, I aim to manage the power that I may exhibit as the researcher in this study. My particular worldview and perspective has been shaped by my experiences and how I have come to know myself. I grew up in a middle-class family in rural North Dakota, where my father worked and my mother stayed at home with the children. Both of my parents attended and graduated college. I lived in North Dakota for most of my life. I identify as a White, heterosexual, able-bodied, feminist, spiritual cisgender woman. I am a doctoral candidate in counseling psychology, which has provided me with many years of formal education and access to social privilege.

These identities together form a foundation that holds a lot of power within the US cultural context. Through identifying as white, cisgender, middle-class, and highly educated, I recognize that these statuses may exhibit privilege and needed to be monitored while conducting this research study. While some participants may have similar identities, there may be others that have identities or social locations that are not as privileged. This disparity was managed through the language that I used in the interview situation, the way in which I interacted with the participants, and the process in which I analyzed the stories that they express, for example naming and holding at bay any assumptions premised on my privileged statuses.

My prior qualitative research experience involved conducting and completing a grounded theory project for completion of my Master's degree. I interviewed six rural school counselors in North Dakota who had experienced a natural disaster. The focus of the study was to explore the role that they had within their school in the aftermath of a natural disaster. This study gave me foundational experience in the stages of implementing and completing a grounded theory study. Additionally, I have taken a course in qualitative research methods that involved exploring the various qualitative research designs, developing researching questions for an individual project, conducting an interview, and writing up the findings for a final paper. Furthermore, I completed a course in counseling research methods that included qualitative components, due to the qualitative focus of the professor.

In addition, I was involved in conducting a quantitative survey on the prevalence of sexual assault on the OU Campus. This project focused on the occurrence and experiences of individuals who have experienced sexual assault while they were matriculating college students. While this study focused primarily on quantitative methods, there was an opportunity to organize some qualitative responses, which provided me the experience of coding survey-collected qualitative data. My prior research experiences have given me knowledge in gaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, ethical considerations when conducting such a study, recruiting participants, conducting in-person and over the phone interviews, analyzing qualitative data, and writing up the findings in a concise and an accurate manner.

My formal education has given me knowledge in the areas of communication, psychology, and counseling. I have a particular interest in the area of counseling

psychology and the processes related to forming gender identities and gender schemas. While I have gained knowledge in the area of quantitative research through coursework and applied experience, I have gained specific interest in qualitative methods. Previously, I was a communications major and was pursuing a career in journalism before deciding on graduate school for counseling. I still have the journalism nature, in which I aim to understand people's experiences and their understandings of reality. A journalistic perspective matches well with the qualitative process, given that researchers seek to intimately understand individuals' experiences and their stories (Morrow & Smith, 2000). I strongly adhere to the principles of qualitative inquiry to better understand the way in which individuals construct their experience and make sense of their world.

I previously (a) worked as a sexual assault counselor; (b) provided counseling for victims of domestic abuse; (c) worked with victims of sexual violence at the OU Counseling Psychology Clinic; and (d) saw victims of sexual violence at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center. I have counseled many clients individually who had experienced sexual violence in the past. Through these experiences, I gained valuable insight into the phenomenon under study and developed an interest in the influences of sexual violence on internalized gender schemas.

Through the work that I have done with female survivors of sexual violence, I starting noticing particular themes and commonalities of their experiences. The process of gender socialization appeared to have a profound effect on their recovery process: How some individuals saw themselves often became a direct reflection of the process of gender socialization. For example, women may experience a disruption of meaning

structures and their self-concept (Krause & Roth, 2011). Women may doubt their self-worth and question their ability to make reasonable decisions. This powerful process helps to inform and shape women's ability to cope and foster resilience. Women are socialized to believe that they are vulnerable and that violence is an inherent risk (Bell, Turchik, & Karpenko, 2014). Through exploring the literature over the past year, I have noticed a gap in known literature regarding the impact that sexual violence has on gender schemas. The exploration of the topic further helped to confirm that there was room to pursue this type of study and provide a broader context to understand gender socialization processes.

While it is impossible to completely eradicate the experiences and biases of the researcher, I monitored my expectations and prior knowledge of the topic at hand. The assumptions that I have gained through my personal experiences may guide my perspective within this study. Through gaining great exposure to cisgender women who has experienced sexual violence, I have developed a strong sense of empathy for their experiences. I have seen firsthand the effects of gender socialization on women and how this shapes their recovery process. It appears that for some individuals this socialization serves as a real hindrance to their growth and recovery as they seem to be silenced in this process. For example, women may feel the need to protect others from hearing about their experience of sexual violence. Women may not disclose their experience of sexual violence and may remain silent due to the belief that others do not want to be burdened with this information.

Monitoring Subjectivity

My own subjective lenses, perspectives on, and experiences with the topic of the present study have been guiding forces that prompted my initial interest and continue to fuel my pursuance of this study. In order to manage my biases, perspectives, and assumptions, I utilized several strategies that help to maintain a focus on the experiences of the participants and to deemphasize my own experiences (Morrow, 2005). The subjectivities of the participants are an integral part of the data collection process and of the data gathered. The privilege and power held by the researcher will be made transparent to the participants to maintain honesty and trustworthiness within the study. The context of the study is better illuminated when based in the perspectives of the researcher and the vantage point in which the study is conducted (Morrow, 2007).

To manage subjectivity within the study, I used memo writing to make sure that any of my biases were managed. Memo writing involves making analytic notes when transcribing, when reading through the transcriptions, and when engaging in analysis and writing (Creswell, 2013). Analytic notes include concepts and insights that emerge through the research process. I also kept a self-reflective journal in order to make notes of my own thoughts, reactions towards participants, and my choices regarding the topics throughout the whole research process (Fassinger, 2005). I kept a record of my reactions, hunches, feelings, choices, and experiences, and acknowledged any biases and assumptions that came to light (Morrow, 2005). Ongoing notes were maintained to document research team meetings and to make record of the discussions and decisions made in data collection and data analysis. During the research process, I was able to document the ways in which I was thinking and reacting to the experiences of collecting and analyzing data. Documenting my subjective experiences facilitated openness and

honesty for me as the researcher and aided in clearly articulating integrity throughout the study. Transparency within the research process is utilized throughout these strategies.

Utilizing a reflective journal created a trail of the decisions made and the route in which I was able to get there (Ortlipp, 2008). The emerging self-awareness was then examined and given space within the process when interacting with my advisor or my peer research team. The interactions with collaborators helped to determine if I wanted to incorporate this self-reflection into my interactions with participants or analysis of data.

I also managed my subjectivity through regular contact with a peer research team. My peer research team involved graduate students. My peer research team met every other week. They served as a mirror in which to reflect back to me their perspectives and viewpoints about my work (Morrow & Smith, 2000). The peer research team provided critical analysis of the emerging research study. These individuals helped to mitigate any assumptions I had that may have limited the research interactions or when to utilize my assumptions to enhance the research process. I discerned if my assumptions were based on my similarity to or difference from to the participant and I conversed openly with participants about differences. I was careful to consider political, social, and cultural contexts as I moved through the research process.

A third strategy for working through my subjectivities occurred through participant checks, in order to make sure that the data accurately reflected the experience of the participant (Fassinger, 2005). Participant checks occured during individual interviews, by asking clarification questions and sharing the developing

analysis with participants. Any disparities were clarified or further explicated by the participants. This process fostered the collaboration between researcher and participant to maintain the reciprocal dynamic within the process of data acquisition.

By being honest with my views, values, assumptions, and experiences, I worked to meaningfully generate mutual knowledge with participants through memo-writing, interaction with my peer research team, and participant checks. The participants in this study were cisgender adult women who provided their knowledge of the conceptualization and their individual experience of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas.

Specifically, I asked participants the following questions for their feedback on the analysis: 1. Is there anything about your experience that you would like to add to the analysis? 2. Are there any conceptual categories that are more significant to your experience than others? 3. What do you see as the main theme of your experience?

Participants

In this section, I clarify the setting of the research, the participants, selection and recruitment of participants, and strategies for taking leave of participants.

Context

While this study covers a large geographic area, it had specific criteria for inclusion. I pursued potential contacts through snowball sampling to identify a diverse group of participants throughout the US. The recovery process for each individual may look very different and may vary greatly depending on geographic location, prior life experiences, and social supports. In order gain a broader understanding of the impact of sexual violence on a cisgender woman's internalized gender schemas, I utilized a

national search. To provide an example of recruitment sites used in national jurisdictions, I describe the values of rape recovery centers and the YWCA USA.

Rape recovery centers help persons victimized by domestic and sexual violence through providing counseling, groups, and court advocacy. Domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and crisis lines fill an urgent need because no other local group or organization provides these services. The YWCA USA provides a variety of services to help survivors of sexual assault regain control over their lives. Through services such as responding to calls on their 24-hour Rape Crisis Hotline and to hospital advocacy and follow-up counseling, the YWCA provides support for survivors of sexual violence.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited via a national search of individuals connected to centers similar to rape recovery centers and the YWCA in broad jurisdictions and individuals not associated with such centers. The sample size is small in comparison to quantitative methods. Grounded theory relies on the quality of data and theoretical saturation to guide the size of the sample (Charmaz, 2014). Fifteen total participants engaged in this study.

I obtained demographic information from participants at the beginning of their initial individual interviews. Fifteen cisgendered women-identified individuals made up this sample. Participants' ethnic/racial background included White (*n*=7, 47%), Mexican American (*n*=2, 13%), South Asian (*n*=1, 7%), American Indian/First Nation (*n*=1, 7%), Biracial (*n*=4, 27%). In terms of citizenship/nationality, participants identified as United States citizens or United States born (*n*=8, 53%), while the

remaining participants identified as third generation (*n*=3, 20%), second generation (*n*=2, 13%), or first generation (*n*=2, 13%).

Participants' religious and spiritual orientations included Agnostic (*n*=6), Catholic (*n*=3), spiritual (*n*=3), Secular/Atheist (*n*=2), Christian (*n*=1). Participants' self-identified sexual orientations included Heterosexual (*n*=8, 53%), Queer (*n*=1, 7%); Bisexual/Fluid (*n*=4, 27%), Lesbian (*n*=2, 13%). Participants' ages ranged from 22-45 years with a mean of 33.5 years. The sample's ability/disability status was largely Able-Bodied (*n*=12, 80%). Three participants (20%) self-identified disability statuses, including having hearing impairment and a physical disability. Of the 15 original participants, five participants engaged in follow-up interviews. Of the participants involved in follow-up interviews, two identified as persons of color (40%; i.e., South Asian, Mexican American) , two identified as having a disability (40%), two identified as sexual minorities (40%; i.e., lesbian, bisexual), with a mean age of 36.5 years (range of 29 to 44 years). Participation in follow-up interviews was voluntary, and I interviewed all those who responded to follow-up interview recruitment emails. The follow-up interview sample had a slightly older mean age.

Of the 15 original participants, four participants took part in feedback interviews, two of whom previously participated in follow-up interviews. Of the participants involved in feedback interviews, two identified as persons of color (50%; i.e., American Indian, Mexican American), one identified as having a disability (25%), three identified as sexual minorities (75%; i.e., queer, bisexual, queer), with a mean age of 34.5 years (range of 29 to 40 years).

Selection Procedures. For purposes of the study, purposeful and criterion

sampling were utilized to select participants that have similar experiences. Purposeful sampling is choosing participants with a broad range of knowledge on the topic of the study and whose experience is considered typical (Patton, 1990). Purposeful sampling is often utilized within qualitative research in order to confine the inclusion criteria for a particular research project and work to reduce the number of participants required to reach saturation (Charmaz, 2014). Reaching saturation is defined as "gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2014, p.213).

As the study evolved, the description of the emergent conceptual model expanded with more defined information. Individuals with that defined information were then sought out. In order to capture a great breadth of data, individuals with atypical experiences were sought out so that the entire range of experiences may be understood (Polkinghorne, 2005). The purposeful sampling procedure in this study was used to create greater richness of collected data by choosing participants who experienced sexual violence and who experienced feminine gender socialization. By sampling purposefully, a credible and clinically significant result may be obtained (Creswell, 2013). For example, after interviewing and analyzing the first five participant interviews, I developed initial concepts to follow in the next step of data collection. I noticed that three of the participants in the first section of data collection were White and all identified as heterosexual. In this early wave of data collection, I noticed that internalized responsibility and normalization of sexual violence were important concepts to gender socialization. I sought out participants that were members of

different social location groups to clarify initial themes embedded in the data and to provide broader breadth of experience.

