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Cracking open the victim-survivor binary: an examination of victim-survivor identity of people who have experienced sexual violence

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Cracking open the victim-survivor binary: an examination of victim-survivor identity of people who have experienced sexual violence

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, there has been an ongoing sense of uncertainty within feminist literature surrounding the most appropriate vocabulary to refer to people who have experienced sexual violence. Within contemporary society, people who have been sexually assaulted are normatively labelled as either a 'victim' and/ or a 'survivor', but ever-increasingly, combination terms like 'victim-survivor' and 'victim/ survivor' are being adopted. Amongst anti-victim discourses within the #MeToo movement, understanding victim-survivors' language choices becomes imperative. However, language choice should not be viewed in isolation; concepts are affected by cultural discourses reinforcing dominant narratives of victim-survivors, and choice can also be shaped by the language used by those surrounding victim-survivors, such as disclosure recipients and professionals they may encounter when accessing support and reporting their experiences.

This thesis integrates documentary analysis and arts-based visual research through methodological braiding, employing a simultaneous and sequential research design. A critical discourse analysis of policy and practice documents produced between 2013 and 2023 examined how victim-survivor language choices are used in materials victim-survivors are exposed to. In tandem, staged photography and follow-up photo-elicitation interviews were conducted to generate data on the understandings and associations behind victim-survivor concepts for people with lived experience of sexual violence and/ or professionals working on a day-to-day basis with victim-survivors. Adopting a symbolic interactionist and feminist standpoint epistemological lens, this research explores the underlying meanings behind victim-survivor identity.

This thesis argues that there are three key pillars of the survivor concept and three key lenses of victimhood, forming the building blocks of victim-survivor concepts in policy and practice documents. Moreover, the victim-survivor binary is overly simplistic by positioning the two as polar opposite categories, particularly when automatically binding survivor with agency as this holds implications, especially for survivors with trauma-related disabilities.

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Statement of copyright

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Signature:

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Dedication

To my little brother Henry,

Whenever someone says, you can't know, you can.

May you always rise to greet the day despite the monsters underneath your bed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Sexual violence is a global concern, a public health crisis, and a marked human rights violation (Johnson and LaPlante, 2023). Sexual violence is usually defined as a sexual act that is attempted or committed against a victim without their consent or where the victim cannot give consent or refuse (Basile et al., 2014). It is estimated globally that at least one in three women will be subjected to a form of sexual or physical violence throughout their lives (World Health Organisation, 2017), with particular concerns of increased violence against women worldwide, especially within the home, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women, 2020). The long-term effects of sexual violence on victim-survivors have been historically documented, concerning the impact on both physical and psychological well-being, relationships, and social effects post-victimisation (Basile and Smith, 2011; Campbell and Townsend, 2011; Golding, 1999).

Studies have shown that particular minority groups are at a heightened risk of sexual victimisation, such as ethnic, gender and sexual minorities (Conroy and Cotter, 2017) and people with disabilities (Mitra et al., 2016; Basile et al., 2016). Sexual violence is conceptualised as a phenomenon experienced by men, women, transgender and non-binary people (Bean, 2018), although females and girls are more likely to experience sexual abuse within their lifetime (Goldberg and Freyd, 2006; Ullman et al., 1999; Koss et al., 1987). Thus, due to women being more susceptible to victimisation, it is often constructed as a crisis faced by women (Gomez, 2018). With the rape and murder of Sarah Everard in 2021 and the very recent publication of part 1 of the Angiolini Inquiry (2024) raising questions about sexual offences committed by police officers, violence against women is once again a primary public concern.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that between March 2021 and March 2022, 2.3% of adults sixteen years old and over experienced sexual assault, equating to 1.1 million adults (ONS, 2023). This is notably higher than the 193,566 sexual offences recorded by the police within the same time frame (ibid). Sexual violence reporting has frequently been described as a 'lottery' in terms of reporting (for example, see Carroll, 2021), with less than one in six victims reporting their experience to the police (ONS, 2021). Victim-survivors of sexual violence can have multifaceted ways of thinking about justice beyond just formal reporting and prosecutions, which McGlynn and Westmarland (2019)

conceptualised as 'kaleidoscopic justice.' These multiple perceptions of justice can also relate to differing points within their post-abuse experience (Hester et al., 2023). However, we do see a recreation and reproduction of the 'justice gap' within sexual violence (Temkin and Krahe, 2008), acting like a 'chasm' (Kelly, Lovett and Regan, 2005). There are an absolute myriad of reasons explaining low-reporting rates, with some examples being, but certainly not limited to, victim-survivors being less likely to report if they deviate from 'real rape' (Estrich, 1987), concerns of not being perceived as a 'genuine victim' by the police (Brownmiller, 1975), victim-blaming (for a complete overview, see Ballucci and Drakes, 2020) and self-blame (Hohl and Stanko, 2015); as well as structural inequality impacting access to the justice system for ethnically minoritised women (Aghtaie et al., 2020; Gangoli et al., 2020), LGBT women (Donovan and Hester, 2014) and male victims (McLean, 2013).

Language and the women's movement

As the language that we use impacts the way we conceptualise reality and our sense of self (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005), feminism has held a historical concern with how violence against women is discussed (Gavey, 1999). Since the rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960s, sexual violence and sexual assault have held a centralised position (Harned, 2005), with a critical goal of empowering women to come to name their victimisation experiences and for the seriousness of sexual violence against women to be recognised (Kelly, 1988; Warshaw, 1988). Within the second-wave feminist movement, the banner 'the personal is political' was utilised to challenge the historic "prioritisation of the (male coded) public sphere, and the diminishment of the (female coded) private" sphere that had been an intellectual tradition within western thought (Vera-Gray and Kelly, 2020: 218). Proponents of 'the personal is political' slogan, such as Betty Friedan, highlighted the false precedent of constructing public and private spheres as exclusively framing women as excluded and absent from the public realm, as well as reinforcing and mystifying female positions within the private (Nicholson, 1981). Thus, early feminist ideas considered notions of separate spheres as legitimising the patriarchy (Ferree, 1990), creating challenges within the nineteenth and later twentieth centuries toward the clear segregation of public spaces by gender (Vera-Gray and Kelly, 2020).

The anti-rape movement

Amidst the late 1960s and early 1970s, within the feminist consciousness-raising groups in the women's liberation movement, a feminist movement to combat violence against women emerged (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Through these consciousness-raising groups, women found ways to take discussions of problems historically positioned as privately experienced and turn them into political action and activism (Kelland, 2016). Feminists spoke out about rape, as well as, later on, wife abuse and battering (Griffen, 1971; Brownmiller, 1975). Notions of male oppression and the patriarchy were expanded to consider violence against women, as well as the setting up of rape crisis centres and domestic violence refuge shelters (Dunn, 2005). The battered women's movement originated in the early 1970s, when victims of wife abuse, feminists, activists and professionals "increasingly responded in a new way, providing emotional support, refuge and a new definition of 'the problem'" (Schechter, 1982: 56).

New definitions repositioned 'battering' as a serious societal issue, emphasising the lack of culpability victims had for their experiences of violence (Leisenring, 2006) and how they created resonant collective representations of battered women (Loseke, 1992). Feminist activism also highlighted the seriousness of sexual abuse of children, mainly perpetrated by their fathers and other male family members (Naples, 2003). This was done by tackling 'the Freudian cover-up' of hegemonic notions of the mythic nurturing nuclear family that resulted in the denial of childhood sexual violence (Rush, 1980). Feminist challenges concerning child sex abuse resulted in the creation of a matrix of groups for survivors and spawning the incest recovery industry (Naples, 2003: 1154).

Also, within the past five decades, there has been an incredible amount of feminist research seeking to examine the prevalence, seriousness, consequences, nature and causes of sexual violence. One of the most significant theoretical contributions amidst the anti-rape movement is the positioning of rape as not merely about sex but rather about power, control and domination (Brownmiller, 1975). Contextually, Brownmiller's conceptualisations existed within early second-wave feminist understandings of violence against women where male-perpetrated violence was either "permitted" or "denied" (Armstrong, 1996: 17); for example, until the early 1990s in the UK, men could not be convicted of marital rape (Boyle, 2019). Thus, the feminist conceptualisation of rape as

violence, not sex, was responding to a specific context where "rape was seen only as sex, based on its meaning for men and ignoring the experiences of the women they abused" (ibid: 103). This conceptualisation allows there to be an understanding that sexual trauma is violent (Tumminio Hansen, 2020), as well as diverting examinations of sexual violence from considering individual men; instead, suggesting the need to eliminate the societal and cultural patriarchal structures that facilitate sexual violence (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 2008). The context is usually referred to as 'rape culture' (Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth, 1993).

In this vein, men and women are socialised to hold gender roles and norms that condone, contribute to reinforce patriarchal structures that reproduce rape culture, with rape culture being "the social, cultural and structural discourses and practices in which sexual violence is tolerated, accepted, minimised, normalised and trivialised" (Henry and Powell, 2014: 2). Rape culture then "is derived from rhetorical patterns that are entrenched in conscious or unconscious heteronormative, White male, privileged traditions" (Hayes, Abbott and Cook, 2016: 1541). Therefore, within a rape culture, rape and other types of sexual violence are more frequently recognised; however, the punishment of sexual violence is not afforded the same attention (Messina-Dystert, 2015). The lines between seduction, normal sexual behaviour and rape also create a rape-seduction dichotomy, where rape culture condones violence against women (Rooney, 1983).