Criterion sampling is selecting participants who meet the identified criterion (Polkinghorne, 2005). Initial sampling involves establishing the inclusion criteria and the way in which data is collected. Inclusion criteria for participation in the study was: (a) identifying as a cisgender woman; (b) being at least 18 years old at the time of the study; (c) having experienced a sexual violence that occurred at age 14 or older; and (d) reporting that the most recent sexual violence occurred at least one year before the time of the study. The rationale for utilizing age 14 was due to reporting laws common in many states. For example, in Oklahoma, there is a close in age exemption allows minors over age 14 to consent to a partner younger than 18. In addition, participants must have been willing to be interviewed and speak about their individual experiences. Participants who reported experiences or histories of childhood sexual violence or abuse were excluded from the study as individuals who experience complex or repeated interpersonal trauma may have a more complicated recovery process and experience (Herman, 1992).

Additionally, maximum variation sampling was incorporated to obtain a sample of diverse women that have had varying forms of experience to explore the variability within cisgender women as well as the commonalities they share (Polkinghorne, 2005). In this study, I sought to recruit participants with diverse demographic backgrounds, such as racial/ethnic group; sexual orientation; gender identity; age; ability or disability status; language spoken; and generational or immigrant status were gathered about all participants. Further, I sought participants with varied access to health services,

utilization of any recovery resources past and present, and date and geographic location of sexual violence experiences.

Furthermore, theoretical sampling was employed, which aims to help the researcher elaborate and refine emergent categories. The goal of theoretical sampling is to collect data that fills gaps within the theoretical categories, add density and variation to the categories, and facilitate saturation (Charmaz, 2014). For example, I sought participants with particular identities or experiences not already sampled as well as new data sampled from existing participants in order to crystalize theoretical categories.

Recruitment. After receiving approval from the University of Oklahoma IRB, participants were selected based on their identified experience of sexual violence and their identified gender. Because the phenomenon of the influence of sexual violence on gender schemas may be a difficult topic for some individuals, I highlighted that participation was absolutely voluntary and would facilitate participant withdrawal from the study if at any point participants disclosed a wish to discontinue engagement in the study. I utilized my previous advisor, Dr. Alexis Arcyznksi as a gatekeeper to the field. After securing Arczynski's contribution to participant recruitment, I brainstormed with my peer research team to locate appropriate means of recruiting. Given their prior relationships with potential participants, my peer research team members served as gatekeepers to establish connection and initial rapport with contacts they had. In addition, I contacted and collaborated with my past supervisors and current supervisors at my internship site and obtained their assistance as gatekeepers in the field. I recruited participants through women-centered email distribution lists using e-mail announcements.

When individuals contacted me in response to e-mail announcements, contact from gatekeepers, and/or my requests for participation, I forwarded them a copy of my recruitment letter and informed consent documents for review (see Appendices A and B, respectively). After screening these individuals for interest in and appropriateness for this study, I confirmed that they met inclusion critieria by asking participants their identified gender identity and experience of sexual violence. For purposes of this study, I focused on cisgender women as these ideas developed from my work with cisgender women as a sexual assault counselor. I aimed to explored the impact of socialization for cisgender women as a starting point of study. I also confirmed their involvement by obtaining verbal consent before starting initial interviews.

Further, I utilized colleagues within my graduate program who had conducted a qualitative study on another dimension of sexual violence. They were able to provide me with two contacts that were helpful within their own research process. Furthermore, there was greater likelihood of obtaining a diverse participant sample by expanding to national recruitment. In addition, expanding the breadth of the study provided a broader scope and understanding of the impact of sexual violence on a cisgender woman's gender schemas.

Individuals who indicated interest were contacted to further explain the purpose of the study. I pre-screened participants to verify the inclusion criteria is met by confirming their gender identity, age, and experience of sexual violence. Once they agreed to participate, a convenient time was be set up for a phone interview. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher reviewed the informed consent materials, answered any questions about the study, obtained verbal consent for participation and completed the demographic form. Additionally, the researcher was trained in preparing participants

about the intense and sensitive nature of the topic being studied. The researcher has sufficient clinical knowledge, skills and experience in relation to the topic being studied and the target population, which aided in building rapport and trust from participants, assessing readiness to participate in the study, and containing the interview situation for research versus therapy (Haverkamp, 2005).

Researcher Roles and Relationships with Participants. Through the lens of constructivism, I was a participant as observer that helped foster an honest and collaborative research process (Creswell, 2013). A participant as observer means that I not only observed the participants, I also participated in co-creating meaning of the experiences of the participants (Morrow & Smith, 2000). I actively engaged during interactions with participants by using active listening to ensure I understood the meaning shared to me by the participants. I openly shared my own perspectives and assumptions to establish an environment of transparency: I explicitly told participants about the intentions of the study, my relevant and connected experiences, as well as my biases and assumptions. The goal was to explore and understand the participants, via eliciting data that pertains to their lived experiences and disentangling participants' experiences from my own preconceptions (Creswell, 2013).

Another component of the relationship I developed with the participants was helping to break down some of the power hierarchies implicit to the researcher-participant relationship (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2012). By having clear and open conversations about the power dynamics present in interviews and by asking for feedback throughout the process, my intention was to create a more egalitarian and collaborative approach. The issue of safety was a priority to establish and to maintain an

environment that facilitates participants' abilities to be courageous and engaged during the research process.

Due to the sensitive nature of sexual violence, the researcher supported participants when they encountered overwhelming or difficult feelings. Resources were made available for participants if they needed extra support and were provided via a debriefing process and resource list. Feedback from participants was encouraged to make sure they had a comfortable and safe experience. Maintaining safety was done by explicitly stating this at the beginning of the interview as well as checking in periodically throughout the interview.

In order to manage the boundary between therapist and researcher, I attended to the issues of power, influence, and manipulation. The goal was not to elicit personal change for the individual but rather express their individual experiences (Haverkamp, 2005). Participants may have expected, that as a psychology researcher, I would rely on knowledge that I have to protect their well-being. I have been trained in recognizing signs of distress and how to mitigate high emotional experiences.

Taking Leave. In order to conclude the study in a respectful and ethical manner, I ended the study in a way that gave attention to the participant's effort and willingness. I encouraged participants to provide feedback to empower their participation in the process of developing a conceptual model. Additionally, through the continued feedback process, the intention was to engage the participants and allow them the opportunity for collaboration and contribution to the research field within counseling psychology. Due to the importance of the relationship between participants and researchers, I aimed to make the participant feel comfortable during the entire research process (Haverkamp, 2005). I

had a responsibility to conduct research that is both of benefit as well as avoiding harm to participants.

Follow-up with participants involved an ethics of care, which involves interaction beyond data collection (Haverkamp, 2005). In follow-up debriefing contact, participants were provided with referral information for therapeutic intervention, if needed. This follow-up provided participants the opportunity to be made aware of the progress of the study and allow for any questions they may have as to how their information is being utilized. Participants were provided with information about the potential uses of their information in the final product of the study. I also had a final write-up of the research study available for each participant to thank them for their participation.

The research participants provided greater meaning and understanding of the process of gender socialization and recovery of sexual violence. Cisgender women who have experienced sexual violence were recruited nationally utilizing criterion and snowball sampling. The goal was to recruit a diverse pool of participants who have information-rich experiences.

Sources of Data

Through incorporating different sources of data, the design allowed for further clarification and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. In the present study, individual interviews, participant checks and follow-up interviews, reflexive journals, and researcher analytic memos were all utilized as data sources.

Initial and Follow-up Individual Interviews

In line with a grounded theory research design, I utilized interviews as my main source of data in this study. I conducted interviews by phone (n=15). I was thus able to obtain a wider range of responses from various differing regions of the United States. Telephone interviews were sufficient due to the specific focus of this study and it was not necessary to observe the participants' environment. There was, however, a loss of nonverbal information when conducting the phone interviews.

I began each interview by engaging in informal conversation to help build safety and rapport during the interview process. I then employed the process of briefing participants to the interview by explaining the purpose of the study, the informed consent form, and obtained verbal consent for participation in the study. Following the individual interview, I employed *debriefing*, to answer any questions participants may have had. I expressed the main points I gathered from the interview to allow participants to clarify or expand my understanding. Interviews were a way for individuals to explore their experience in great depth. I created an environment where participants felt heard as I listened intently and encouraged them to talk about their experience. My goal was to obtain intensive depth of what the participant experienced and the meaning they attributed to it. I responded with minimal encouragers and asked for more information in order to gain a strong sense of their experience.

I conducted 15 semi structured individual interviews, ranging from 61 minutes to 110 minutes in length (mean = 85.5 minutes), with a total of 20 hours and 47 minutes of initial individual interviews. Each interview was audio-recorded to be transcribed. I worked with a professional transcriber to transcribe my initial and follow-up interviews.

I performed accuracy checks of the transcriptions by listening to the recorded interviews and making any corrections that needed to be made.

The research question for this study was "How are a cisgender woman's internalized gender schemas influenced by the experience of sexual violence?" I employed the research question to guide the interview questions and to set the foundation for the course of the study. The interview questions were piloted with a cisgender female who was not a part of the study as a way to revise more concise questions that allow for information rich interactions (Fassinger, 2005). Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommend a funnel-like approach to interview protocol construction, which starts with broad questions and moves toward questions that are more specific in nature in order to provide clarification. The following questions guided the interview:

1. Tell me about how you have come to understand gender over your lifetime. What does your gender mean to you? What experiences informed your gender the most?
    a. How was gender discussed or understood while you were growing up?
    b. How has your understanding of gender changed or stayed the same?
    c. What gender roles do you adhere to, if any?
    d. What do you consider to be Feminine? Masculine? How do those ideals fit with your current identity?

2. How did you respond to your experience of sexual violence and what did you notice about how other people reacted to your response?
    a. What did you perceive to be the socially acceptable response to sexual violence?
3. What behaviors did you perceive to be reinforced following your experience of sexual violence? What behaviors were not reinforced? How did your gender identity/roles change following the experience of sexual violence? If so, what were those changes?
4. Did you perceive any changes in your perception of yourself? How much have you opened up to others?

Participant Observation

Researchers fluctuate within a continuum from participant to observer with a qualitative research design (Spradley, 1980). I had a desire to foster collaboration and development in knowledge during interviews and therefore was a conversational participant at times. I took on a central position but leaned toward an observer of participants' constructions. My experience as a sexual assault counselor helped to inform my interactions with participants. Through attending to my own reactions throughout the interview process and participating in the interview, the power differential between participant and researcher was decreased.

I documented participants' interactions with me and emotional reactions throughout the interview. My own reactions, feelings, and discoveries during the interview process were also documented as field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Descriptions of the interview in an organized and systematic way allowed for patterns to

emerge and augmented the analysis process.

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Analytic Memos and Journals

Memo-writing was an imperative step in the grounded theory research design (Charmaz, 2014). Writing memos encapsulated the ideas, hunches, insights, feelings, and choices of the researcher. It provided a glimpse into the critical reflexivity and constructive processes that take place (Charmaz, 2014). Memos were a space for the researcher to engage with the information and provide a concrete form of the assumptions and choices of the researcher. Throughout each step of the process, memos were utilized to record the decisions that occur during peer group meetings and throughout the progression of collecting and analyzing the data (Charmaz, 2014; Fassinger, 2005; Morrow, 2005). I utilized memos during each peer group meeting, after each interview, and following any meetings with my advisor. The memoing process aided in gaining a more complete picture of the phenomena being studied and provided a description of the context beyond the verbatim interview data. Memo writing also allowed the researcher to sort through the codes and categories and to identify any gaps in the analysis. Through memo-writing, I was able to construct new ideas and create new connections which aided in my developing my voice and rhythm as a writer (Charmaz, 2014).

I utilized early memos to discover and fill out the codes that started to emerge (Charmaz, 2014). I was able to record what I saw happening in the data and provided focus for later data collection. Grounded theory research design allows for the search for processes and explores the meanings and conditions surrounding specific relationships (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, I utilized advanced memos. These memos

allowed the researcher to identify any beliefs and assumptions about the categorized data. The codes, categories, participant experiences, and concepts from the data were all sharpened through this writing process.

Reflexive journals were also incorporated to record researcher impressions. I used reflexive journals to explore my reactions to the participants, the emerging analysis, and the research situation. They also assisted in unfolding my biases and assumptions as well as examining the influences of power in the research situation. In order to minimize the power differential, acknowledging difference between researcher and participant is a valuable way to minimize the power differential present (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2016). The researcher recognized that the social locations and conditions of one's existence impacted the knowledge that they have and the ways in which researchers render collected data.

Through utilizing the process of triangulation, I collected data that had both depth and breadth. I incorporated individual interviews, participant as observer, follow-up interviews, participant checks, analytic memos and journals to ensure accuracy and to enhance the analysis and subsequent findings. Through data collection and analysis, findings emerged that were reflective of a constructivist paradigm and grounded theory research design.

Participant Checks and Follow-up Interviews

I utilized participant checks during initial interviews and during the entire data analysis process. I checked in with participants to confirm that I understood their experience and to seek additional or disconfirming evidence. As I carefully reviewed transcripts, I recorded follow-up questions to clarify or deepen meaning through email

or phone calls. Upon completion of the 15 initial phone interviews, I emailed participants offering the option of a follow-up interview or answering questions via email. I conducted five follow-up interviews via phone lasting 26 to 49 minutes each, for a total of 3 hours and 59 minutes. I asked questions of participants that filled any gaps in their initial interview or to make sense of unclear or vague aspects of the emerging conceptual categories, or to clarify any disconfirming evidence.

The purpose of feedback interviews was to engage participants as collaborators by requesting their feedback on the emergent conceptual model. I invited participants to meet via email or phone to provide any feedback they had. I conducted four feedback interviews via phone ranging from 32 minutes to 47 minutes for a total of 2 hours and 24 minutes. I emailed each participant an electronic narrative of the conceptual categories and subcategories. I asked that the participants review the narrative and offered to talk participants through the narrative. Three out of the four participants asked me to talk through the conceptual categories and subcategories. I adjusted the conceptual model to match participants' revisions. The feedback from participants was crucial to the emergence of the central category, its relationships to other categories, and the final conceptual model.

Data Analysis and Writing

The impact of sexual violence on gender schemas was examined through constructivist grounded theory. The purpose of analysis from a grounded theory perspective is to define what is happening in the data and start to understand its meaning (Charmaz, 2014). Through analysis, the researcher is able to synthesize theoretical statements with contextual analyses of actions and experiences. Within this

section, I explain the processes for data management, data analysis, and writing up the findings of the study.

Data Management

In order to compile and organize the data corpus, I incorporated the use of Atlas.ti (Muhr, 1991). Although I anticipated doing most of the later stages of analysis through note cards and a paper and pen, using the software helped to create some structure and simplicity to the immense amount of data, particularly in the early phases of analysis. Furthermore, Atlas.ti provided a way in which to simplify the process of early data analysis and facilitated the process of keeping track of the codes, categories, and memos that emerged.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through the iterative processes of immersion, initial coding, focused coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding. After verifying each transcription, which served as the first step in immersion, I read through each to begin the coding process, to immerse myself in the data corpus. During the first read through, I did not take any notes but rather become familiar with the individual experiences of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I then listened to the interview recordings and made analytic notes of my beginning thoughts on the data. These analytic notes were the beginning of my analytic notes and were stored in my computer for utilization in impending data analysis. I then re-read the transcripts again before starting the coding process. Through immersion, I ensured that the voices of the participants were being accurately portrayed and driving the course of analysis.

The coding procedures that Charmaz (2014) has recommended were utilized in analyzing the transcripts. Coding involves naming and summarizing portions of data (Charmaz, 2006). The initial procedure is *initial coding*, which involves exploring the possible theoretical outcomes that may emerge from the data. As expressed by Charmaz, "Initial codes are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data... [to] remain open to other analytic possibilities and create codes that best fit the data you have." (p. 117). In initial coding, I went through and deciphered each sentence that expressed a similar concept into meaningful units. I gained an understanding of how participants understood their situations before I made assumptions about their behavior and actions (Charmaz, 2014).

Initial Coding. Through the process of initial coding, codes were utilized to encapsulate meanings and actions. Further, codes must invoke the reader while also capturing the phenomenon being studied. Line-by-line coding was the first step into initial coding. Line-by-line coding allows the researcher to interact with the data and study each component presented. Furthermore, line-by-line coding defined meanings, created directions for exploration, and suggested similarities among processes within the data to follow-up with future data collection. It is possible to detect patterns within the individual experiences and more fully analyze the phenomenon. *In-vivo codes* helped to highlight the meaning of the participant's words and actions by employing their words to construct code names. I looked for the implicit meanings and paid attention to how participants constructed these meanings (Charmaz, 2014). The experiences of the individuals drove the conceptual model and helped explain the phenomenon (Fassinger, 2005).

Focused Coding. In an effort to condense and sharpen the conceptual quality of the work already done through initial coding, *focused coding* relies on what is important in the initial analysis. Focused coding involves focusing in on the codes that appear more frequently or have greater significance within the analysis. After establishing a base for direction through the initial coding process, I was able to synthesize and conceptualize larger portions of data using focused codes as emergent categories (Charmaz, 2014). One way to assess the value of focused codes as to their conceptual strength is to attend to how well they adequately account for the data presented. Furthermore, focused coding means utilizing codes that have more direction and more central focus of the budding analysis.

Axial Coding. A third type of coding that I utilized *is axial coding.* Axial coding involves organizing relationships within the categories by combining subcategories previously delineated into emerging superordinate categories. It also helps to clarify and expand on the analytic power of the emergent categories (Charmaz, 2014). For example, Strauss and Corbin (1998) contend that axial coding involves answering the following questions, "when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences" (p.125). Answering these questions allows the researcher to capture more fully the individual experiences being studied.

Theoretical Coding. Similarly, *theoretical coding* moves to integrate the codes already established by conceptualizing how categories relate to one another. Charmaz (2014) suggests that these codes aim to "move your analytic story in a theoretical direction" (p. 150). During the final state of coding, the researcher attempts to explicate and connect the codes in a meaningful way. A core or central story thus encompasses

the codes and serves as the emergent substantive model (Ponterotto & Zárate, 2010). The emerging model is then compared to the data to ensure accurate reflection of participants' experiences and is compared to the existing literature to provide stronger explanation.

Throughout the research process, I engaged in *constant comparative methods,* to find similarities and difference among the data. Utilizing this method allowed for gaps or holes in the data to present themselves to go deeper into the research problem and engage in emerging categories. Charmaz (2014) has expressed that this method includes comparing data from different individuals, comparing individual participant data at different parts of their narratives, and comparing categories with other categories. The goal of coding is to construct meaning from the data from various individuals or incidents.

Data collection and constant comparison reached a stopping point when no new information was discovered, when the categories were complex enough to capture any distinctions in the participants' experiences, and when the similarities between categories were agreeably defined. I developed a conceptual understanding of the data that has been collected to synthesize the experiences of individuals. I incorporated the use of analytic notes to focus my understanding of the process of analysis and the subsequent connections that made within the data.

Analytic memos were incorporated throughout the data analysis. I carefully tracked the emerging design and theory through writing down my hunches, interpretations, and any changes made throughout the process (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, memos aided in the exploration of gaps in the data and documenting my

interpretations of the emerging analysis. Memoing provided a tangible chronology of the research choices and activities that take place. The analytic process was enhanced through keeping notes throughout the entire research process and was reviewed for possible incorporation into the analysis (Morrow, 2005).

A typical element of a grounded theory research design is the quest for disconfirming evidence. This quest is to seek out any discrepancies, holes, and flaws in the explanatory model in order to effectively harness variation between and among participants into a synthesized analysis (Charmaz, 2014). I repeatedly checked the participant's original narrative against the conceptual model and perused the literature for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Fassinger, 2005). Through this exploration, the analysis was refined and given greater explanatory power. Disconfirming evidence also gained through meetings with my research team, through writing memos, and through the interview process. This search for contrary evidence helped to combat my inclination to seek information that confirms initial findings. Through exploration of disconfirming evidence in comparison to confirming evidence, the intricacies of individual experiences are given voice (Morrow, 2005). Revision was necessary throughout the research process to establish and maintain accuracy of the participant's experiences.

Writing

The results of the data analysis yielded a substantive conceptual model. Rather than predicting a social process, this model provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas. The interconnected concepts that formed this framework establish a model about the process of socialization on gender schemas. The flexibility of the model allows for reconceptualization and modification

as new information becomes known or the phenomenon evolves. Additionally, quotations were utilized to situate the model within the data. Time was taken to ensure that there was equal space given to each participant by verifying frequency of quotations used within the narrative. Through development of the initial model of gender schemas after sexual violence, I provided the opportunity for feedback from participants to disconfirm any evidence, thus enhancing the narrative.

A grounded theory research design was used once immersed in the data. Once the subsequent analysis was saturated and confirmed by the participants, the findings were written in a succinct, accurate manner that highlighted the experiences of the participants (Morrow, 2005). Furthermore, I incorporated varying methods that addressed any concerns in the qualitative endeavor and promoted trustworthiness within this study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness criteria are important for qualitative researchers to promote the quality and the scientific merit of a study and to strive for quality throughout the entire research process (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). A constructivist research paradigm may be understood through *authenticity criteria* or *intrinsic criteria*, as set forth by Lincoln (1995). The components of authenticity criteria are fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, and catalytic authenticity (Morrow, 2005).

Trustworthiness, dependability, and credibility were pursued by adhering to guidelines and expectations involved in qualitative research (Morrow, Hansen, Haverkamp, & Ponterotto, 2005). Credibility involves examining the data to explore

and understand the meaning of each participant's experience, which helps the researcher to develop themes and theory that accurately reflects the data. The term *fairness* ensures that multiple perspectives and experiences are obtained throughout the research process. Fairness was utilized by honoring the diverse individual experiences of the participants (Morrow, 2007). In order to obtain a diverse range of experiences, I worked to recruit participants who had differing experiences of socialization and support following the experience of sexual violence. Furthermore, I sought out experiences from individuals of diverse social locations and intersecting identities. I recruited participants on a national scale, thus diversifying the geographic influence on internalized gender schemas. In addition, the participants were given the opportunity to review their transcript and verify its accuracy.

Participant checks allowed for any correction of errors, clarification of additional information, or confirmation of previous information given. Disconfirming evidence that was sought helped to rule out other possible explanations and to refine the analysis to encapsulate a breadth of experiences (Charmaz, 2014). Searching for discrepant findings is important to combat any confirmatory bias and to add complexity to the interpretation (Morrow, 2005). Additionally, care was taken to ensure that there was equal participation among participants in the final written product by maintaining a balance of quotations from each individual participant.

Ontological authenticity sets forth that the participants' individual experiences are elaborated and extended (Morrow, 2005). To further elucidate and understand the meaning and context of their experience, I implemented an awareness of the power dynamics and how that may have impacted the research process. I aimed to create a safe

environment where the participants felt comfortable in sharing their experiences. Similarly, to make sure the data accurately represent the reality of the participant rather than my own experiences, I took on a naïve interviewer stance (Yeh & Inman, 2007), meaning I did not assume I knew the participants' meaning. I asked questions and further elicited understanding of their experience.

I sought out understanding and clarity by asking questions and confirming my data with participants. I elicited participant feedback, in the form of participant checks and follow-up interviews, to ensure analytic accuracy. I used participant feedback to enhance accuracy of the emerging model and narrative, by confirming or disconfirming the interpretive analysis. I also utilized triangulation of data sources, including individual interviews, participant observation, follow-up interviews, participant checks, analytic memos, and reflexive journals to challenge any researcher bias that presented itself.

Educative authenticity involves giving participants an opportunity to gain an understanding of the experiences of other participants (Morrow, 2005). This process occurred during the interviews, by sharing my developing perspective with participants and by engaging in participant checks of the emerging analysis. During the follow-up interviews, I shared my developing model of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas to increase the participant's understanding of the perspectives of other participants. In participant checks, I provided my emerging analysis on the impact of sexual violence on a cis-woman's internalized gender schemas. Providing an initial analytic model helped participants to gain a sense of the direction in which the analysis was going and increased their awareness of the integrated perspectives of participants.

Sharing the developing model with participants served to increase participants' knowledge and awareness regarding sexual violence recovery, which may have been normalizing and validating to their own experiences.

Catalytic authenticity involves decreeing change or action through the research process (Morrow, 2005). Sharing the initial and final findings will potentially cause change for the participants. There are several reasons that an individual might choose to participate in research interviews. One important reason cited by Campbell and Adams (2009) is for the potential to help other victims. Similarly, individuals may find insight and recovery themselves through the research process. Researchers have indicated that between 27% and 96% of victims of sexual assault describe some form of benefit from participating in sexual trauma focused research (Campbell et al., 2010; Carlson et al., 2003; Edwards et al., 2009).

My goal was to promote change within the area of counseling psychology by disseminating an empirically derived conceptual model of the influence of sexual violence on gender schemas at trainings and conferences, and in courses to increase awareness, knowledge, and skills of the impact of sexual violence on a cis-woman's gender schema. The completed study may be submitted to relevant scholarly journals to increase the distribution of the findings and the implications of this study.

The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced through various mechanisms of rigor, such as prolonged engagement with participants, peer debriefing, disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity, and co-constructed meaning with participants. Reflexivity was utilized to manage my subjectivity through a self-reflective journal and participant checks. Rigor was enhanced through providing rich descriptions of the

participants' experiences as well as comparing new data with emerging analysis (Morrow, 2005). Rich, thick descriptions were established and utilized, imbuing the analysis with a dense description of the participants' experiences integrated with related contextual factors, such as the social positioning of the participant (Morrow, 2007). The layered cultural context helped to inform the individual experiences of socialization and internalized gender schemas.