Continuum of sexual violence

Liz Kelly (1987, 1988) also offered the extremely influential contribution of a continuum of sexual violence to draw attention to the pervasiveness of male-perpetrated violence. Koss (1985: 196) suggested that "future studies could explore whether [women] acknowledged that their experience was at least on a continuum with rape" concerning victims who had experienced other forms of sexual victimisation. Kelly (1987) observed that within survivor's perceptions of sexual violence, there was not a simplified binary of rape and consent. Instead, the reality of rape experience was much more complex, such as experiences of pressure and coercion, with 'choice' at one end and 'force' occupying the other. The continuum is present within every individual woman's lifetime, connecting diverse female experiences under a patriarchal system, despite these experiences being different due to overarching intersections of gender with other forms of structural oppression (like race, age,

sexuality or disability) and systematic social or political structures (for example sexual slavery or wartime experience). It can help us discern a "basic common character that underlies many different events" and "a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and cannot be readily distinguished" (Kelly, 1988: 76). Thus, viewing sexual violence on a continuum, means that parallels between the feelings of a rape victim and someone who had experienced other forms of non-consensual sexual activity, such as sexual harassment can be observed (Koelsch, 2014). Kelly had no intention of creating a hierarchy apart from sexual murder; instead, she sought to make connections rather than suggest equivalence (Boyle, 2019).

Kelly (1988) emphasises the importance of research utilising the idea of the continuum of sexual violence, as it enables women to consider a variety of types of sexual victimisation that are not always recognisable as sexual violence acts. It also facilitates researchers' abilities to understand the complexity of how women come to define unwanted sexual experiences through conceptualising rape as part of a continuum of other sexual experiences (Harned, 2005). By conceptualising rape and sexual assault on a continuum, much more apparent links can also be established between even consensual sex perpetuating rape culture (Gavey, 2005).

Anti-victim discourse

Feminist debates surrounding language received substantial reinvigoration in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly surrounding the controversy of the victim label (Ross, 2020). The victim label was frequently depicted as reinforcing the stigmatisation of people who had experienced sexual violence, anchored by 'prevailing dogmas' surrounding victimhood (Alcoff and Gray, 1993: 260). The victim label came to be seen as 'inherently stigmatising' (Dunn, 2005: 22). Victimhood was positioned as a devalued category during this period that was echoed throughout the media into the 2000s and right up to the #MeToo era (Ross, 2020), the latter of which was hallmarked by the proliferation of survivor narratives in online media outlets, particularly Twitter, amplifying discussions of sexual violence that had been historically silenced (Anitha, Marine and Lewis, 2020).

For example, Lady Gaga's (2016) performance of the song 'Till It Happens to You' at the Academy Awards recreates this dominant survivor discourse of resistance, with survivors of sexual violence entering the stage with words written on their wrist, the camera panning

into 'survivor' as a final message (ibid). Moreover, MP Michelle Thompson, after publicly disclosing her experiences of rape as a teenager, declared that "I am not a victim. I'm a survivor" in the House of Commons (Guardian, 2016, 07:20-07:33). Right before Alyssa Milano adopted #MeToo from the activist Tarana Burke, Roxane Gay's memoir was published, where she pointedly contested anti-victim logic:

"It took me a long time, but I prefer "victim" to "survivor" now. I don't want to diminish the gravity of what happened. I don't want to pretend I'm on some triumphant, uplifting journey. I don't want to pretend that everything is okay." (Gay, 2017: 20–21).

A critical enduring legacy of the framing of rape as violence-not-sex can be seen within the #MeToo movement, particularly within some feminist examinations of sexual violence perpetrated by Harvey Weinstein. Here, it was emphasised that his actions were not just about sex but existed within a cultural context that had condoned his abuse by viewing it as *just sex* for decades (Boyle, 2019). Similarly, dominant anti-victim discourses within the movement focused on resisting the apparent 'excess' that the movement created (Sullivan, 2018). Of course, feminists had been documenting popular discourses about rape, sexual violence and sexual assault for decades prior, but this gained more prominent traction in the media due to #MeTOO (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Leung and Williams, 2019). With the realities of sexual violence being thrust into primetime media discourse (Zarkov and Davis, 2018), we also see some very public rejections of the 'victim' label again due to the associated stigma, such as Amber Heard's explicit refusal to adopt the label and preference for being seen as a survivor in an interview for Wonderland Magazine (Barlow, 2019).

Aims of the study

Previous literature has delved into understanding the self-labelling of 'victim' and 'survivor' (O'Shea et al., 2024), as well as the discursive sites (Orgad, 2009) have examined the current discourses surrounding victim-survivor labelling (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). Further research is needed to explore the more nuanced elements of labelling by examining current discourses surrounding victims and survivors through more than just victim-survivors' perspectives (Williamson and Serna, 2018). As language choice and self-identity can be shaped by both perceptions of victim-survivors, as well as language usage by professionals that victim-survivors may encounter and broader society, this becomes an essential area of focus. Victim-survivor language choices cannot be viewed solely in isolation as an individual

language choice but are impacted by discursive contexts, perceptions and underlying associations. Research rarely focuses on normative and non-normative framings of victim-survivor identity outside of self-labelling. When it does so, it tends to focus on framings within academic publications (for example, see Hockett and Saucier, 2015) rather than policy and practice documents.

Yet literature tends to place a significant emphasis on language. Whilst that at first may seem extremely obvious, given that, indeed, victim-survivor identity involves the analysis of language, we must also acknowledge that victim-survivors are only able to consider identity concepts using the language available to them (Hansen, 2020). Although words can only encapsulate a surface level of human understanding, art is not constrained solely by linguistic measures but can convey meaning that words cannot reach (Harper, 2002). Whilst the incorporation of arts-based research with victim-survivors with lived experience of sexual violence is in the early stages, it can help navigate the language problem in a way traditional qualitative methodologies cannot, allowing for a deep dive into discourses at play. Thus, this study has five clear-cut aims:

Firstly, this study aims to trace the emergence of the concepts 'victim,' 'survivor', and 'victim-survivor' through sexual violence literature, the emergence of the survivor discourse and position this within the victim-survivor binary.

Secondly, the project seeks to understand the discourses surrounding the concepts 'victim' and 'survivor' through an exploration of the meaning both these two concepts hold for people with lived experience of sexual violence and the underlying assumptions, associations and behaviours they feel underpin these concepts and schemas.

Thirdly, this study wishes to consider normative and non-normative framings of victim-survivor concepts within policy and practice documents produced by governmental agencies and third-sector organisations to help address this research gap. As perceptions of victim-survivors and the language used to describe sexual violence experiences can directly impact the meaning victim-survivor concepts hold for victim-survivors, their internalisation of said concepts and their language choices, focus cannot be solely on victim-survivors own self-identity. Instead, language usage must also be considered through representations and cultural constructions of victim-survivors within documents that describe them.

Next, the study plans to examine understandings and cultural constructions of victim-survivor through the standpoint of professionals with day-to-day experience working and offering support to victim-survivors of sexual violence. Again, given that perceptions of victim-survivors can hold consequences for self-labelling, focus should also be broadened to exploring how victim-survivor identities are viewed, understood, and spoken about by professionals working in the sector, who may shape perceptions victim-survivors themselves may hold. Also, given the complexity that professionals may also have lived experience of sexual violence themselves, it allows the study to consider this unique dimension of dual identity, examining comparisons between the two groups.

Lastly, but by no means the least, this thesis hopes to accurately depict the representations of victim-survivor identities that participants wish to convey, to honour and respect the time, effort and contribution made by all who created a photograph. The study's empowerment approach strongly seeks to centre the needs and views of participants surrounding their own identities and experiences through creative research.

Thesis overview and structure

The thesis comprises seven chapters centred around examining victim-survivor identities, unpacking language choices, and exploring vital discursive sites they emerge within. Chapter two offers the theoretical and literature foundation for the thesis; it traces the theoretical emergence of the VictimSurvivor Paradox and victim-survivor binary within feminist theorisations of victim-survivor identity. It begins this examination through the complexity of a lack of universally agreed upon language to refer to people with lived experience of sexual violence, but also the debates surrounding terminology to describe acts of sexual violence themselves. Once established, it then considers the theoretical roots of the concept of a victim and the growing concern about the negative connotations underpinning the devalued identity, resulting in the emergence of the survivor discourse. After exploring four key discursive sites integral to understanding the creation of the concept of a survivor within violence and abuse literature, it unravels the VictimSurvivor Paradox and the victim-survivor dichotomy, positioning this through the conceptual ideas of transition, linear progression, growth and the infamous journey metaphor. Chapter 2 then ends with the creation of the concept of a 'victim-survivor,' as well as the less influential alternatives.

Chapter 3 showcases my methodological journey, outlining the essential research methods, theoretical perspectives employed within my thesis, and the practical and ethical challenges encountered. It lays the theoretical rationale I held for drifting away from traditional mixed-methods approaches and outlines instead why I employed methodological braiding throughout the research process. Next, it untangles the specific practical challenges I encountered before commencing research, considering that professionals working with victim-survivors may also identify as victim-survivors themselves. Hence, they occupy a dual identity (for dual identity, see Anderson and Overby, 2020). The chapter also outlines the epistemological background of the thesis, the combination of symbolic interactionist understandings of identity and labelling alongside feminist standpoint theory. Alongside this, Chapter 3 showcases the research calendar and procedures for exploring victim-survivor concepts across the three fundamental methods of documentary analysis: arts-based research with victim-survivors and arts-based inquiry with professionals working daily with victim-survivors. Chapter 3 ends with articulating the distinctive ethical challenges of sexual violence, identity and arts-based inquiry.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 all present the empirical findings of this thesis. Chapter 4 showcases the analysis of 116 policy and practice documents produced in January (2013) that feature normative and nonnormative framings of victim-survivor. It not only outlines the difficulties in categorising such documents into normative and non-normative framings, as language is often used interchangeably but also unpacks the critical discourses surrounding the usage of 'survivor' using three key pillars:

1) Safety
2) Agency
3) Recovery

Chapter 4 also examines the discourses surrounding the concept of a 'victim' within policy and practice documents, using the lenses of agency, harm, and disempowerment. It echoes the usage of the 'survivor'.