In order to increase the dependability, or "consistency of study across time, researchers, and techniques" of the study, an audit trail was implemented (Morrow, p. 252, 2005). The research process was made explicit and transparent by keeping an audit trail. An audit trail is a chronological catalogue of all the research activities and decision-making steps involved in data collection and analysis. Additionally, interviews, field notes, and participant checks were documented. Detailed notes or memos addressed hunches and reactions as a way to increase the careful and rigorous analysis of the data. I de-identified the audit trail and gave the edited documents to my peer research team to elicit feedback on the method, process, and analysis. A condensed version of the audit trail is included in the appendix of my dissertation.

Through working within a constructivist paradigm, trustworthiness is best understood through the components of authenticity criteria including fairness, ontological authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and educative authenticity. I took various steps in which to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness within this study. Furthermore, careful attention was paid to ethical considerations to ensure the wellbeing of all participants.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained approval from IRB of the University of Oklahoma to conduct my research and followed the accepted procedures. The ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) guided the research of this study. Due to the immersion within the interview process, there was the potential for heightened emotions. I attended to this possibility by explaining the risks to the participants during the informed consent process and made sure they were aware in advance of the study (Haverkamp, 2005).

I navigated potential dual roles as a psychologist in training who conducted qualitative interviews by fostering collaboration with participants (Haverkamp, 2005). I encouraged participants to become involved with setting goals for the research and identifying any personal benefits that they are to gain from their involvement. Furthermore, I monitored and articulated expectations of the research process. One way to do this was to view informed consent as an ongoing, dynamic process and taking responsibility for ongoing consent.

To ensure confidentiality of the interview transcriptions and participant checks, all identifying information was removed and pseudonyms were used. All paper documents were kept in a locked file cabinet and all electronic data were kept in a password-protected computer. Any identifying information was removed in the conceptual model and pseudonyms were employed to ensure the privacy of each participant.

Chapter 3 : Findings

The purpose of this study was to expand the literature pertaining to gender schemas after sexual violence among cisgender women. In this chapter, I provide the findings of a grounded theory analysis from individual, follow-up, and feedback interviews with cisgender women. Participants described their understanding of gender growing up, their own reactions to sexual violence, and the response of others around them. From these data, I describe the conceptual categories by outlining their analytic properties, the conditions from which they arise, and their consequences. I also present the social processes underlying conceptual categories.

Further, I define how the conceptual categories relate to one another and relate to the core category. One core conceptual category and five related conceptual categories emerged from this grounded theory analysis. These categories explain the experiences of cisgender women and exist as an interlocking system. That is, each distinct category needs the others in order for socialization to exist as a framework. The core category is *Gender as Operating Principle.* The women in this study anticipated the consequences of their gender roles by integrating the remaining conceptual categories in their internalized experience of sexual violence. The ways in which they conceptualized the complexities of power included (a) *Performing Gender*; (b) *Internalized Responsibility*; (c) *Normalization of Sexual Violence*; (d) *Reconciling the Self*; (e) *Consistency of Gender Roles; (f) Looking at the Way Context Impacts Women*. I utilize participants' words as illustrative examples of the conceptual model.

Core Category: Gender as Operating Principle

Gender as Operating Principle was the core conceptual category and central component of the experience of sexual violence. Actively dealing with and understanding the complexities of gender was how participants explained how they conceptualized their experience and why they responded in the way that they did. Cisgender women dealt with the complexities of sexual violence by acknowledging that gender expectations often account for inequity in relationships. Participants went on to explain that gender differences are instilled from a very early age and often inform their decisions and realities. Gender was a complex variable in participants' relationships and subsequent experience of sexual violence. Although women felt a sense of agency in their life, expectations of gender often played a role in how they thought they should present themselves. Gender as operating principle emerged from the conditions of responsibility that women feel to portray themselves in a particular way in order to be accepted. This responsibility guided the decisions made within relationships. Participants acknowledged tension between external influences and their internal sense of self. The core category is shown below in Table 1; each property is then further explained through the participants' words.

Table 1
Core Category: Gender as Operating Principle

Properties of Gender as Operating Principle
• Performing Gender
• Internalized Responsibility
• Normalization of Sexual Violence
• Reconciling the Self
• Consistency of Gender Roles
• Looking at the Way Context Impacts Women

Performing Gender

To the cisgender women in the current study, dealing with the complexities of gender meant knowing that the role of women is often in contrast to that of men. The gender differences that are reinforced are often very powerful and consistent. The nature of performing gender informs how individuals interact with and respond to relational dynamics. Michelle spoke of her experience with how a male acquaintance responded to feelings of rejection:

> After I told him I wasn't interested, he responded with a message that said, "hurting you emotionally is the least of what I wish I could do to you." I took that as a rape threat. He used to be one of my best friends. I was really upset and confused.

Carly identified the impact of performing gender on her sense of self:

> It can be really exhausting to be true to who you are at your core and fitting into the ideals set out by society. Like, for example, making sure you are put together, as a woman, or that your appearance is appealing to those around you.

Women in the study spoke about ways in which gender expectations came into conflict with how they envisioned their life. Like MT explained through her church community growing up, that she did not agree with a lot of what was taught but what was expected of her. Similarly, Jo found that once she experienced sexual violence, she found a lot of conflict with ideals that she was taught growing up about purity and what that meant for her future relationships. The expectations of how a woman should react were prominent throughout the women's experiences. For example, Jess expressed, "I was very forthcoming that I was raped and that was what led me to this research. A lot of women told men not to air my dirty laundry like that. I was surprised. I wanted to help people realize this is real. That this mattered. I got a lot of negative reactions to

being outspoken and disproportionate women. I would have a lot of men tell me that I am not allowed to be emotional in public."

Internalized Responsibility

Internalizing responsibility for participants meant personally taking on the responsibility for what happened to them. It was accepting the responsibility for personal welfare or for consequences of actions instead of putting the blame on others. The complexity of gender has the ability to create differentials and dichotomies where women do not have as much power. When such inequity of power does exist, the burden of responsibility may fall on those with less influence. A woman's gender may also influence the sense of responsibility she feels for her experiences. Tia shared, "I went over and over the incident in my head, asking what I could have done differently. I must have done something wrong where this happened to me. Maybe I was actually interested in him and I was giving him signals or flirting with him." Michelle explained about how her choice in clothing may have made a difference: "I remember looking at my closet and thinking about how much meaning was read into a lot of things that I owned. I was a girl and because I was with this guy. I felt like literally the clothing I wore was indicative of what he deserved from me." Some women shared that external influences impacted their sense of feeling responsible. For example, Carly shared, "I was really disappointed when the investigator grilled me about what I was wearing and how much I had had to drink that night. I felt like I was not going to be believed and that if I had done something differently, I would not have been raped." In addition, women's sense of responsibility shifted depending on the degree to which they accepted or rejected beliefs and values learned from greater culture, that pertained to, for

example, age, gender, power, and/or control. Furthermore, Gwen went on to identify the conflict that she experienced about feeling in control of her life:

> I felt like part of me had control over my decisions and ultimately what happened to me. There was another part, though, that kept vying for my attention. This was the part that was saying that somehow, I played a role in being assaulted, that something was inherently flawed about my judgement. For a time, I did not know which part to listen to.

On the other hand, some women spoke about how they altered their behaviors in a way that they could predict or control future experiences. Women in this study often found that they changed something in the way they lived as a way to accept this responsibility. Carmen stated, "I started wearing baggy clothes and my hair in a ponytail in an effort to draw less attention to myself. I figured if I somehow caused the assault the first time, then I would be able to responsibly produce a different outcome for myself." Jess echoed, "I started never going out alone at night, carrying mace, and really did not hang around any males for a couple years. I did not think any men were safe to be around. For the first year, I did not hardly ever leave my apartment on the weekends."

Normalization of Sexual Violence

When dealing with the complexities of gender and sexual violence, these women experienced various messages that reinforced sexual violence. Many participants iterated that sexual assault was something that they got used to or that was almost expected. Mariah expressed, "I have known so many women that have gone through the same that I have and for what? I wonder what it takes for this to end. I was told more than once, that I just need to get over it and that it is all in my head, that I am angry and am trying to get revenge." Similarly, Michelle stated, "You get used to it. It is so

unbelievably common. Sexual assault is just accepted as part of the heterosexual dating culture. I was fortunate enough to not be sexually assaulted since then." The process of socialization can serve as a very strong reinforcer of cultural and gender norms. The women in this study all had some external response that suggested to them that they should not disrupt the status quo. MT explained about her experience of negative social messages for trying to speak up:

> The few times I did try to reach out and ask for help, no one helped, it was like it's okay, this is normal. This happens everywhere so I didn't know better and every time something inside me would try to rise up and tell me it's not right, every other model in my life was saying it was normal. Those that were slightly appalled were afraid to ask so they reinforced the idea that this is normal.

According to participants, their experience of sexual violence was often minimized by their perpetrator, the ones they love, or the very systems that are set up to help victims. Joann shared:

> I was hesitant about reporting my sexual assault as I had people around me saying that I wasn't going to win because it was my word against his. One of my friends actually said to me, how can you prove that it happened? I was very upset and distraught by the disbelief that so many around me had. I thought I would've had more support in going through this.

Although Tara had a different experience, she echoed some of the same sentiments, "I was quite disappointed in my now ex-boyfriend's response to my sexual assault. I told him as I was afraid of being sexual intimate and wanted to give him some context of what I had been through. He responded in a very matter of fact way, saying, 'Are you sure that it was rape?' I was crushed, and it really made me question our relationship from that point on." Further, the act of reporting sexual violence can be disappointing to victims. The participants in this study iterated some of the challenges that come with reporting and pressing charges against their assailant. Jess shared:

> After I lost the court case, the university were involved in the sense that like they put a university's version of a restraining order between him and I. I didn't want to be in classes with him. They said if either one of us tried to contact each other, whoever initiated contact would be kicked out of the university. Since he wasn't found responsible, I was not allowed to tell anyone that this specific person like identify him as someone who had done this to me. Which was shocking to me. They said of course you probably talked to people in your life that he did this to you, but you are not allowed to talk to the school newspaper or tell your coworkers that this person did this to you. This would be a violation and you would get kicked out of school.

Reconciling the Self

Reconciling the self meant that women in this study often found that they had to compartmentalize parts of themselves. This process of dissonance occurred when women felt that others did not want to see how broken or hurt they were. Theresa expressed, "I only wanted to show the good parts of myself; the parts that are happy and joyful. I was afraid that if I showed any of the damaged parts, that I would be rejected or that I would be seen as less than. It was better to just keep these things separate." Participants expressed that there was a sense of loss of who they used to be. Along the same lines, women in this study expressed the need to want to protect themselves from too much vulnerability or exposure to others. For example, Paula discussed her hesitancy about opening up to others,

> I just felt like my vulnerability had already been shown and I did not want that to happen again. I felt that if I trusted someone and became too close, then I would be taken advantage of again. For the longest time, I have tried really hard to maintain a safe distance from others, even if I am dating them, in order to protect myself.

Participants of the study iterated that they felt a sense of disconnect between the different parts of themselves. One such way that this happened was through the impact

of sexual violence on the intersecting identities of individuals. One participant, Mariah, stated:

> Part of my white socialization is to make sure that everything is okay and that I make sure others around me are taken care of, but there was a sense of freedom that there might be more believability about my experience. On the other hand, my black socialization reinforced that I should keep to myself and that the very systems of power that are in place to help me may actually hurt me.

One way that individuals thought of their sense of self was that they saw a interruption of meaning structures and their self-concept. Self-concept involves an all-encompassing awareness of who you used to be, who you are in the present, and the expectations you have of who you can be in the future. Beth stated, "I doubted who I was and questioned whether I had any self-worth. I started to wonder whether I was able to make good decisions and if I would experience this again. I really hoped that this was not my destiny; that I would not experience sexual assault for as long as I live."

Jo went on to express that it was really difficult for her to understand her experience, "I lived in a safe neighborhood with a lot of lighting. I did all of the things I was supposed to do. It just does not make sense to me that this happened. I still struggle with question of 'why me' and what it meant for how I lived my life."

Women are socialized to believe that they may be vulnerable to experiencing violence and that they are inherently at risk. This expectation can make women feel more on guard and think that they have to take precautions in order to protect themselves. Ella shared:

> I still feel like I have to watch my surroundings and make sure that I do not go out alone at night. I can't even run out to my car at night because I don't know what will happen. I even put pillows around me at night in an attempt to keep anyone away. I don't know what might happen.

Participants acknowledged that there was a disruption in their identity and how they view themselves. The idea that women had to rebuild their sense of self and what they had to offer was relevant for many of the women. They described how specific experiences in their life, including sexual violence, shaped how they conceptualized themselves. For example, Tia illustrated, “I felt very confident before I was raped. I felt a strong sense of who I am and what I wanted. After, I had no freaking idea. I was shattered to the core. I knew who I wanted to be, I just was not able to actually know who that was anymore.”