Chapter 5 displays the findings from the photographs and art pieces created by victim-survivors with lived experiences of sexual assault surrounding 'victim' and 'survivor,' understood through their photo-elicitation interviews. After outlining important contextual information about the images from the data collection process, it examines the critical discourses surrounding both concepts. Specifically, it explores the 'victim' images through

the vantages of hurt, coping, victim-blaming, ideas of normality and fundamental misconceptions surrounding victimhood. 'Survivor' images are outlined through discourses of challenging victim-blaming, sexualisation, masculinity, and perceptions of healing.

In a similar fashion to Chapter 5, Chapter 6 presents the findings generated from photo-taking and photo-elicitation interviews with professionals who work on a day-to-day basis with people with lived experience of sexual violence. After offering similar essential contextual information and untangling some critical challenges with a dual identity, discourses surrounding the two concepts are also examined. 'Victim' images are considered through victim-blaming, recovery and negative emotions, whilst 'survivor' images centre around the unfairness of victim-blaming, the presence of hope and the drawbacks of survivorship being bound with hope and resilience. Following the empirical chapters (Chapters 4-6), Chapter 7 concludes the main research findings and offers future directions for victim-survivor language research.

Using a methodological braiding approach to arts-based research and documentary analysis, symbolic interactionism and feminist standpoint theory as theoretical lenses, this research was created to explore the usage and associations with victim-survivor concepts. This study adopted a documentary analysis of policy and practice documents featuring normative and nonnormative framings of victim-survivor concepts, as well as photo-taking and photo-elicitation with victim-survivors with lived experience of sexual assault and professionals working with victim-survivors on a day-to-day-basis, seeking to explore perceptions surrounding language choice and their subsequent influence on victim-survivor identity.

Chapter 2: Untangling the victim-survivor dichotomy

This chapter will illustrate the theoretical foundations of this study, surrounding feminist theorisations of 'victim' and 'survivor' concepts, as well as feminist constructions of rape and sexual assault. It starts with examining the difficulty in understanding sexual assault language due to a lack of consensus on the most appropriate terminology to describe sexual violence itself. It explores specifically the challenges surrounding identity concepts and research. The chapter then moves onto an assessment of the victim-survivor paradigm briefly, delving into a much deeper consideration of the intellectual foundations of this paradigm and tracing the roots of the concept of a victim and the survivor discourse to understand the backdrop the paradigm emerged before finally returning to unravel the VictimSurvivor Paradox (Thompson, 2000) and the victim-survivor dichotomy (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996) that underpins victim-survivor language.

Understanding the difficulties in language in sexual violence research

There is an ongoing sense of uncertainty within violence and abuse literature surrounding the most appropriate vocabulary to identify or refer to people who have experienced sexual violence (O'Shea et al., 2024; Williamson, 2023; Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Muldoon, Taylor and Norma, 2016; Young and Maguire, 2003) is. Within contemporary society, people who have been sexually assaulted are normatively labelled as either a 'victim' and/ or a 'survivor' (Setia, Marks and Sieun, 2020; Jordan, 2013). In terms of self-labelling, studies in the past decade have found quite distinctive differences among people who have experienced sexual violence (Johnson and LaPlante, 2023).

Boyle and Clay-Warner (2018) found that female sexual assault victim-survivors preferred the term 'survivor' on the whole. Similarly, Williamson and Serna noted that female participants were more likely to self-label as a 'survivor' (41%) rather than adopt a victim label (11%), and Williamson (2023) found that whilst 50% of participants preferred the survivor label, only 16.2% had a preference for the 'victim' label. Along a similar dimension,

Johnson (2023) also found 'survivor' to be the most common self-label within a female, community-based sample, with endorsement from a quarter of participants, whilst only one-tenth preferred the 'victim' label. Although this is not clear cut, Graham et al. (2021) found a greater preference for female victim-survivors for a 'victim' label (29.6%) compared with 24% preferring the survivor label. It, of course, must be acknowledged that 'victim' and 'survivor' were the exclusive label options given to participants in the study, as mentioned earlier (Johnson and LaPlante, 2023).

The concept of a 'victim-survivor' is also referred to ever increasingly within feminist discourse (O'Neil, 2018; Jean-Charles, 2014), as well as the more historic 'victim/survivor.' Although it is rather challenging to trace some of the earliest uses of alternative terms, 'victim/survivor' has been used as a concept since the late 1980s in feminist literature (for example, see Dominelli, 1989; Spry, 1995) and 'victim-survivor' around the late 1990s heading into the noughties (such as Reed, 1995; Moreno, 1995; Rozee and Koss, 2001). To further complicate matters, studies have found that some people with experience of sexual assault completely reject all labels as they do not wish for their victimisation experiences to be included or given primacy within their identity (Williamson and Serna, 2017; Nissim-Sabat, 2009; Hunter, 2010). Thus, they may hesitate to be labelled (Ovenden, 2012). Moreover, victim-survivors may assign themselves both 'victim' and 'survivor' (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Leisenring, 2006), suggesting that victim-survivor labelling can be multi-dimensional.

Labels are usually framed as societally salient notions that do not just exist merely as language but also conjure up mental representations of individuals or groups when used (O'Shea et al., 2024; Boyle and Rodgers, 2022; Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2005). Due to the societal salience of these ideas, people who have been assigned these labels may also internalise the representations embedded within them, wherein the label may become part of their identity (Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018; Williamson and Serna, 2018; Thoits, 2011). Subsequently, label-specific schemas and attached behaviours become reinforced (Williamson, 2023), even if those behaviours, as mentioned earlier, are considered stigmatising (Boyle, 2016). Thus, the decision of how to describe yourself post-sexual assault is quite complex due to the social, political and cultural consequences of adopting a specific label (Parker and Mahlstedt, 2010).

Yet 'victim' and 'survivor' do not have universally accepted definitions (Schwark and Bohner, 2019), and their definitions also vary culturally (Papendick and Bohner, 2017). Thus, they can oscillate from individual to individual and, despite having the same constructs, result in different or conflicting schemas or feelings (Williamson, 2023; Anderson and Gold, 1994).

To return to the beginning: identity and sexual violence.

In tandem with a lack of consensus on the language that should be used to describe people with experience of sexual violence, there is an absence of "universally agreed-upon labels to describe various sexual acts" such as, but certainly not limited to, sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape (Sasson and Paul, 2014: 35). This lack of agreement holds considerable consequences for how both victim-survivors may approach their sexual, assault and the cultural constructions of victim-survivors within broader society (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Sasson and Paul, 2014). For instance, Wilkinson (2008) studied perpetrator identity, finding that when the term 'rape' was used in comparison to 'unwanted sex,' participants were more likely to believe the assault should be reported to the police and that the perpetrator received punishment.

Defining terminology

As language affects how people view reality and their identity (Richardson and St Pierre, 2005), feminist research has a rich, established history of exploring language usage inside academia and beyond (Gavey, 1999). The term 'sexual assault' is defined as "a sexual act that is committed or attempted by another person without freely given consent of the victim or against someone unable to consent or refuse" (Basile, Smith, Breiding, Black and Mahendra, 2014: 11). Thus it is typically reserved for any involuntary sexual act (Leung, 2017), including rape, coercion and harassment (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020). It can also refer to a person who has been subjected to pressure or been forced to engage in sexual contact against their will (George, Winfield and Blazer, 1992).

'Sexual assault' was adopted by some feminists for three key reasons: 1) to make the violation or lack of consent clear, 2) to revert attention to the offender in terms of agency, and 3) to create an established set of collective nouns for more specific terms underpinning acts of sexual assault, such as rape or incest, allowing an extension for the meaning of these specific terms (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996). Due to this establishment, sexual assault is often directly conceptualised alongside rape (Hall and Flannery, 1984), but 'sexual assault' should be viewed as more of an umbrella term, with rape a potential distinctive subcomponent (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 1993).

'Sexual assault' is often considered a broad term, as it encapsulates a myriad of potential behaviours (Gavey, 1999), and it can be somewhat ambiguous (Young and Maguire, 2003). This apparent "ambiguity is a double-edged sword" as, on the one hand, it can allow for victim-survivors to more easily voice what has happened to them, yet on the other, it can potentially minimise the traumatic experience (Young and Maguire, 2003: 41), through thinning the severity of the acts it encapsulates, particularly rape (Gavey, 1999). 'Sexual assault' is usually viewed as less emotionally charged than 'rape,' as 'sexual assault' was designed as an 'overarching term' (Hall and Flannery, 1984) through being a collective noun (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996).

In contrast, 'sexual violence' is often employed as a "complement to 'rape' and 'sexual assault'" (Hansen, 2020: 140). Usually, the term is traced to Susan Brownmiller's famous postulation that the essence of rape was violence rather than sex as commonly conceptualised (Brownmiller, 1975, 1999). 'Violence' has been considered somewhat reductive, though, with potentially unintended consequences (Hansen, 2020). The term 'violence' can run the risk of conceptualising rape as normative sexual behaviour, especially in examinations involving forms of rape that are less frequently mythologised, as the use of 'violence' does not exclusively imply that sex is essentially violent. Still, it does norm sex and it becomes difficult to disentangle 'sex' and 'sexual violence' (MacKinnon, 1993). Moreover, 'violence' has solid and deeply-held notions of violence embedded in the physical. In contrast, sexual trauma is not by its nature entirely physical, and this can replicate commonly-held myths surrounding sexual trauma, necessarily containing violence (Hansen, 2020).

Sexual violence can involve numerous forms of behaviour, such as non-consensual sexual experiences without contact, non-consensual sexual contact, coercion, and "attempted and

completed rape" (Sasson and Paul, 2014: 35). Despite 'rape' and 'sexual assault' being two distinctive terms, they are frequently used interchangeably (Hall and Flannery, 1984; Hansen, 2020). Even when attempts are made to try and navigate definitional issues, this is often through creating new terms to describe acts of sexual violence. Yet, creating a new label is somewhat controversial (Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996).