Continuity of Gender Roles

Reinforcement of gender roles meant that the women in the study experienced the reinforcement of traditional gender expectations. This consistency meant that the roles of power, privilege, and context played a large role in what they experienced. Jo stated, “I literally was told that there was no point in me reporting my assault as they would not believe me because my perpetrator had a lot of money and influence. I felt confined in the power that I had over my situation and how I could find closure.” Therefore, participants managed the complexities of these gender roles through a intricate process by which women both internally and externally reconciled any present inconsistencies. The women addressed issues of self-reflection, identity, transparency, and attention to context in order to find empowerment in their experiences. Michelle expressed, “I felt like I owed everybody explanations for what they wanted. I also felt like I had to do a lot of caregiving for them if they had a really hard reaction or they were really upset. I felt like I had to reassure them that I was okay even if I wasn’t or

assure them that this is really rare. I feel like I was doing all of this education instead of them helping me."

Theresa explained a similar sentiment. She stated, "I felt like I was responsible to other's reactions to my sexual assault. I found that I did not want to share what I had been through because I didn't know how they would react. I did not think that others could handle the violence that I experienced." Similarly, Carly shared about how she did not feel validation for her experiences, but rather she felt that as a woman, that she should perform certain duties:

> I found that I did not want to tell everything about what I had been through because I didn't think others could handle it. My mom, for instance, told me that I should not make waves and not make a big deal out of what I had been through. I also heard something similar from my grandmother, who stated that I should be happy that I received positive attention from a man.

To the participants, one of the main themes was that they felt a need to protect others around them. Women in this study expressed that they often had to suffer alone as an attempt to protect others from their pain. For example, Jo described:

> I did not want to share too much. I did not know how others would react to me or the ones that I did share with, were incredibly upset and I felt like I had to take care of them. I found it incredibly tiring, where I had to try and console others. Eventually, I just stopped sharing about my experience because of how much energy it took, and I didn't think they would be able to handle it.

Further, participants found ways to reconcile the discrepancies in their beliefs. For some, this involved finding acceptance within their faith community, while, for others, this involved many years of counseling. For example, MT stated:

> I was like I cannot continue to worship a god that thinks it's okay and let this happen. I have to have a new paradigm of god, but I think I have to understand right and wrong, what is healthy and unhealthy before I can try to rebuild that. I am going to take a moment to reconcile and when I think that I can reconcile this, I will thank you god.

For others, it involved figuring out their spiritual journey on their own without the support of their family. The challenge of doing this was to create a sense of community that differed from what they grew up with. Gwen expressed:

> I found that there were many contradictions to how I view myself currently versus how I was raised. I did feel guilty about changing some of these beliefs, but ultimately, I wanted what was best for myself. My family is orthodox Jew, but I do not a feel a sense of connectedness to these beliefs. I wanted to carve my own path for myself and figure out what best fit for me and my experiences. There has definitely been conflict between me and my parents because of this. Because of my experience of sexual assault, I felt strongly about figuring out what fit for me.

The participants of the study expressed that they often felt a need to close off to others and protect others from the details of their experience. Some of the participants said that they found that the need to care for others and to make sure everyone was okay was reinforced even after experiencing sexual violence. For one participant, Tara, it was pronounced, as she stated, "I had to make sure that everyone around me was okay, and at the end of the day, I could care for myself. There were certain messages I received about making sure that I did not talk about things that were about sex or sexual assault. I felt very unsure about what to talk about as shame was such a strong influence for me." Mariah expressed, "I noticed that people treated me differently, like some of my friends did not want to talk about what happened or they just felt sad for me. In a sense, I felt like if I shared too much, that they would not want to go there or that they would stop talking to me." Some of the ways that individuals talked about their sexual assault experience was that they did not feel any acceptance about their situation or any type of closure for what transpired. Women in the study often felt that they had to take care of the needs of others before their own. For example, Theresa, stated, "I felt like the other

person's response had more weight than mine, that somehow if I shared this dark secret about myself, that I would experience this sense of shame that I honestly wanted to avoid." The participants expressed that it was challenging to overcome the gendered expectations surrounding their experience of sexual violence. They iterated that the encouragement to care for the needs of others, the messages about not speaking up about their experience, and the sense of remaining silent throughout their recovery was often overwhelming and a way to maintain the status quo.

Looking at the Way Context Impacts Women

The women that participated in this study articulated ways in which they worked to challenge some of the gendered assumptions they encountered. Specifically, there were ways in which women felt empowered to make a difference in the lives of other women. Beth, shared one way that she cultivated this empowerment:

> I started doing research on sexual assault and actually started working at a women's shelter. That was where I felt like I could make a positive difference for women that had similar experiences. If I can help bring hope and change to one person's life, then I have done something right.

Similarly, Ella found herself wanting to create change through teaching:

> One of the ways that I found healing and closure when I could not find justice in my own experience, is going around and teaching classes on consent around my local colleges and high schools. I think this is such an important construct to empower both young men and women to have positive sexual experiences. I wish I would have had that information growing up.

Further, there were various ways in which the women sought to respond to their their experience through enacting change. The strive for system change was on the forefront for some of the participants as a form of empowerment. For Jo, this meant becoming a victim's advocate:

> I wanted to do my part in making being a physically present in the court room for victims. I felt that my presence could provide some sense of safety and support during this difficult process. I feel a need to work with the courts in order to help bring about much needed change.

One woman, Carly, heightened her sense of empowerment by deciding on a new career path:

> I actually decided to become a lawyer after my experience of sexual violence. I was devasted when I learned how common this happens to women. I wanted to be that voice in which women could rely on to help justice be served. I have taken on many women clients that are needing to take back their power and find some closure for their experience.

Some women recognized the difficulty in challenging the norms of society and what it means to be a woman in the United States. The social responses and forces were often powerful ways to prevent women from making a difference. Joanna iterated such difficulty:

> I definitely recognize that there are so many barriers facing women. I mean, you look at all these celebrities that are being called out for sexual harassment. I have seen how some of these women are treated by even other women. I can see how that would be enough to make someone not want to step forward when you consider other factors to consider such as career, family, and social acceptance.

In addition, the weight of experiencing sexual violence is often defeating. Gwen shared, "Sometimes I become really upset when I think about all of this happening to women who do not deserve it. I try to maintain a positive attitude, but it can be suffocating to think that women are just supposed to accept this violence as something that is almost expected."

Summary

Participants had a great deal of power attributed to their gender roles due

to the reinforcement of their socially defined behaviors. Power in gender roles was not simple. Instead, it was complex, due to the intersection of individual identity and social locations of age, race, spiritual, and sexual identity. Cisgender women saw and recognized tensions between how others reacted to their experience and their own internal experience. The participants in this study explained how powerful social structures impact their perception of their experience. The participants noted that there was an internal sense of responsibility that often occurred. The women in this study found that they could not escape gender, as sexual violence often brought this identity to the forefront. Furthermore, this study found that the context in which a woman lives her life can impact her well-being and quality of life.

Conclusion

These cisgender women worked to resolve the complexity of power in gender roles and social interactions by examining the implications of their roles and actions and by employing strategies to reduce the negative consequences of power in relationships. Participants recognized that their response to their experience of sexual violence was often derived from the reactions of others around them and ranged from sharing their experience to silently suffering. Participants spoke about gender being a strong influence in how they understood themselves and their response to sexual violence. They iterated that gender expectations were instilled early on in their lives and proved to be a strong force in their reaction to sexual violence. Further, women in this study found that they often took on an internalized sense of responsibility for what happened to them. From various social responses and social norms, women experienced a questioning of their own role in what happened. Even when women were reassured that

they were not at fault, there was still an underlying reflection of how they potentially impacted the experience of sexual violence. This responsibility highlights the strong influence that socialization and social relationships have on the schemas of cisgender women and the consequences that occur.

The concept of normalization of sexual violence also emerged from the data. The women suggested that, because of their experience and the experiences they knew of other women, that sexual violence is common. They iterated that many of the social influences around them echoed the sentiment that they should not make a big deal out of their experience or that they should not disrupt the life of the perpetrator. Further, women recognized that even though sexual violence occurs so often, it does not mean that there needs to be acceptance. Participants often found ways to empower themselves either through their work or through other avenues, such as spiritual identity. The women also described the process of reconciling the self in order to connect the compartmentalized parts of themselves. Through experiencing sexual violence, women often adopted ways in which to separate their sense of self as a way to protect others or to prevent being rejected from others.

Finally, the women examined ways in which their gender roles remained continuous even through their traumatic experience. The gender expectations of what was deemed socially acceptable and what was not often dictated the behavior and choices of the women. Taking on the need to care for others and taking care of others' emotions was one way in which women found continuity of gender expectations. The women found varying reactions from those around them which informed their internal sense of empowerment and worth.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to expand the literature pertaining to gender schemas after sexual violence among cisgender women. In order to do so, I utilized a grounded theory research design and constructivist paradigm to construct the methods of this study. Through intensive initial, follow-up, and feedback interviews, participants examined their experience of sexual violence, discussed their understanding of their own gender and gender roles, and detailed their ways of finding healing and justice. In this chapter, I start by discussing the findings most pertinent to the research question and connect those findings to the relevant literature. Next, I describe the limitations of the present study and implications for future research. Last, I discuss implications for sexual violence recovery.

Discussion of the Findings and Implications for Future Research

In the following section, I connect the major findings of this grounded theory study to existing theoretical and empirical literature related to gender schemas, gender socialization, and sexual violence; a constructivist paradigm; and other appropriate literature sources. I describe the relationships between these findings and prior scholarly work. I also detail how the conceptual categories that emerged from cisgender women's experiences confirmed, challenged, and extended prior scholarly works. Further, as I integrate the findings of this study with existing literature, I propose ways in which the findings of this study can augment future research.

Gender as Operating Principle

This study found that the experience of sexual assault brought gender identity to the forefront. Given the dichotomy of gender in the United States, the participants found that this held up when they experienced sexual violence. Similar to the findings of Always, Belgrave, and Smith (1998), the organizing principles of gender remained stable and served as a way to interpret their experience. Women are more likely to be victims of abuse and is often in relation to sexual orientation and gender socialization, or an individual's masculine or feminine behaviors (Elliott, Mok, & Briere, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The findings of this study expand on the literature suggesting that gender serves as a framework in which individuals experience their reality (Bell & Bayliss, 2015; DeLamater, 2006; Zaleski, 2015).

Gender socialization

Gender socialization occurs from the time individuals are born in an effort to categorize and make sense of the world (Maccoby, 2000). Individuals are taught behavior from their immediate environment through many different methods, such as modeling and imitation (DeLamater, 2006). Through socialized gender cognitions, individuals are able to attribute characteristics to others and to define what behavior is acceptable. Using this gender lens, women in this study saw their experience as tolerated within United States culture and found that their gender was a strong factor in their experience.

Consistent with previous research, the high rate of sexual violence within the United States is preceded by sex-based stereotypes and the culture's tolerance for violence (Wells et al., 2016). Rape culture perpetuates and reinforces this violence by often blaming the victim for rape rather than focusing on the perpetrator. Leinbach and

Fagot (1986) suggested that gender is one of the most salient ways that humans make sense of new information. Findings of this study indicate that gender is a significant way in which women understood their experience. Understanding how their previous gendered experiences worked to inform their current identity helped to formulate their sense of self and healing.

Implications for Future Research. Future research should consider the initial findings of the current study to further examine cisgender women's experiences of sexual violence and the ways in which cultural influences impact their sense of self. Further, to explore the consequences of such experiences and the societal norms that work to perpetuate sexual violence may be important considerations.

As discussed by Bem (1981), Leinbach and Fagot (1986), and Bell & Bayliss (2015), and the current study, gender often serves as a way to interpret new information and how to understand reality. Researchers could explore the role of gender as an organizing principle and further explicate the role that gender serves in various social experiences. The foundational component of gender socialization serves as a platform for individuals to understand their self in relation to others. Future researchers could examine the influence of gender identity salience and other identities, such as gender non-conforming individuals. Further, in line with research by Wang and Dovido (2017), it may be beneficial to explore mediating factors on gender experience, such as the nature of the trauma experienced.

Performing Gender

This study found that the various ways in which women performed their gender were altered following their experience of sexual violence. Findings revealed changes in sexual activity, struggles with sexual boundries, the fluidity of gender identity and expression. Previous research suggest that many women report a change in sexual activity following sexual assault (Deliramich & Gray, 2008). The current study has similar findings; women varied in how they reacted to their experience by either noticeably increasing or completely avoiding sexual activity.

Another significant component of performing gender was that women often struggled with their own sexual boundaries and sense of empowerment. For example, several women described either putting up rigid sexual boundaries or finding difficulty in instilling boundaries with others. Further, some participants felt a sense of disempowerment when it came to their own autonomy. These findings are similar to other research that emphasizes the multifaceted healing process that occurs after sexual violence and that asserting boundaries and finding a sense of empowerment are important steps (Koenen, 2012; Narayan-Parker, 2002).

The socialization process of reinforcing or punishing behaviors that mirror or subvert, respectively, expectations helps to create the often-perceived dichotomy of gender (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Rather than viewing it as fluid, flexible or continuous, society sends messages that gender is comprised of two mutually exclusive (men versus women) dichotomies, rather than two ends on a continuum (Stockard, 1999). Men are often socialized to be assertive, self-reliant, confident, and courageous, while women are taught to be nurturing, emotional, modest, and gentle. Many of the women in this study reported having learned about their own identity through

comparison to male counterparts, and often understood their gender based on external sources of information and feedback.

Gender Expression

There has been significant research looking at how individuals "do gender" and how individuals outwardly express their gender identity (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; DeLamater, 2006; Fox & Murry, 2000; Hayes et al., 2016; Peterson & Hann, 1999; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This study helped to expand literature that focuses on social identities and the entanglement of gender. The participants provided a description of the process of socialization and sexual violence. They noticed that they performed gender in a way that they felt was appropriate for the context of sexual violence and that was appropriate for their environment.

There is limited research into contextual variations of the expression of sex-typed behaviors and how this affects one's view of the self and others. There is variability among different social contexts that individuals encounter and what expressions and behaviors they deem appropriate (Cross et al., 1993; Frable, Bem, & Hogan, 1985). This variability underwrites how one displays their inner identity and beliefs about themselves as a gendered person. A complete, integrated understanding of gender can only be achieved through investigating and discovering how a given context or situation influences such behaviors (Bem & Estes, 1981). The socialization process was explored through the current study and the role of gender was explicated, specifically how women internalized their experience of rape and the cultural constructions played a role. This confirms the finding that Anderson et al. (2004)

suggested where cultural constructions that women have internalized about rape may be activated after experiencing sexual violence.

Furthermore, gender identity changes and evolves over time (Stockard, 1999). For the women in this study, gender identity was strengthened through the experience of sexual violence. The focus of this study was on gender and gender schemas, which highlighted that specific aspect of social identity. As findings from this study highlight, social identities founded on ethnicity, sex/gender, ethnicity, class, and disability status are interdependent and equally inherent in individuals (Bowleg, 2013).

Implications for Future Research. Future research would benefit from continuing to investigate how one performs their gender and what that process looks like. Given the complexity of gendered expression, it would be interesting to further examine how various experiences infiltrate and impact gendered behavior. Further exploring the process of gender socialization to provider greater context to the experience of sexual violence would be beneficial. The various social influences that are present in individuals' lives are complex and intricate. Focusing on various components of social influences, such as family responses to sexual violence will build on the findings of this study. In addition, it may be beneficial to look at how women contextualize their experience of sexual violence in relation to power and the various entities that have profound influence in their lives.

Internalization of Responsibility

This study found that women often felt an internalized sense of responsibility for the sexual violence that occurred. The responses that the participants received from those around them contributed to the women questioning their role within the

experience. The findings are consistent with Mercer et al., 2017, who found that women may in fact be more susceptible to social influences than men. There are inconclusive findings showing that women hold more negative attitudes toward rape victims (Stormo, Lang, & Stritzke, 1997; White & Kurpius, 2002), and some studies illustrate that men hold more negative attitudes toward rape victims (Katz, Moore & Tkachuk, 2007; Rempala & Bernieri, 2005).

Blame Attribution

It is important to look at the cultural influences that tend to reinforce this internalized sense of responsibility. The cultural scripts and societal norms strongly influence individuals' sense of self. Within US culture, the concept of rape culture that exists highlights the societal tolerance for the sexual aggression of women, violence toward women, and objectification of women (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Accepting and legitimizing violence against women influences their ability to trust the criminal justice system and belief that justice will be served. How rape or sexual assault is understood and perceived often lends itself to victim blaming and putting the responsibility of safety on the woman (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015). As noted within this study, a culture that perpetuates violence against women may also activate schemas that influence where blame is prescribed, with blame often ascribed to the victim.

Some research suggests that observers may have a tendency to attribute a baseline level of blame to the victim (Belknap, 2010). However, if observers learn that the victim received positive support from others, they may perceive a lower level of blame whereas when observers learn about negative support provided to victims, their beliefs about blaming the victim may be reinforced (Belknap, 2010). The findings of

this study highlight that every woman experienced some level of blame from others and then, to varying degrees, internalized this responsibility.

Rosebrock, Au, Dickstein, Steenkamp, and Litz (2011) found that negative social reactions, such as not being believed or being blamed for the assault, were related to PTSD symptoms after experiencing sexual assault. As noted earlier, this was the first study that highlighted the influence of social reactions on PTSD diagnoses. The current study aimed to further delineate these findings to explore the way in which a cisgender woman internalizes such social responses. The women noted a process in which they had to work through and reconcile their beliefs with the beliefs imparted by others. Thus, this study highlights the strong influence that social reactions have on a woman understanding her experience of sexual violence.

Implications for Future Research. It would be beneficial if future researchers looked at the implications of various social locations and the impact on their experience. Future research may benefit from examining the importance of understanding the experience of individual historically marginalized (e.g., persons of color, sexual minorities). Given that this study focused on gender socialization and the salience of gender in the experience of sexual violence, future research may benefit from continuing to explore this phenomenon. Understanding the social processes that occur following sexual violence can provide greater context to deconstruction of harmful contributing factors, such as victim-blaming. Future researchers may benefit from contemplating a broadened view of advocating for survivors of sexual violence by providing educative presentations and policy change to better serve the needs of diverse women. As such, future research would could look at the confounding factors of

perpetrators and the social processes that perpetuate sexual violence. The provision of education and information for men within United States culture could prove to undermine the prevalence of sexual violence.

Normalization of Sexual Violence

The findings of the study suggest that for cisgender women, sexual violence is prevalent and often becomes normalized. Within US culture, the concept of rape culture that exists highlights the societal tolerance for the sexual aggression of women, violence toward women, and objectification of women (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). The way in which various social influences contribute to normalizing the occurrence of sexual violence can have painful consequences. To expand the findings of Schick (2014), who found that local adults, including parents and administrators as well as teachers, contribute to the socialization of sexually harassing and the socialization of sexually objectifying girls. Exploring the various contributing factors to upholding rape culture can provide profound understanding of how things can change and improve.

Self-Advocacy

Further, this study indicates that when victims of sexual violence chose to step forward and seek justice, they did not have a favorable outcome. Similar to previous research, there is often a justice gap for survivors of sexual violence, wherein either the individual does not feel safe in reporting to law enforcement or very few cases result in conviction (Temkin & Krahe, 2008). Furthermore, the negative reactions received after disclosure of sexual assault and the socialization around sexuality for cisgender women may influence a survivor's ability to be heard or believed (Orchowski, 2010; Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith, & Marks, 2010). The women in this study were often met with

disappointment in their attempt to come forward. Thus, the process of normalizing sexual violence was perpetuated, and they were unable to experience a sense of justice through the means of the law. Negative responses from others have the ability to greatly impact the continuation of sexual violence toward women.

Implications for Future Research. Future research may benefit from exploring the different domains and structures that seek to uphold current cultural values. The findings within this study that explained the various ways in which sexual violence became normalized could be built on to provider a broader narrative. Future research could examine the ways in which gendered norms are upheld throughout an individual's lifetime and thus intersect to form one's identity. Another important component to explore is understanding how various influences, such as media, work together to desensitize individuals around sexual violence and the concept of gendered norms. Further, the process by which individuals internalize the complexities of gender expectations through various social structures and relational influences would help to develop more depth to the dominant cultural narrative.

Reconciling the Self

This study found that after the experience of sexual violence, women felt a disconnection or disruption in their sense of self. They expressed a tendency to compartmentalize parts of themselves and hide the trauma experiences from others. These findings are consistent with Slaninova and Stainerova (2015) who found that trauma has a significant impact on the self-concept of an individual and can cause lower self-acceptance, self-image, and self-esteem. Similarly, the findings of this study confirmed previous research that identity construction is affected by trauma (Chung,

Algarni, Al Muhairi, & Mitchell, 2017; Mueller, Rehman, Fallis, & Goodnight, 2016). Given that sexual violence is a reflection of the social constructs of a given society, gender was salient in the women's experiences and provided a framework in which they viewed themselves and their core identity.

Social Learning

Further, this study reiterates that idea that the social construction of the female self arises out of an intricate interactive framework of social relations that includes fathers as well as mothers and that is contextualized by the cultural norms of male privilege (Jacobs, 1993). Sexual violence is a strong form of social learning and women come to experience themselves through the reactions of others. The findings of this study further delineate the research on individual identity formation and the intersecting experiences that disrupt the formulated sense of self. Also, when an individual enacts an identity there are certain expectations attached how that person should respond. The level of stigmatization that individuals feel depends on their reconciliation of the self. Further, this study confirmed and expanded previous research that conceptualized unexpected and extremely emotional events as a violation of schemata (Berntsen and Rubin 2006; Boyle, 2017). Trauma challenges self-narratives, and therefore can be understood in the context of identity disruption.

Implications for Future Research. Future research may aim to expand through quantitative and qualitive analyses, how social reactions to sexual assault disclosure influence the process of recovery. Further, examining the type of trauma and the impact on their self-narrative may be beneficial in understanding the variances between interpersonal violence and natural disasters, for example.. The current study created a

foundational starting point from which to understand this complex process, and future research could build on the current findings. In addition, future research may reveal what experiences resolve the disruption produced by their traumatic event and which experiences intensify their identity-related distress. Such research would advance a psychological understanding of sexual violence and could then be utilized in fostering healing individuals.

Continuity of Gender Roles

Stereotypically within United States mainstream culture, girls and women are taught to keep an attractive outward appearance, to look after others, to maintain the household duties, and to remain passive (Wigdersen & Katz, 2015). The gender roles that are established and maintained within a given culture serve a purpose in maintaining the status quo. The findings of this study echo earlier sentiments found in the literature (Always et al., 1998; Anderson, Simpson-Taylor, & Herrmann, 2004). The women in this study noticed continuity in what was expected of them after the experience of sexual violence, meaning the social roles and expectations remained intact. Specifically, the role as nurturers and protecting others from the burden of trauma became a central narrative. Another theme that emerged was the women often found themselves staying silent about painful experiences.

There is limited research on gender roles following the experience of sexual assault. However, there is literature on consistency of gender expectations following natural disasters. Similar to the research on individual experiences of Hurricane Andrew in Miami, Always et al. (1998) found that individuals engaged in gender-specific behavior and maintained roles that were consistent with previous roles they adhered to.

Women typically occupied the role of nurturer or consoler, while men took on the role of physical laborer and safety maker. They found that while the men took care of physical conditions and safety, the women took care of emotional conditions. Notably, more women sought professional help to cope with the natural disaster (Always et al., 1998). Furthermore, disasters or traumas work to interrupt the status quo and disrupt the day-to-day flow of events (Anderson, Simpson-Taylor, & Herrmann, 2004). The reconstruction of individual identity and roles after a traumatic experience often bears itself in similarity to prior behaviors. Gender roles and schemas are so vital that there is continuity of gendered behavior after a major trauma. The findings of this study confirmed this continuity of gender roles within the context of sexual violence.

Feminine Beliefs

This study found contrary evidence to previous research that suggested certain traditional feminine beliefs were related to behaviors that place an individual more at risk or vulnerability to experiencing sexual violence (Mehta & Dementiev, 2016; Wigderson & Katz, 2015). The findings of this study concluded that adherence to traditional beliefs did not play a role in the likelihood of experiencing of sexual violence. The women in the study articulated that regardless of their beliefs, they still experienced sexual violence. This suggests that the power structures of gender inequity may override belief systems. On the other hand, femininity is often defined in more collective terms and tends to be identified with those that have less power, such as a victim of assault rather than the perpetrator of an assault (Anderson et al., 2004; Crane, Markus, & Manis, 1982). Cisgender women in US society are often held to standards set forth that establish the norms of femininity and therefore reinforce the power

inequity for women. The women in this study experienced strong social messages that reiterated the distinction between feminine and masculine.

Implications for Future Research. Future research on sexual orientation, gender expression, and sexual violence may want to compare how these varying domains interact with one another. Researchers might look at whether increased gender nonconformity among sexual minority women is an explanatory mechanism for their higher rates of violence in adulthood. Research may also examine the subtle ways in which gender expression relates to trauma among heterosexual women, by assessing the relative impact of appearance, gender roles, and emotional expression on victimization experiences. Finally, findings in the current study only focused on cisgender women and should be extended to transgender or gender non-conforming individuals. It would be valuable if future researchers examined the implication of gender role socialization within the context of various social locations.