The question of defining rape should be simple in theory but is far from it in practice (Pandley, 2023). Globally, rape definitions tend to have three key dimensions: a lack of consent, penetration and the use of force (Decker and Baroni, 2011). Statutory definitions of rape in England and Wales are given in the Criminal Offences Act (2003) and involve the penetration of a victim-survivor's vagina, anus or mouth through penile penetration, with the dimension of penile-penetration being a heteronormative framing (Burgin, 2019), excluding women from being able to commit rape according to statutory definitions (Pandley, 2023). This privileging of the penis in statutory rape definitions has been described as 'phallocentrism', where the penis is positioned as "the organ of rape" (Wykes and Artz, 2019: 216). Thus, phallocentric beliefs perpetuate the idea that 'real rape' involves penile penetration (Muehlenhard et al., 1992). Although 'rape' is an emotionally charged word (Burgess-Jackson, 1985), and discussions of 'real rape' and rape definitions are pretty controversial (Dowds, 2019), rape is at the same tariff level as assault by penetration (Pandley, 2023). Legal definitions of rape almost exclusively include the actual use of physical force/coercion tactics, or the threat of physical force, employed to result in unwanted sexual intercourse (Abbey et al., 2004: 323). This element of physical force by the perpetrator is consistently evidenced in Western considerations and definitions of rape (Koss, 1993). Defining 'rape' can be pretty problematic to studies of sexual assault, particularly given the slight differences surrounding the term amidst both academia, policy, practice and in everyday culture (Brown, Shell and Cole, 2023; Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Young and Maguire, 2003). Problems defining rape are also in tandem with almost common-sense understandings of sexual assault that can further act as an obstacle to recognising behaviours (Kelly, 1988).

So we start entering slippery territory when trying to navigate the lack of universally agreed terminology of sexual acts and how victim-survivors use this terminology to describe their sexual violence experiences, which in turn affects how they come to make meaning of these acts. Yet, their language choices are carved by culturally dominant

discourses. Thus, 'murky waters' indeed is victim-survivor, sexual assault vs rape terminology (Young and Maguire, 2003: 42).

Sexual violence acknowledgement

Without explicit agreement across legal, academic and practice spheres, it creates uncertainty, which could inadvertently constrain a victim-survivor's ability to self-label (Young and Maguire, 2003). Uncertainty holds implications for 'hidden' victim-survivors or 'non-identifiers' of sexual violence as recognising themselves as having experienced a non-consensual sexual act (Kilimnik and Meston, 2019: 2). Not all women who meet the legal threshold for rape or sexual assault always use identifying terms to describe their own experiences (Gavin, 2024; Littleton and Henderson, 2009; McMullin and White, 2006; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger and Halvorsen, 2003). We typically refer to this as an acknowledgement of victimisation of sexual violence or rape acknowledgement (Merwin and Osman, 2017), which can sometimes occur significantly after an assault has happened (Cleere and Lynn, 2013; Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2011). Self-acknowledgement is usually conceived as a critical first step in terms of disclosure and accessing support (Ullman, 2010), with three vital non-linear phases: a) defining and recognising the problem, b) choosing to seek help and c) selecting sources of support (Liang et al., 2005).

Psychological literature exploring the benefits of labelling experiences as 'rape' and/ or 'sexual violence' on post-traumatic outcomes is somewhat contradictory. Several studies have found there are positive benefits for victim-survivors who label their experiences; for example, Botta and Pingree (1997), examining rape acknowledgement, found that 'labellers' reported higher scores on variables of psychosocial adjustment, experienced fewer emotional issues at work and consumed less alcohol. Moreover, frameworks such as 'The information processing model of interpersonal violence' (Resick and Schnicke, 1992) and the emotional processing theory of post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD (Foa, Steketee and Rothbaum, 1989), both suggest that rape-labelling is a crucial component of recovery. Acknowledgement of sexual violence is often considered positive in outcome-related literature (Osman and Merwin, 2020; McMullin and White, 2006), where acknowledgement is intrinsically linked to disclosure (Wilson, Newins and White, 2018; Heath et al., 2011). After all, labels are shaped by the words available to the victim-survivor, where words hold meaning for self-interpretation of experiences (Hansen, 2020).

To add further complication to this, how acts of sexual violence are described during disclosure can also affect the perceptions of the person receiving the disclosure (Loney-Howes, 2018), people we typically term 'disclosure recipients' (Sasson and Paul, 2014: 35). As words can often hold different meanings depending on the setting, this is also hardly a cut and dry language usage (Hansen, 2020; Leisenring, 2006). Given that victim-survivors frequently experience negative responses to disclosures (Herman, 2005), such as scepticism or disbelief (Propen and Schuster, 2017; Alcoff and Gray, 1993), language usage can be important in examining disclosure experiences (O'Neill, 2018). Indeed, two frequently applied labels to people who have been sexually assaulted post-disclosure are 'survivors' and 'liars,' stressing the link between labelling and disclosure (Larson, 2018: 682)

Foundations of the victim-survivor paradigm

At the heart of the self-definition of a 'victim' or 'survivor' is a factual definition that is the result of a victimisation event, namely, that a person with lived experience of abuse survived a sexual assault (Ben-David, 2020). However, it is also essential that some victim-survivors experience a change in self-definition and self-presentation after the victimisation experience; for instance, they may view themselves as a 'victim,' 'survivor,' or perhaps even as a 'thriver,' or 'overcomer.' The concepts 'victim' and 'survivor' have starkly different connotations (van Dijk, 2009). Although both 'victim' and 'survivor' are central identities to mainstream and academic discourses, they are typically framed as polar opposite, binary categories (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Dunn, 2005; Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996).

Victim and the roots of the 'victima'

'Victim' is a term with a long-established history of being used to describe people who have experienced sexual violence, particularly in medical-scientific literature (Schwark and Bohner, 2019). Although the term 'victim' is arguably the most historically used term, within the literature, very little attention has been devoted to understanding either self-identity or self-defining victimhood, such as victims choosing to occupy a victim role (Ben-David, 2020). 'Victim' is often perceived to be the first identity that is either embraced or forced upon those who have experienced sexual violence (Boyle, 2017; Boyle and Walker, 2016).

In terms of defining 'victims,' this is something that has a relatively large consensus in violence and abuse literature, unlike the sister term 'survivor.' Common framings of the term 'victim' describe a person who is the recipient of 'harmful and unfair treatment" (Holstein and Miller, 1997: 27). Similarly, a victim is also "someone injured, killed, or otherwise harmed by some individual, act or condition" (Young and Maguire, 2003: 42). The underlying concepts of harm or injury are critical to all definitions of victimhood (Leisenring, 2006), this also especially becomes evident when exploring the etymology of the term 'victim' itself. The word 'victim' stems from the Latin description of a sacrificial animal (victima) across all Western languages (van Dijk, 2006); as well as modern Hebrew and Arabic, the words used to denote victims of crime stem from ancient traditions of describing sacrificial animals, indicating sacrifice, as well as sometimes sacrificial objects (Fletscher, 2007). Interestingly, when you start breaking down some words for victims of crimes in Western languages, there is even a double meaning, where the word describes both the act of sacrifice as well as the sacrificial object, such as the German word 'opfer' (van Dijk, 2008; Papendick and Bohner, 2017). This does appear to be a Western tradition, as other languages, such as Mandarin and Japanese, use more neutral language to refer to victims of crime, revolving around them being the injured party (van Dijk, 2009).

Victima almost eliminates every semblance or hope of recovery at all, likening victims of crime to sacrificial objects at the mercy of a sacrificing priest (van Dijk, 2009). We can also see similar patterns of the word victim being explicitly tied to sacrifice in some of the oldest uses in European languages and Latin, which revolve around the depiction of the Christian religious figure Jesus Christ.

Instead, victims of crimes and natural disasters were only really referred to as such around the end of the eighteenth century (Rock, 2004). Here, recognition of the suffering of ordinary people began to be understood, and the victim started to be applied (van Djik, 2006), but etymologically, they are socially constructed as having suffered, thus are considered worthy of receiving societal compassion but also as the subject of a sacrifice (van Dijk, 2009). Indeed, connotations of the victima appear across all modern Western languages, positioning victims as being irreversibly dead, which has no hope for recovery at all (van Dijk, 2020).

The innocent 'ideal' victim

Despite feminist attempts to redefine sexual assault by placing the blame solely on the perpetrator (Donat and D'Emilio, 1992), rape myths and victim-blaming discourses are still dominant within cultural constructions (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015; Young and Maguire, 2003). Considerations of victimisation often boil down to blame and responsibility (Leisenring, 2006), with social victimisation being "an unfortunate reality for many women" (Hockett and Saucier, 2015: 6). Rape myths refer to prevalent problematic societal discourses surrounding victimhood and sexual assault (Doherty and Anderson, 1998), that both legitimise discrimination and subsequently stabilise oppression (Pratto et al., 1994). Rape myths "serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994: 134). Tapping into historical criminological constructions of 'victim-precipitated' crime (Walklate, 2007), victim-survivors were viewed as in some manner complicit in the offences committed against them (Williams and Chong, 2009) or 'catalysts for crime' (Jordan, 2013: 48). Victim-perception has been commonly linked to how victim-survivors are treated by police officers (Ferraro, 1993), in the court system (Frohmann and Mertz, 1994) and third-sector support agencies (Loseke, 1997), thus demonstrating the importance of perceptions with language-usage.