Limitations and Methodological Implications for Future Research

In this section, I review the methodological limitations of the current study. As limitations are explored, I explain procedures researchers could utilize to improve upon the methodological limits of this study. Many of the methodological limitations of this study are related to data collection and sampling. Finally, I contemplate implementing the considerations of grounded theorists (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse et al., 2009) to advance this initial conceptual model into a substantive grounded theory. I aimed for triangulation of data sources by utilizing intensive individual interviews, follow-up interviews, and feedback interviews. Future research, though, may benefit from including various data sources such as focus groups, which would allow for more

complex data collection by helping each of the group members to build on each other's experiences.

Future researchers may want to examine the perspective of perpetrators, which would be challenging, but would be fruitful in exploring the gendered assumptions about sex and power. This perspective would add complexity and provide more depth to the larger cultural narrative surrounding sexual violence. In order to work toward challenging the broad narrative, it is important to understand the intricate ways in which sexual violence is perpetuated and upheld. To further Miller's (2018) idea of the critical role of changing gender norms, future research should aim to challenge the gendered expectations. This current study did, however, give space and voice to the victims of this violence and thus challenging the status quo of power and status. The experience of sexual violence can be a disempowering experience for individuals.

Further, focusing on the age of participants when they experienced sexual violence may provider greater knowledge surrounding developmental factors that contribute to healing from trauma. Similarly, the context of the assault itself (violence level, relationship to perpetrator) would provider greater depth to literature on these contributing and contextual factors. The physiological response to trauma may also play a role in changes to gender identity/ gender schemas. Future research may focus on how feedback from others, such as negative social reactions, may re-trigger the traumatic physciological state for indiviuals. Future research may build on how helping others deal with rape may be a path to healing or may reinforce silencing that may reflect post-traumatic growth. While this study did not find explore if or how romantic relationships

may have been affected by sexual violence, future research may aim to explore the impact on boundaries within relationships.

Further, even though I incorporated a fairly ethnically/racially diverse sample, I maintained a sample with similar educational backgrounds, disability status, and within a similar age bracket. Although these similarities among participants regarding education helped to streamline the data collection process, the transferability of the findings was reduced and perhaps limited the complexity of the model. Therefore, future research would be benefitted from recruiting women who had varying levels of education as well as looking at various age groups where women are in different life stages. The variability in a more diverse sample would lend itself to providing richer and more comprehensive explanation of the experience of sexual violence. Future research may also benefit from including a larger percentage of participants with religious values as this could add complexity to the narrative.

Due to the small number of participants (n=15), the findings of this study are not representative of the specific population. However, there was good diversity within the sample as far as the various social locations of the individuals. Further, given that all of the interviews took place over the phone, there may have been important non-verbal behaivors that were not captured.

Research that is focused on developing a model of gender schemas after sexual violence is important for a couple reasons. One, this study was one of the first qualitative explorations of this phenomena (Chung, Algarni, Al Muhairi, & Mitchell, 2017; Mueller, Rehman, Fallis, & Goodnight, 2016). The current cultural norms and narrative is one of dichotomized gender and the reinforcement of violence and

aggression. Although there are some shifts within the realm of gender identity, qualitative exploration is imperative to providing depth the experiences of individuals.

Additionally, future research should strive for more substantiated development of theory. One way to accomplish this would be utilizing theoretical sampling measures to build upon the central conceptual category that arose from this study of sexual violence, Gender as Operating Principles, to form a substantive grounded theory of gender schemas after sexual violence (Charmaz, 2014, Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Holton, 2007). Further, research could incorporate the six remaining conceptual categories to provide further evidence for gender schemas after sexual violence. Future research would be warranted to confirm and possibly extend the current findings into a more intricate and multifaceted conceptual model or substantive theory. Next, I will discuss implications for the application of the empirically support model.

Application of an Empirically Supported Model of Gender Schemas

The findings of the current study gave an advanced approach to understanding sexual violence that integrated gender and identity factors through an empirically derived central conceptual category and six connected conceptual categories. My purpose was to generate a conceptual model that was both practical and relevant. Individuals can use all of the subsequent conceptual categories to understand the process of gender socialization and the impact on cisgender women. Alternatively, individuals may decide to utilize portions of the conceptual model to enhance cultural responses to sexual violence and to start with an understanding of how socialization within United States culture works to reinforce sexual violence. The findings of this study highlight the various influential factors that contribute to rape culture and how

this information can be utilized to create change and reform. Further, the findings of this study provide evidence that women have experienced a normalization of sexual violence and that working to challenge this normalization may help create a safer community and culture for women.

Implications for Counseling

An important aim of this study was to understand the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas. Based on the findings of this grounded theory study, I suggest that individuals working within counseling psychology, whether in an educative role or not, consider the following recommendations. I recommend that counseling psycholgoists consider contextual factors as well as individual factors and the current cultural narrative around sexual violence. Specifically, psychologists should seek to understand the role of the social environment in the lives of clients and research participants. Psychologists should aspire to recognize current and previous experiences with power, privilege, and oppression within the United States. This recognition would aid in addressing institutional barriers and inequities that exist for individuals and work to increase accces to services. It is important for individuals and organizations to consider the impact of historical and ongoing violence toward women on the individuals' psychological well-being. Psychologists who are involved with education and training may include sociocultural understandings of trauma, resilience, and coping in their curricula. It is imperative that graduate-level psychology students are exposed to research on trauma and resilience that allow for the discussion of sociocultural issues. Further, it may be beneficial for students to learn the implementation of interventions with trauma survivors from diverse sociocultural backgrounds.

Implications for Advocacy

This study provides a gender understanding of the impact of sexual violence on gender schemas. As counseling psychologists, it is important to give voice to others and to work to decrease the inequities that exist without US culture. As such, psychologists can utilize their knowledge and understanding in a variety of civic settings, ranging from local to a national level (Daniel, 2017). Psychologists promote advocacy beyond their work with clients to inform public policy, public health, system of care, research, and training and education. Further, changing the rape culture dialogue requires a shift in how sexual violence is discussed and how it is handled on varying levels, such as with the individual and within institutions. This would involve educating others on consent and personal safety for both men and women, girls and boys. The dialogue must address all facets of the issues, such as working with victims to ensure their healing and also working on prevention efforts within various systems.

Conclusion

This constructivist grounded theory study provided empirical understanding of gender schemas after sexual violence, which helped to greatly expand and build upon the existing gender, feminist, and sexual violence literature. Specifically, this study helped to expand the literature on gender roles and the impact of trauma. The study provided an in-depth look at the impact of gender socialization on cisgender women's schemas. The current study expanded upon prior research and scholarly works exploring the role of gender socialization after sexual violence. This is a novel finding in the domain of understanding gender schemas and the cultural contextual factors that perpetuate sexual violence. A contribution of this study is that a contextual analysis is

extended to integrate awareness of the women's lived experience, context, and environment on their perception of sexual violence. The cultural influence on individuals is important to explore to understand the nuances of socialization and their impact on cisgender women. By focusing on gender and sexual violence, the findings work to advance and challenge the current cultural narrative. Therefore, in general, work can be done to challenge the power imbalance and create a safer and better informed society.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear _____

We want to inform you of an opportunity to participate in a research study on the impact of sexual violence on the gender schemas of cisgender women. This study is being conducted by Caylee Hunter at the University of Oklahoma. The purpose of the study is to deepen the field's understanding of the impact of sexual violence on the gender schemas of cisgender women. 15 to 20 people will participate.

You will be asked to:

- Take part in an in-person, telephone, or Skype individual interview of 60-120 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded.
- Take part in an in-person, telephone or Skype clarification interview of 30 minutes. This interview will be audio recorded.

If you (a) identify as a cisgender woman; (b) are at least 18 years old at the time of the study; (c) experienced sexual violence that occurred at age 14 or older; (d) report that the most recent sexual violence occurred at least one year before the time of the study (e) are willing to talk about your experience(s) with sexual violence, we would be very interested in talking with you about taking part in this research.. If you are interested in this study or have questions, please contact Caylee Hunter, graduate student at the University of Oklahoma, at caylee.hunter@ou.edu. By requesting more information about this study, you are not obligated to participate in this or any study. You should be aware that e-mail is not a confidential form of communication. This study is being supervised by our faculty sponsor, Dr. Paula McWhirter at paulamcwhirter@ou.edu.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Caylee Hunter

Primary Investigator

The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution.

Appendix B: Clarification Email

Participant Name

Subject: Gender Schemas After Sexual Violence

Dear _____

We want to inform you of an opportunity to continue participating in our study investigating the impact of sexual violence on the tenure of emerging adult college students. This study is being conducted by Caylee Hunter under the faculty sponsorship of Dr. Paula McWhirter at the University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus. The purpose of this research is to understand the impact of sexual violence on cisgender women's gender schemas. The researchers are hoping to use the information in contributing to the expansion of current literature on sexual violence and gender schemas. In addition, the researchers hope to not only increase the awareness of sexual violence on women's gender schemas but also hope to advocate for improved service provision and protection of the victims. If you agree to participation, you will be asked to: Participate in 1, 30-minute individual clarification interview in which you will be asked to clarify information gleaned from your initial interview and to provide feedback on the initial data analysis. The clarification interview will be digitally audio recorded and transcribed. If you are interested in this study or have questions, please contact the PI, Caylee Hunter at caylee.hunter@ou.edu. You may also contact the faculty sponsor, Dr. Paula McWhirter at paulamcwhirter@ou.edu. By requesting more information about this study, you are not obligated to participate in this or any study. You should be aware that e-mail is not a confidential form of communication. Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Caylee Hunter, M.A.

Primary Investigator

The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution.

Appendix C: IRB Consent Form

Consent Document

BACKGROUND

You are being asked to take part in a research study on gender schemas after sexual violence. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the process of socialization that occurs within US culture and how this information is integrated into cisgender women's experience as gendered beings. I hope to use this information to both extend the counseling psychology literature related to sexual violence and gender schemas and to gain a complex understanding of the implications of sexual violence for gender socialization, identity, and schemas.

STUDY PROCEDURE

Your participation in this study will take approximately 1½ to 3 hours. You will have the opportunity to participate in the following interviews in person, via phone, or via Skype.

You will be asked to:

- Take part in an individual interview of 60-120 minutes in which you will be asked to talk about your experience of sexual violence and the impact on your gender schemas. The individual interview will be audiotaped.
- Take part in a follow-up interview of 30 minutes. The follow-up interview will be audiotaped.

RISKS

The risks are similar to those you experience when discussing personal information with others. It is possible that the interviews may remind you of your previous sexual violence experience(s), and that you may experience psychological (emotional) distress when talking about the influence of sexual violence on your life and on your gender schemas. Distress may include feeling upset or discomfort, such as tearfulness, anxiety or fear, sadness or depression, and anger or rage; confusion; and/or reduced functioning in everyday activities and relationships. Members of the research team will not serve as counselors or therapists. However, the researchers will provide you with resources to assist you if you are distressed. If you become distressed to the point in which you decide, or the researchers conclude, that further participation would not be in your best

interest, your engagement in the study would be discontinued. Should this happen, we would discuss with you if the information you have already disclosed will be retained by us or if you would like to have it removed from our research records. Indications that you may be feeling too distressed to participate may include, but are not limited to: uncontrollable tearfulness, feeling nauseated or physically ill, feeling such physical or psychological discomfort that you do not wish to participate any longer, or feelings of rage that make it difficult to speak of your experiences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information that you share will be kept confidential to the extent afforded by law. Audio recordings, video recordings, and transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected computer located in the researcher's work space. Only the researcher and members of her study team will have access to this information. Your information will be assigned a code name or pseudonym (which you may choose if you wish), which will be kept with your interview recordings and transcriptions. In future publications, only your code name will be used, and every effort will be made to protect your identity by removing identifying information from quotes, etc. that are used in the publication. If you would like to exclude certain information contained in the interview transcription from being shared in future publications I will accommodate your requests. The exception to confidentiality is if you choose to disclose actual or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, or disabled or elderly adult, the researcher or any member of the study staff must, and will, report this to Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS) or the nearest law enforcement agency. An additional exception to our guarantee of confidentiality is in the case of a suspected ethical violation in accordance with the American Psychological Association Code of Conduct.

PERSON TO CONTACT If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about this study, or if you feel that taking part in the research has harmed you, you can contact Caylee Hunter at 701-331-2107. Caylee can normally be reached during normal working hours; however, if she is unavailable when you call, you may leave a message on her confidential voice mail. She will return your call as soon as possible. You may also contact her by e-mail at caylee.hunter@ou.edu; however, you should be aware that e-mail is not a confidential form of communication. If, for any reason, you wish to discuss this research with Caylee's research advisor, you may contact Dr. Paula McWhirter at (405) 325-1509 or by e-mail at paulamcwhirter@ou.edu.

Institutional Review Board: Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints, or concerns that you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Oklahoma IRB may be reached by phone at (405) 325-8110 or by e-mail at irb@ou.edu

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. Refusal to participate or the decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator. If you decide to stop after you have agreed to participate, just inform the researcher. Your interview tape and any transcripts will be destroyed.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS

There should typically not be any costs to you for participating in this study. Participants will be given a $20 Amazon gift card for participation.

CONSENT

By participating in the interviews, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

Appendix D: Abbreviated Audit Trail

Before Entering the Field

September 2016 – September 6th, 2017

Initial development of dissertation topic, "Gender Schemas After Sexual Violence: What are the Perceived Roles and Expectations for Cisgender Women?"

Through discussion with peer qualitative research team members, my advisor, supervisors, and consultation with existing literature, I settled upon exploring the ways in which cisgender women understand their experience of sexual violence. In September 2016, I began self-reflection on my biases, assumptions, and prior understanding of gender and sexual violence.

My proposal meeting with my committee occurred on June 22nd, 2017.
I sought approval from Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB). Having received approval on September 6th, 2017, I began initial recruitment emails on September 15th, 2017 and informed gatekeepers on recruitment materials and procedures.

Entering the Field

September 20th, 2017

My entry into the field began with initial email contact with the first participant who responded to my email recruitment efforts. Email consisted of confirming interest, scheduling interview date, time, and mode of interview contact (e.g., phone).

Individual Interviews

October 1, 2017 - February 5, 2018

conducted one- to one and a half hour individual interviews with participants. After each interview, I wrote field notes so that I would not forget important details. Field notes included specifics of the interviews, self-reflections, and analytic memos. I wrote for a minimum of 45 minutes.

Follow-up Interviews

February 10, 2018-March 2,2018

I conducted 30-minute to 45-minute individual follow-up interviews. Beforehand, I wrote an agenda, planned questions to fill emerging gaps in the emerging data analysis, and jotted down notes on my thoughts and self-reflections. After the interviews, I wrote field notes to capture what happened in the interview, my thoughts and reactions, and analytic memos.

Feedback Interviews

March 4, 2018-March 20,2018

I conducted 30-minute to 45-minute individual feedback interviews. Before each interview, I wrote an agenda, planned or revised questions to facilitate feedback on the emerging conceptual category structure, and jotted down notes on my thoughts. After the interviews, I wrote field notes to capture what happened in the interview, my thoughts and reactions, and analytic memos.

Transcription

October 5th, 2017-March 21, 2018

I had interviews transcribed and usually received them from my transcriptionist within two weeks after the date of the interview. After receiving transcripts, I listened to the initial, follow-up, or feedback interview, reread the transcript for errors while listening to the interview, and immersed myself in the interview. During transcript checks and immersion, I wrote analytic memos, self-reflections, and notes to improve the emerging research design and interview process. I explored my thoughts, feelings, and interactions with participants to improve future data collection and analysis.

Coding

October 10, 2017-February 12, 2018

Analysis involved analytic memos about what I gathered during initial individual interviews as documented in field notes, transcription checks, and immersion analytic memos. I made connections between segments of transcript data within and between participant interview transcripts, and my internal reactions demonstrated in self-reflection memos.

I commenced Atlas.ti-supported initial coding procedures on October 10, 2017. All initial coding occurred electronically on Atlas.ti. In this phase of analysis, I coded each

transcript line-by-line. I referred to Charmaz (2014) continuously to verify that I consistently used effective initial coding strategies.

Beginning on November 7, 2017 after finishing initial coding on the sixth interview, I contrasted statements I made in my field notes, analytic memos, and self-reflective memos to the initial codes to find confirming and disconfirming evidence for emerging focused codes. First, I read analytic memos, self-reflective memos, and field notes. This process enhanced my theoretical sensitivity and helped me find significant patterns/themes in early memos.

Being a woman
Being aware of difference
Being aware of others
Being aware of gender
Challenging masculinity
Conceptualizing through social locations
Cultivating safety
Control through messages
Confronting sexual violence
Describing the role of influences
Emotional expression
Establishing boundaries
Examining the role of early experiences with current context
Aggressive Masculinity
Performing Femininity
Learning through social responses
Having role models discourage
Learning by doing
Learning by watching
Learning language to describe experiences
Not having role models
Not receiving support
Seeing self as victim
Perception of self
Disclosing sexual violence experience
Noticing perception of trauma
Noticing social responses
Noticing feminism as vindictive
Doing caregiving
Encouraging self to find their own voice
Enhancing self-reflection
Examining own response
Examining sexual boundaries
Examining sexual practice
Exploring sense of loss
Noticing loss of self

Changing scenery
Learning to cope on own
Developing healthy boundaries
Developing self sufficiency
Utilizing spiritual beliefs
Utilizing external resources
Fulfilling gender roles
Recognizing differences in masculinity and femininity
Encouraging to think of others
Gender ideals
Internalizing response from others
Looking at how culture impacts recovery process
Sharing about self
Shifts in Gender Performance
Disclosing emotions and reactions
Recognizing the intrinsic potential of everyone
Reflecting on experiences
Questioning biases and assumptions
Questioning dominant narratives
Having to remain silent
Sacrificing for others
Increasing awareness of clients' cultural identities
Learning how own identities impact their experiences
Letting part of self be known
Maintaining quietness
Loss of autonomy
Recognizing the socialization process
Working to rebuild the self
Noticing changes in self
Noticing change in beliefs
Questioning societal expectations
Learning to shut others off
Learning to not show vulnerability
Working to understand faith
Questioning morals
Questioning decision making
Noticing other people’s assumptions
Working to understand own gender identity
Family expectations
Finding congruence between beliefs and behavior
Expectations about behavior
Understanding masculine responses

After looking through analytic memos, self-reflective memos, and field notes, I examined the initial codes themselves. I compared codes to codes, data to codes, codes to emerging focused codes, and focused codes to focused codes to construct an initial

list of focused codes. I incorporated initial codes that summarized data from all interviews.

As I examined the initial codes, I renamed initial codes. I started to develop a strong ability in initial coding as I went along, I could then start to recognize the processes of what was going on. I went through the focused codes and condensed ones that appeared to be redundant or already captured. Through this process I was able to utilize the most valuable codes to explain the phenomenon. I worked to distributed initial codes into relevant focused codes.

Once I completed going through focused coding of the first six interviews, I wrote memos on each focused code by reviewing the initial codes within. I reallocated some initial codes into focused codes that more sufficiently and analytically explicated the concept or process that appeared to be going on, and I broke down focused codes into concept-driven focused codes instead of thematic focused codes.

My beginning list of focused codes looked like this:

Advocating for the self
Awareness of own gender identity
Being aware of my identities
Being aware of social responses
Building awareness
Being mindful of external resources
Context of self versus others
Context of sexual violence
Creating a safe space
Exploring experience of sexual violence
Exploring early experience of gender
Understanding gender role
Looking at power differential dynamics
Self-disclosing
Recognizing impact of gender
Exploring boundaries
Developing a sense of self-trust
Learning from experience
Anticipating needs of others
Talking about separate parts of the self
Reinforcement of gender differences
Working with power differences

On January 3, 2018, after completing initial and focused coding of interviews one through six, I started axial coding. This process was cautious and is likely to change based on disconfirming evidence found in subsequent interviews. I observed relationships between focused codes and started articulating subcategories and their

connections to broader conceptual categories. I sought feedback from my peer research team. This was my resulting axial coding:

Working with power differences
- Addressing the role of social constructions
- Being aware of my identities
- Exploring own perception of power
- Exploring power in sexual violence

Contextual Factors
- Checking in about their previous experiences (Intentionally checking in on experiences of gender growing up and throughout their lifetime)
- Building awareness
- Developing a sense of self-trust
- Context of sexual violence

Role of Gender
- Awareness of own gender identity
- Being aware of my identities
- Recognizing impact of gender
- Critiquing gender expectations

Sense of Self
- Context of self versus others
- Creating a safe space
- Being mindful of social relationships and responses
- Talking about separate parts of the self
- Exploring boundaries

Social Responses
- Being mindful of external resources
- Being aware of social responses
- Anticipating needs of others

Gender expectations
- Gender role reinforcement
- Breaking down masculinity and femininity
- Reinforcement of gender differences

Beginning on January 20, 2018, after completing the first section of initial, focused, and axial coding, I initiated a second section of initial and focused coding procedures. After completing initial and focused coding of the 14th interview, on January 27, 201, I started the process of voicing the relationships between focused codes or rearticulating the axial coding structure. In analytic memos, I analyzed focused codes and started

conceptualizing some focused codes as secondary focused codes and others as higher order focused codes of the analysis. I noted each of the focused codes and placed focused codes together that were related in a meaningful way. These relationships were tentative: They were my first attempts of making sense out of the data. My attempts at axial coding the first 14 interviews resulted in a lengthy 16-page document of the superordinate focused codes, subordinate focused codes, and their linkages. I jotted down analytic memos on the definitions of focused codes and how focused codes were connected to one another. I observed some gaps in the emerging axial coding structure, and, via follow-up interviews, pursued participants to fill out conceptual gaps. I also continued to put effort into memoing and interviewing to transform focused codes into conceptual categories.

The Emerging Conceptual Category Structure

From January 30, 2018 to March 1, 2018, while concurrently conducting follow-up and feedback interviews, I started writing analytic memos on emerging superordinate focused code categories to explain further their properties and dimensions and to polish the emerging conceptual category structure. I compared focused codes to focused codes, data to focused codes, and emerging conceptual categories to emerging conceptual categories. Through this process of comparison and memo writing, the conceptual categories gained depth and complexity; I reduced repetition; and I began changing superordinate focused codes to conceptual categories. I expressed the findings I had progressively refined with participants, individual peer-researchers, and my peer research team. During research meetings, I received feedback about names of categories, new relationships between categories to consider, my way of writing and starting to look at emergent conceptual categories. The feedback from the research team helped me to organize the data and develop a sense of where to focus further data collection.

Throughout follow-up and feedback interviews, I asked participants how conceptual categories appeared to be connected, which looked redundant, and which conceptual category defined the central category of experience. I also asked them what guided their individual reaction to sexual violence. In my follow-up interview with Gwen on February 19, 2018, I learned that understanding her gender and the expectations were central guiding themes for her response to sexual violence. In analytic memos following the interview, during initial coding, and during focused coding of her follow-up interview, I compared her inference with the data, initial codes, focused codes, and conceptual categories. I found evidence for her hypothesis. I decided to continue with my hypothesis that *Gender as Operating Principle* was the central category of the conceptual category structure. I looked for disconfirming evidence in initial, follow-up, and feedback interviews and examined prior memos.

From March 4, 2018, 2013 to March 20, 2018, while leading feedback interviews, I continued to write analytic memos on the developing conceptual categories, using the feedback given by participants, peer researchers, and my peer research team to explicate conceptual constructions of the developing conceptual categories. The final conceptual categories have similarities to the first section of coding. Upon extensive analytic memo writing, constantly comparing the data, and incorporating feedback from participants, I laid out the final conceptual category structure on March 24, 2018.
Below is the emergent conceptual categorical structure:

Gender as Operating Principle

- Performing Gender
- Internalized Responsibility
- Normalization of Sexual Violence
- Reconciling the Self
- Continuity of Gender Roles

Looking at the Way Context Impacts the Person

- Exploring Social Relationships and Responses
- Making System and Ecological Change

Upon finalizing this conceptual category structure, I started writing analytic memos to define emerging theoretical codes. I referred to writings by Charmaz (2014), Glaser and Straus (1967), Glaser (2006), and Hernandez (2009) to support this process. I more completely conceptualized the relationships between conceptual categories and subcategories and the relationships between conceptual categories and the central category.

Writing the Findings

March 1, 2018 – March 27, 2018
During the time of writing and rewriting the findings for chapter three, a stronger and denser analysis developed which resulted in the final conceptual model. Conceptual categories were analyzed again by comparing conceptual categories, sub-categories, and data to each another. Through using the constant comparative method in the writing phase, I polished the resultant conceptual model. Consequently, the writing phase was an extra layer of analyzing the data.

Appendix E: Resource List for Participants

National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline- Call 800.656.HOPE (4673) to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline- 1-800-273-8255

National Sexual Violence Resource Center- https://www.nsvrc.org/- We have a collection of resources for healing from sexual violence available online. Connect with resources for survivors of sexual violence in your area.

National Organization for Victim Assistance- https://www.trynova.org/- We advocate for victims by connecting them with services and resources.

The VictimConnect Resource Center- is a place for crime victims to learn about their rights and options confidentially and compassionately.

A traditional telephone-based helpline: 855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846)

An innovative online chat: Chat.VictimConnect.org

Web-based information and service referrals:VictimConnect.org