When considering victims of sexual violence, victimhood also implies some degree of uncontrollability, namely, people who have been subjected to sexual acts beyond their control where they have been made powerless (Young and Maguire, 2003). Thus, the idea of 'innocence' due to their powerlessness and the vulnerability of the individual during an act of sexual coercion is also attached to victims (Holstein and Miller, 1990). Some victims even chose to specifically describe themselves as victims because it indicates they were powerless against their victimisation and thus are worthy of sympathy and support (Leisenring, 2006). As a result, victim status allows victims to be seen as innocent in their victimisation (Loseke, 1999) as it deflects responsibility from the victim (Holstein and Miller, 1990). However, this is perhaps a limited framing that is not afforded to all victims (Dunn, 2010), and victimisation is often called into question in so-called 'victim contests' (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 113). Victims are more likely to receive blame from outsiders when their sexual assault experience deviates from hegemonic sexual assault scripts (Clay-Warner and McMahon-Howard, 2009; Grubb and Harrower, 2008).

The 'ideal victim'

Christie's (1986) conceptualisation of the 'ideal victim' is perhaps the most widely known articulation of this construction (Dunn, 2006). An ideal victim is defined as "a person or category of individuals who, when hit by crime, most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (Christie, 1986: 18). An ideal victim thus embodies vital attributes, such as appearing weak and being of a certain age, here either very young or old, and is physically weaker than their abuser (Bows, 2018). It holds parallels with the idea of a 'real-rape' victim according to dominant cultural narratives (Estrich, 1987).

A 'real-rape' victim is female, young and stereotypically attractive (Burt, 1980), who was victimised in a 'classic' rape situation by a male perpetrator, usually a stranger, who attacked her when she was particularly vulnerable, such as walking home alone at night (Williams, McShane and Akers, 2000). Dominant myths surrounding 'real rape' may exclude older women as they are not considered sexually desirable (Bows and Westmarland, 2017), and they may be less likely to frequent nighttime public spaces distancing them from the classic rape situation (Bows, 2018). However, due to older women's inherent vulnerability, they could be considered to embody some of Christie's ideal victim criteria (Bows, 2018; Bows, Bromley and Walklate, 2023). Van Wijk (2013) described how a perfect victim is often an older white woman.

Christie's (1986: 18) formulation of the ideal victim argues that victims must present themselves by traditional expectations of victimhood to be "given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim." This ideal victim trope maintains that ideal victims are without agency and culpability and, thus, are consequently weak, passive, and respectable (Roberts, Donovan and Durey, 2019). Crucially, they must also be seen as 'morally pure' people, blameless for their victimisation (Davies, Lyon and Monti-Cantania, 2000); victims cannot have played a role in their victimisation to be defined as 'true' victims (Clark, 1997; Christie, 1986). Victims of rape reported to the police must be what Stevenson (2000) terms 'unequivocal victims.' Thus, 'proper' victims need to demonstrate their innocence (Sweeny, 2004: 407; Haag, 1996: 60). Whilst they are afforded sympathy due to both their respectability and lack of culpability (Loseke, 2003; Clark, 1997), victimhood thus becomes congruent with a specific form of femininity that may not be accessible to large groups of victims (Roberts, Donovan and Durey, 2019). Loseke (2003: 78-79) goes as far as to assert that a person can only be viewed as a 'victim' when deemed worthy of sympathy with three

central conditions increasing the likelihood for this: 1) victims who bear no responsibility for their victimisation, 2) victims judged as moral, and 3) victims who experience particularly troubling conditions. Thus, support is solely reserved for blameless, morally good victims (Leisenring, 2006).

Victim contests

D'Souza (1991: 242) describes the binding of the concept of a victim with culpability as a 'quest' for "the moral capital of victimhood" where certain minority ethnic groups were more likely to be discredited on this basis and have their victim status called into question. For instance, white female victims are more likely to be perceived as ideal victims amidst cultural narratives (Christie, 1986), where the ethnicity of the victim and offender is essential to rape stereotypes (Donovan, 2007). Whilst all rape victims are subjected to some form of blame (Boyle, 2020), Latinx and Black women find themselves more intensely scrutinised for their behaviour and appearance in discourses of victim blaming (Spohn, Beichner, and Davis-Frenzel, 2001). They are surrounded by cultural narratives of them engaging in risky behaviour, their sexuality and substance misuse (Slakoff and Brennan, 2019). Sexual assault also disproportionately affects women of colour (Curtis et al., 2022. Decker et al., 2019). Black women, in particular, experience blame for their sexual victimisation, being positioned as 'asking for it' (Littleton and Dodd, 2016) and hypersexualised as always wanting sex, therefore legitimising their victimisation (Kelley, 2023). They are often constructed as frequently targeted for violence but usually are not viewed as being harmed and subsequently denied victim status and the "legitimacy of victimhood" (Wallace et al., 2024: 6). Thus, black women and other minoritised women of colour, may be seen as (un)victims as they have "unequal recourse to protection and/ or justice" (Long, 2018: 131).

Similarly, feminist literature has attempted to highlight how constructions of the 'innocent victim' can create distortions of justice for specific groups based on their actions (Convery, 2006; Kitzinger, 1988). This is especially evident when any actions of victims beyond outright, blatant resistance are seen to diminish their victim status (Garrison, 1999; Clegg, 1999). The pure victim model can be particularly harmful to victims of intimate partner violence, where unless victims present themselves as highly fearful of abuse, they may not be awarded sympathy or actual victim status (Leisenring, 2006; Lamb, 1999). This is particularly resonant for older victims of intimate partner violence who are subjected to

dominant cultural narratives around ageing (Harbsison and Pettipas, 2020). They may be considered ideal victims due to their inherent frailty, but not 'ideal enough' as these attritions of weakness and frailty are often used to either discredit their victim status or lead to them being blamed (Bows, Bromley and Walklate, 2023).

Victim ideology, the devalued victim and victim-scapegoating

A vital dimension of the cultural context of the emergence of the 'victim' label is what is widely known as 'victim ideology' (Best, 1997). Victim ideology is an overarching cultural framework for understanding and positioning victims and victimisation, stemming from changing conceptualisations of victims over time (Dunn, 2010). Best (1997) attributed contemporary constructions of victims that emerged from various social movements of the 1960s that created a 'victim industry' and subsequent 'victim ideology;' within these, increasing numbers of people were identified as victims of abuse, and this created a climate where any ambiguity could create victim-blaming. However, Best (1997:14) argued that it made a time when an ideology of victimisation emerged, and this fuelled a so-called 'victim industry.' Here, an extensive collection of different types of victims was mass-produced and further exacerbated by significant institutions such as academia, the mass media, and the recovery movement, which provided "considerable institutional support for the ideology of the victim" (ibid).

Best here was making a direct criticism levied at the feminist anti-rape movement of the 1960s-170s, specifically the three core tenants that suggested: any woman could potentially be a rape victim, any man could be a rapist, and the act of rape could take any type, such as martial rape, or rape by an acquaintance, not just by the culturally dominant narrative of a stranger (Brownmiller, 1975; Russell, 1975; Burgess and Holmstrom, 1974; Griffin, 1971). Thus, women could be victims of rape regardless of their class or racial background or their age group (Kelly, 1988; Warshaw, 1988; Stanko, 1985; Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1983). Due to this radical re-orientation, Best (1999) viewed the anti-rape movement as seeking to precisely reframe rape as a 'new crime' through the reconstruction of its definitions, characters involved and even the role of the rape victim (Jordan, 2013; Dunn, 2005).

Best (1999) noted that under victim ideology, victimisation had become relatively common and significant numbers of people had been affected. Thus, claims of widespread harm led to framing victimisation as deserving of serious public attention (Best, 1990; 1999). Quite controversially, Best (1999: 104) linked the evolution of feminist theorisation and conceptualisation of rape to broadening standards in refining sexual assault to the point where "women in our patriarchal culture can never freely consent to sex." Thus, in recent times, victimism has even been described as fashionable (Best, 1997) but also in crisis (Gavey, 1999). This is because victim ideology and victim culture critics drew attention to the increasing prevalence of victim-survivors and perpetuated the false idea that almost everyone falls under the blanket of victimisation, subsequently undermining the genuine anguish that 'real' victims experience (Lamb, 1996: 20).

In some of the more controversial assertions, victims are constructed as taking on or exhibiting a 'victim personality,' where their abuse or trauma takes primacy over their own identity in a detrimental fashion (Alcoff and Gray, 1993). This is why Minow (1993: 1432) and Dunn and Powell-Williams (2007: 983) describe how victims are perceived as 'pathetic.' In tandem with the dimension of victim ideology, the construction of victims within the socio-political discourses was also affected by growing concerns in feminist circles about the pathologising of victims (Dunn, 2005). Minow (1993: 1432) described victimhood as "a cramped identity, depending upon and reinforcing the faulty idea that a person can be reduced to a trait. The victim is helpless, decimated, pathetic, weak and ignorant." Victims may be subjected to processes where their claims become delegitimated due to them being judged as becoming 'victims of victimhood,' where victimhood "can have a kind of self-fulfilling quality" as it is constructed as perpetual (Minow, 1993: 1430). Stringer (2014: 40) expresses concern at this notion of a victim-personality as "victims are presented as self-made" as the systematic oppressive structures perpetuating and reinforcing sexual violence are entirely ignored.

Rape trauma syndrome

Victim identity also centres around specific contemporary ideas of rape and rape-trauma syndrome, which has also been referred to as 'rape-related post-traumatic stress disorder' (Burgess, 1983: 100). Rape trauma syndrome was first used by Burgess and Holstrom (1974) to identify the considerable knowledge gaps surrounding the physiological and psychological consequences of rape, as well a need for further protections for victims to

prevent further harm (Donohue et al., 2014). Rape trauma syndrome was conceptualised as a two-phased reaction, beginning with the 'acute phase' and the 'long-term reorganisation process' that is caused by actual or attempted rape (Burgess and Holstrom, 1974). The long-term effects of rape become particularly relevant to understanding some contemporary constructions of victim-identity.

Within the long-term reorganisation process, victims were constructed as experiencing lifestyle changes, moving homes, turning away from support from family members, suffering from nightmares and experiencing 'traumaphobia,' which could include social anxiety, fears of loneliness, crowd anxiety, being approached from behind and anxiety around sexual activities (ibid). These post-rape consequences were not without controversy, mainly due to questions around the representativeness of their sample size and singular setting (for example, see Tversky and Kahneman, 1974), lack of a control group (Frazier and Borgida, 1985), and treating victim-survivors as a homogenous group when their sample had a wide variety of differences in offences from a legal standpoint (Katz and Mazur, 1979). Despite this, rape trauma syndrome and the long-term consequences of rape hold a role in considering whether victims take on a new personality post-victimisation.

The roots of victimism

'Victimism' is "an objectification which establishes new standards for defining experience; those standards dismiss any question of will, and deny that the woman, even while enduring sexual violence, is a living, changing, growing, interactive person" (Barry, 1979: 38). Convery (2006: 241) observed that it has now actually become a dominant trend in feminist theorisations and constructions of victims to instead seek alternative identities "to the now devalued victim." It is important to note that this is also under the conditions of victim-provocation theories and victim-blaming discourses, both of which also affected the construction of victims. Best (1999: 116) noted that "the term victim has undesirable connotations."

Concurrently, under victim ideology, although victimisation is positioned as unambiguous, quite often, it is unrecognised by the wider public, as well as by victims themselves (Best, 1999). Research has found that even women who meet research-created definitions of rape may not always self-identify or recognise themselves as being rape victims (Warshaw, 1988). Moreover, for example, in the context of domestic violence in particular, victims

were often not commonly even recognised as victims before the 1970s (Leisenring, 2006) due to domestic violence not being taken seriously as a social problem before the early 1970s (Pleck; 1987; Schechter, 1982). Victim provocation theories emphasised that abused women played a willing role in their violence; thus, in the context of an intimate relationship, they were often viewed as either wholly or partially accountable (Schechter, 1982).

Another crucial but distinct term to understand 'victim' is the idea of victimhood. Victimhood constitutes the "belief, usually from victims, that their plight is caused by themselves or others who must be blamed and punished as a substitute for actively seeking the roots of their problem" (Convery, 2006: 539). It is often used by those critical of victims' claims, where they position victims as 'espousing' victimhood; where although victims are granted the view that they have an authentic case of victimisation, their subsequent actions after the victimisation event are called into question (Convery, 2006).

Victim as negative

It is important to note that there are different findings in the literature that there are distinctive meanings and connotations towards the concepts 'victim' and 'survivor,' with victim being associated with overwhelmingly negative attributes (O'Shea et al., 2024; Schwark and Bohner, 2019). Due to these negative attributes, victims of crime themselves are showing some hesitancy in occupying the victim label (Rock, 2004), particularly within a wider society that places value on individual strength (Garland, Spalek and Chakraborti, 2006), where the negative label completely denies the strengths they may have (van Teeseling, 2001). Williamson (2023) similarly found in a study of victim-survivor labels and self-compassion that there was a general preference for the term 'survivor.' However, a third of participants either preferred a different label, used both 'victim' and 'survivor' or rejected both entirely, but there was an overall hesitancy towards the 'victim' label. This was due to the overwhelmingly negative connotations attached to the victim label, particularly passivity (ibid). Also, in their literature review of academic articles using normative ('victim') and nonnormative (survivor) labels of rape victim-survivors, Hocket and Saucier (2015) found that normative framings solely focused on adverse outcomes for victim-survivors. Beyond simply the blanket term 'negative connotations,' there are also much more profound, specific associations with victimhood as well.

Passivity is one of the most commonly discussed attributes ascribed to victimhood (Thompson, 2000; Lamb, 1999; Holstein and Miller, 1997; Best, 1997). Barry (1979: 39) was one of the first feminist theorists to propose the alternative of a survivor as a viable alternative to the victim label, as "surviving is the other side of being a victim. It involves will, action, and initiative on the victim's part." In stark contrast, the victim label holds "negative connotations of being damaged, passive and powerless" (Best, 1997: 13), unlike the survivor moniker that denotes agency. The 'victim' label has been shown to exhibit passivity in myriad ways. On a simply definitive level, the act of victimising someone "instructs others to understand the person as a rather passive, indeed helpless, recipient of injury or injustice" (Holstein and Miller, 1997: 43). However, in further dimension, victimhood is associated with passivity due to victims' mental state after the traumatic incident, where they attribute their victimisation to forces beyond their control (Ben-David, 2020), so even after the incident they feel a loss of power (Ullman and Peter-Hagene, 2014).

Similarly, victims are also often positioned as being trapped due to being in situations beyond their control that they cannot escape from (Dunn, 2005). Picart (2003: 97) describes this framework as 'gendered helplessness' where victims are constructed as people "who must be protected from 'evil' and predatorial forces because she is incapable of any acts of agency to defend herself." Similarly, Leisenring (2006: 318) found that victims used adjectives such as 'powerless,' 'cowering,' 'hopeless,' and 'helpless' to describe victimhood. Under a similar theme but with a slight deviation, Lamb (1996) maintained that being helpless is a crucial component of victims being seen as 'real victims' as idealised victims are expected to bear no responsibility for their victimisation. Thus, "victims drown in the sea of degrees of powerlessness" (Lamb, 1996: 43).

So, the victim label denotes helplessness due to their inability to protect themselves as they require help from external forces (Cazeau, 2015), either a protector or an external agency to rescue the victim. In this vein, the victim label can create the stigmatisation of victims due to their passivity and lack of designation of victims as 'fighters' in a fashion afforded to survivors (Williamson and Serna, 2018). For instance, victims are pitied figures and, in some cases, even blamed for allowing their assault to happen by not fighting back or fighting their attackers (Spry, 1995). This is also known as a 'dependency trap,' where some victims find themselves caught in a trap where victim status "is both a blessing and a curse" (Ben-David, 2020: 23) as it is a reciprocal process (Dillenburger, Fargas and Akhonzada, 2005).

Whilst "most people in everyday life would not willingly court any of these circumstances or eagerly build an identity upon them" (Rock, 2002: 14), there are known benefits to claim victim status (Konradi, 1999). For instance, identifying as a victim is often necessary to access assistance and psychological, economic, and legal support (Friday and Kirchhoff, 2000; Levens, 1986). Thus, to access these benefits, victims may need to remain in a victim role to have access as such (Glazer, 1975). Either alternatively or simultaneously, victims may need to claim victim status to even be recognised as a victim in the criminal justice system, particularly in cases of intimate partner violence where victim status may be questioned (Dunn, 2010). Occupying the ideal victim role can even be helpful in the criminal justice system (Konradi, 1999) to avoid being deviant (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015). A downside to this is that the need to prove one's status as a victim can result in relabelling and even falling into the role of a victim unintentionally (Ben-David, 2020; Dussich, 1981).

Long-lasting damage

A final component of victimisation ideology is the positioning of victimhood as being highly consequential and resulting in long-lasting damage (Best, 1999: 106). Feelings of being damaged by victim-survivors of sexual violence tend to be rooted in them experiencing a semblance of responsibility for their victimisation or being powerless to prevent their assault (Draucker et al., 2009). The extent to which victims experience damage is an idea with conflicting evidence; for instance, Draucker and Madsen (1999: 330) found that victim-survivors' core identities or 'essential nature' were not affected by sexual violence. Yet sexual violence damaging a victim's sense of self is an ever-present idea in the constructions of victims and the victim label (Sasson and Paul, 2014). For example, Boyle (2016) found that the victim label had stronger associations (than the survivor label) with mental illness, including post-traumatic stress disorder and shame, or the label is associated with poor self-esteem (McCarthy, 1986).

Victim labels suggest that due to this attribution, victims may not be active in working towards recovering from their victimisation experiences (Dunn, 2005). This could stem from victim labels eliciting highly negative emotions, such as the individuals experiencing shame or guilt, as well as having a lack of self-compassion (Williamson and Serna, 2018), and it is these emotions that are a significant obstacle to their recovery (Thompson and Waltz, 2008). Indeed, those who occupy the victim label tend to be viewed as having fewer coping qualities (Hockett, McGraw and Saucier, 2014). In this line of thought, agency is

explicitly linked to responsibility (Marcel. 2003). A particularly salient idea in this sphere is 'learned helplessness', where people do not act when encountering problems or setbacks (Ben-David, 2020). It is typically viewed as a failure to cope or an inability to try and work towards moving out of an unhelpful outcome (Seligman, 1991; Dussich and Jacobsen, 1981; Seligman, 1973).

Similarly, Berns (2004: 15) described this 'victim empowerment' model of constructing victims of intimate partner violence as offering some sympathy for victims due to the abuse suffered. Still, victims themselves are positioned as being responsible for their recovery and stressing the need to "refuse to be a victim." Other literature has also found a similar lack of agency associations with victims of intimate partner violence, including them even placing self-blame on victims due to their lack of actions (see Donovan and Hester, 2010; Hyden, 2005), as well as other forms of violence within relationships (Lloyd and Emery, 2000). These constructs of a passive victim place a significant emphasis on the passivity, vulnerability and helplessness of victims (O'Shea et al., 2024; Hunter, 2010; Dunn, 2005), where they are even re-objectified (Faith and Schare, 1993).

Here, the label 'victim' no longer solely signifies the victim-survivor's position within patriarchal power structures but indicates a personality characterised by 'incomplete personhood' (Thorosby, 2004: 141; Gilmore, 2003: 710; Haraway, 1997: 65). This absolute normalisation of victimhood having a bad reputation due to associations with passivity, has led to the symbiosis of victimhood and passivity where those occupying victim status are now viewed as even 'causing victimhood' due to their occlusion of forward progress towards their recovery (D'Souza, 1991). Patsavas (2014: 209) noted that "discourses of personal responsibility are consistently embedded in cultural narratives of pain", where other structural conditions that contributed to violence and abuse are ignored. Still, victims must assume responsibility for their own experiences and move towards recovery (Larson, 2018). Thus, when "victims are solely responsible for ameliorating the negative conditions of life", systematic social structures that violence against women exists within are entirely ignored (Stringer, 2014: 40).

Now, on a surface level, these experiences could be indicative of secondary victimisation and a simple case of victim blaming (Van Dijk, 2009). However, conventional representations of victimhood showing them as passively suffering directly contradicts victims' ability to show resilience in their coping with trauma (Jacoby, 1983). When victim resilience receives

negative responses, it shows a second mechanism that seems to be at play, where victims are not only expected to be passive but also meek in their suffering. Any behaviour displaying resilience is negatively defined (van Teeseling, 2001). Van Dijk (2009:18) described this as 'reactive victim scapegoating' where victims deviate from conditions of passivity and receive an "outpouring of hatred against them."

Tracing the emergence of the contemporary survivor

By definition, a survivor "is considered to be a person who continues to live after or despite some incident" (Young and Maguire, 2003: 42). Unlike the word 'victim' which focuses on the event that happened to a person, 'survivor' is more concentrated on and even emphasises what happened in the aftermath (Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018). Dictionary definitions of the term 'survivor' vary but have some common threads (Ben-David, 2020). The root of the term survivor is 'survive,' denotive to connotations such as remaining alive, functioning, and persevering (Hebdon, Foli and McComb, 2015). It is pretty difficult to trace the etymology of the term 'survivor.' Still, it similarly has Latin roots to the 'victima' label, such as the prefix 'super' that refers to being above something or surpassing it, as well as the French root 'vivere' that means explicitly to live (Stringer, 2014; van Dijk, van Kesteren and Smit, 2007).

The 'survivor discourse' is somewhat problematic to explore as the term does not reference a discourse that holds preference with the label 'survivor' rather than 'victim,' as expected (Convery, 2006); instead, it refers to the discourse of survivors that examines public disclosures of sexual assault happening with increased frequency (Alcoff and Gray, 1993). Within the 'survivor discourse', far less prominence is given to perpetrators (Convery, 2006), as the perpetrator holds far less relevance to the survivor's 'heroic adaption' (Lamb, 1999: 119). As well as this, the survivor discourse is often contrasted with expert discourse through distinctions in knowledge production, the former of which is formed from victim-survivors' personal subjective experiences and emotions, whilst the latter is derived in systematic, supposedly objective truth assertions (Naples, 2003).

Due to the multiple sites that use the term 'survivor,' it should not be viewed as a monolithic concept as although parallels can be drawn, the term itself is hardly well-defined

(Hall, 2004). Rather, instead of simply viewing it as a linguistic term or label, 'survivor' should be understood as "an explanatory scheme, an image for a way of being, which frames, informs, and underpins how individuals think, judge, and act about themselves and others (Orgad, 2009: 149).

Death

The notion of 'death' with constructions and definitions of survivorhood is a problematic concept to untangle as it can be referred to in two dimensions: 1) physical death or risk of physical death, or 2) what we might term a 'social death.' 'Social death' is a multidisciplinary conceptual idea, and there is a lack of consensus on its exact usage (Kralova, 2015). As a term, it was first introduced into social science research through a study of identity in hospital patients by Sudnow (1967), attempting to distinguish between clinical, social and biological death. The most famous conceptualisation is typically ascribed to Glaser and Strauss (1966), who considered how a person's understanding of death impacted their social interaction with others, drawing upon Goffman's (1961) conceptual understanding of the 'mortification of self.' Social death is usually self-perceived, where a person or group comes to lack hopefulness and has suffered some significant or extreme loss that makes them view themselves as very close to death due to a loss of social identity or social capital (Kralova, 2015). In terms of a violence and abuse context, social death is typically used to refer to women raped under genocide conditions, so in the context of other traumas (for instance, Card, 2010).

From the nineteenth century, the term 'survivor' was also readily used to describe people who had remained alive during near-fatal accidents or natural disasters. For instance, 'Sporting Life' used the term 'survivor' to reference those who survived sporting incidents (Sporting Life, 1898; 1899), army incidents (Sporting Life, 1910; 1888) and victims of catastrophes such as the Titanic (Sporting Life, 1912)[1], and even occasionally, animals who survived near-fatal accidents (see Kane, 1856). Again, here we see the term being solely reserved for those who have survived the risk of death, as it was not until around the 1960s that the term's meaning was extended to include people who had suffered damage from

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[1] For further details, see Orgad (2009)

things such as persecution by other people, or even disease and illnesses such as addiction (Orgad, 2009; Hall, 2004). Quite famously, the term 'survivor syndrome' was coined in the psychotherapeutic discourse by William Guglielmo Niederland in 1961 to describe a mental illness suffered by survivors of persecution in the Third Reich (Niederland, 1968). Survivor syndrome is now also extended to refer to people who have experienced a range of posttraumatic symptoms, from negative experiences, such as heart surgery (for example, Blacher, 1978) to fields of psychobiology (Yehuda et al. 1998).

Sites for the production of the survivor discourse

Several cultural sites are integral to the survivor discourse (Orgad, 2009). Each of these can help to untangle the 'survivor' figure emergent in feminist discourses surrounding violence and abuse, particularly cancer and the Holocaust.

Surviving Cancer

One of the most widely known discourses functioning as a site for producing a 'survivor' is within the medical discourse. Within this, a 'survivor' is a person who continues to live despite being faced with a traumatic, difficult or adverse experience, which may be related to being diagnosed with an illness, surviving a disaster or suffering through some other form of trauma (Kornhaber et al. 2016). Although other labels such as 'patient,' 'service user', and 'client' are still commonly used, 'survivor' is still a preferred term used to refer to some individuals accessing healthcare, in cancer patients who were encouraged to assume the mantle to survive through maintaining a positive attitude (Christmas and Sweeney, 2016).

The term 'cancer survivor' was first coined by Fitzhugh Mullan, who stressed that patients should be termed 'survivors' from the beginning of treatment as "survival begins at the point of diagnosis because that is the time when patients are forced to confront their morality and begin to make adjustments that will be part of their immediate and to some extent, long-term future" (Mullan, 1985: 271). Thus, rather than distinguishing between literal survivors, such as patients in remission, from others with different levels of outcome, the term should be applied to cancer patients as a whole (Rees, 2018). This is still, however, a rather heated debate, despite the prominence of the survival label (Khan, Rose and Evans, 2012) due to a lack of consensus on the actual meaning of the term survivor (Bell and Ristovski-Slikecepcevic, 2013) and the apparent disjuncture of applying the term to all

cancer patients, even those at the end of their life (Berry, Davis, Flynn, Landercasper, and Deming, 2019).

To try and combat this confusion, a large body of research has been trying to untangle how oncology patients perceive the term 'survivor' (for example, Davis et al., 2016; Documet et al., 2012; Morris et al., 2011; Stephenson, Fletcher, and Schneider 2013). Some patients have embraced the label due to 'survivor' having positive associations with recovery and also creating a unifying identity that can create cohesion between survivors (Dyer, 2015). However, some patients have found the term disingenuous (Bell, 2012) and unrelatable to their experiences due to its over-emphasis on positive thinking in the broader discourse (Bell, 2014; Sinding and Gray, 2005).

This is perhaps because one of the dominant narratives within the cancer discourse is 'heroism' (Stacey, 1997) and imagery of fighting a battle against the odds, where those who triumph are considered the 'survivors' (Sontag, 1978). We see a deep entrenchment of warfare language, battle imagery within the discourse (Seale, 2001), and other illnesses like tuberculosis (Chin et al., 2019). As the body is 'invaded' by foreign cells "with the patient's body considered to be under attack ('invasion'), the only treatment is counter attack" (Sontag, 1978:63), akin to territory being infiltrated by enemy lines in war. Even though cancer treatment has a long-established link with feelings of patients losing control or agency within literature (Thomas-MacLean, 2004; Dunn and Steginga, 2000), some studies have found that patients with less intrusive treatments felt they were not worthy of the accolade of survivor (Rees, 2018), showing possible hierarchies amongst survivorship. In particular, research into survivor identity in the cancer discourse has also been criticised for almost entirely conducting research with samples comprised of American white women with breast cancer (Bell, 2014; Khan et al., 2012). Thus, the meanings and associations of survivorship outside the US have received very little attention.

Death is also a problematic concept to explore within cancer discourses, as cancer has a high likelihood of recurrence, so 'cure' is rarely used in favour of remission (Martin, Hocking and Sandham, 2020). Hesse-Bieber (2014) described this as the so-called 'cancer-clock' where patients often involuntarily predicted their outcomes. Even when in remission, the survivor label places pressure on survivors to return to normality and their previous lives before their diagnosis (Rees, 2018); thus, little space is given for survivors to navigate through fears of reoccurrence or even some ongoing effects of treatment within remission (Little,

Paul, Jordens and Sayer, 2002). Thus, we see a transition period where survivors move from 'active treatment' to 'follow-up care' where the ambiguity of their state of illness and complex treatment can pose a problem for identity meaning (Hofree et al., 2016). Hebdon, Foil and McComb (2015) likened battles with cancer to The Vietnam War, as victory is not one singular, clearly identifiable point but comprised of multiple battles fought with both positive and negative consequences.

The Holocaust Survivor

The Holocaust is also a location of specific significance when considering the historical backdrop of the term 'survivor,' where the survivor figure was cemented as "a visible discursive object" (Orgad, 2009: 137). Chaumont (1997) traced the experiences of Holocaust victims in the two decades following the end of the Second World War through a process of secondary victimisation they experienced. Up until the 1970s, 'Holocaust victim' was the term used to refer to the people persecuted under the Third Reich; however, this label became interwoven with connotations of deep shame due to the passivity of individuals in death camps and the supposed undignified means of survival prisoners used under the harsh conditions (Chaumont 1997). In tandem with this, Jewish survivors were facing an absence of their experience on monuments commemorating Holocaust victims (Chaumont, 2000), particularly in the Zionist-Israeli state in the 1950s, where there was systematic omission and neglect of honouring survivor voices in broader literature, education and history (Loshitzky, 2001; Solomon, 1995). With celebrations centred almost entirely on partisans and the Ghetto fighters, ignoring victims of concentration camps, "it was the heroes,' not the victims' time" (Zertal, 1998: 284). So emerged the cult of the hero (Chaumont, 2000), where recognition was only afforded to those conceptualised as actively resisting oppression or defending their home nations. This cultural narrative began to be actively challenged in the 1970s with repeated attempts to reclaim status for all, known as the 'glorification of the victims' (Chaumont, 2000: 168).

Under the glorification of the victims, Holocaust victims were instead reframed and reconceptualised as holding great courage, recognised as having immensely suffered, and even being afforded the badge 'survivor,' which had been previously only used to describe active heroes in the Holocaust (Orgad, 2009). As well as a societal label, a reconfiguration of how Holocaust survivors began to view their own identity took place as a result, as "survivors of the Holocaust rarely thought of themselves as 'survivors,' until the term

became routine, and an honorific" (Hoffman, 2017:172), thus once the term began to gain traction, wide-scale application, more victims began to internalise 'survivor' attitudes. This was because 'victims' were seen as deeply affected and sometimes even immobilised by the atrocities of what happened in the Holocaust. Still, survivors could move beyond this by coping with catastrophe, using it as a source of strength in their recovery (Figley, 1985). In this context, survivorhood was considered the 'mastery of being a human being' (Figley, 1985: 399), where survivors held positive attitudes through newfound safety, optimism and vitality for life itself.

Yet 'survivorhood' in the Holocaust discourse is far from clear cut, and some conceptualisations were starkly different. For instance, Des Pres (1980) conceptualised the Holocaust survivor as an unglorified figure who relied on his bodily instincts to survive, even through unpalatable means, as the most authentic obligation of a survivor is to embrace life. This was quite a controversial construction. Bettleheim (1979: 288) argued that this interpretation misconstrues the level of agency Holocaust survivors had during persecution, noting that depicting survivors as having active agency in their survival, namely that they chose and fought to survive, was a "completely misleading distortion." Instead, in actuality, Bettelheim (1979) viewed Holocaust survivors' passivity and complete lack of agency as actually facilitating their survival itself. Other works have also rejected parallels between survivorship and heroism within the Holocaust discourse due to lack of agency and inability to resist or act (such as Geddes, 2003; Delbo, 1995). Despite this, agency remains at the heart of the predominant construction of the survivor within discourses of the Holocaust (Orgad, 2009), particularly within an emergent memoir culture where survivors need to claim the experience that happened to them (Zur, 2004).

In parallel with sexual violence literature, we see a victim-survivor dichotomy in the Holocaust discourse. Langer (1995) proposed that renaming 'victims' as 'survivors' is at the heart of Holocaust scholarship, yet this has dangerous consequences with the presentation of the survivor as the superior label. As a result, the rhetoric used by the survivor discourse is "a language designed to console instead of confront" (Langer, 1995: 5), such as the use of the term 'survivor' instead of 'victim,' 'martyrdom' in favour of 'murder,' as well as other words he highlights designed to allow people to "build fences between the atrocities of the camps and ghettos and what we are mentally willing – or able – to face" (1995:6). The unintended side-effect being that the 'survivor' label fails to fully encapsulate the extent of trauma experienced by Holocaust victims, through not affording this to those labelled as

'survivor.' Consequently, there is a danger to privileging 'survivor' over 'victim' as it may undermine previous attempts to acknowledge the widespread traumas and sufferings experienced that the survivor label does not produce (Orgad, 2009). It is for this reason why, in echoes of sexual violence, there has been a push for the usage of 'victim-survivors' of the Holocaust (for example, see Danielli, 1980; Bosmajian, 1986; Hoelzel, 1978; Garber and Zuckerman, 1989; Doubrovsky, 1981) and 'victim and survivor' (such as Fishman, 1978).

The emergence of 'survivor' as a viable alternative

Amongst some feminist circles, the term 'survivor' began to be suggested as an alternative to 'victim' to shift the focus away from the passivity of victims to instead concentrate on the agency victim-survivors have in their ability to move on from the sexual assault (Jordan, 2013; Atmore, 1999). Early feminist scholars sought to challenge classical conceptions of victim precipitation under the grounds that they constituted rape myths and victim blaming (Gordon and Riger, 1991). Simultaneously, many clinical studies have begun to examine the mental health outcomes suffered by victims of sexual violence and the injurious effects of victimisation (Petrak, 2002; Koss, 1993). Thus, quite rapidly, the narrative of rape being viewed as simply unwanted sex shifted dramatically to it being understood as "a permanently devastating experience" (Chasteen, 2001: 135), with an overwhelming emphasis on women's lives being ruined permanently by sexual assault in the mass media (Gavey and Schmidt, 2011; Kitzinger, 2009).

Kelly's (1988) 'Surviving Sexual Violence' is generally considered to be one of the earliest works within this paradigm shift towards a contemporary preference for 'survivor.' Kelly (1988: 163) proposed that despite rape having a horrendous impact on a woman's life, it should also be understood as a crime that is indeed survivable, and victimisation should not take primacy over a victim's life and identity, "the focus on coping, resistance and survival" better represents rape-victims experiences. Kelly (1988: 163) further stressed the importance within feminist discourse of "shifting the emphasis from viewing women as passive victims of sexual violence to seeing them as active survivors." Thus, the term 'survivor' began to emerge to combat the perpetuation of victim myths where representations of victimisation characterised women as "eternal victims of rape, rather than as individual subjects for whom sexual violence is one aspect of their identities" (Jean-Charles, 2014: 40).

Due to discursive tendencies to place sexual violence as a primary identity for rape victims, the term 'victim' itself required extensive scrutiny to "reconceptualise the term victim so that the contemporary focus on the evidence of rape victims' agency ceases to extenuate the reality of violence in women's lives" (Mardorossian, 2002: 748). This was all taking place amidst a backdrop of a broader feminist movement on rape, where feminist discourses sought to draw attention to widespread cultural practices of blaming women for their victimisation (Brownmiller, 1999; Schechter, 1982). Thus, scholars and activists were attempting to manage the constructions of deviant identities towards victims of sexual violence (Dunn, 2005).

In tandem with this, from the 1970s and 1980s, victim-survivors themselves began to reframe their experiences of child sexual abuse by moving away from the more apparently negative term 'victim' to the more recovery-focused moniker of 'survivor' (Larson, 2018). Therefore, under this discourse, labelling victims of sexual violence as 'survivors' actually became deeper than semantics and was a political statement, where the rejection of a word was also the rejection of language enshrined in patriarchal thought (McKenzie-Mohr and LaFrance, 2011; Gavey, 2005). Consequently, the emergent 'survivor discourse' strove to emphasise the post-assault actions of victim-survivors, as well as the strength and resilience demonstrated by them (Walklate, 2011; Lamb, 1999). Thus, the label 'survivor' began to emerge as a viable alternative, quickly becoming associated with overwhelmingly positive connotations surrounding coping with a life-threatening experience (Papendick and Bohner, 2017). Through the adoption of the 'survivor' label, a person would no longer view their survival experiences as "the centre of their existence", but instead, they re-define themselves as the result of the experience (Wuest and Merrit-Gray, 2001: 91)

The agentic survivor

The most overwhelmingly discussed representation of 'survivors' within sexual violence literature is the idea that survivorship is associated with agency in several different dimensions (Schwark and Bohner, 2019). Marcel (2003: 54) maintained that everyone has "a sense of agency" and defines this as a "sense of oneself as an actor or a sense that actions are one's own." Through this popular conceptualisation of agency, people typically are agentic figures who own their actions (Naples, 2003). Now, when we apply this understanding of agency to phenomena, the phenomenon can be considered agentive when the experiencing person experiences it as "an action (of one's own); an action that one is in control of; an

action that one is performing with a certain degree of effort; and as an action that one is performing freely" (Bayne, 2008: 183). In a sexual violence context, typically during the assault, the victim-survivor is conceptualised as having no agency over the situation. Hence, them being the victim of an unwanted sexual act, but instead, agency is explored concerning the aftermath of the assault (Jean-Charles, 2014). A 'survivor' identity is mainly used to highlight the agency with people with lived experience of sexual assault after their victimisation (Profitt, 1996). Agency usage is perhaps best explored through two subcategories: resistance and recuperation (Bahar, 2003; Hengehold, 2000).

It is argued that the term 'survivor' "paint[s] a picture of agentic individuals who do not passively experience abuse" (Williamson and Serna, 2018: 670), particularly around their recovery and healing. Regarding self-labelling, the 'survivor' label is not merely a word, but rather, survivors internalise and comply with the associated survivorship schema. Thus, internalising so-called 'healthy labels' can help individuals navigate through traumatic events (Williamson and Serna, 2018). For example, therapeutic literature has found that the internalisation of survivor labels is linked to better mental health outcomes (Jagielski, Hawley, Corbin, Weiss, & Griggs, 2012). This is because survivorhood emphasises initiative, where survivors are encouraged to focus on positive aspects in their lives and move forward; to shift from a disaster-based mindset towards hope-based thinking through no longer reacting, they become "proactive agents of their own destiny" (Wozniak and Allen, 2012: 89). It is conceptualised that this is done through survivors no longer positioning themselves as being defined by violence (Kelly, 1988), but rather through basing their identity on positive attributes such as strength and resilience, as well as thinking towards their future (Roddick, 2015; Wozniak and Allen, 2012).

It is essential to understand healing as an interactive process, where those embarking on healing attempt to reconnect with their sense of self, others, and the broader social world around them (Sinko and Saint Arnault, 2020). One commonly discussed feeling survivors must move past to achieve healing is 'disconnection,' which is a survival strategy involving the creation of psychological distance from traumatic experiences that creates barriers to rebuilding a sense of self and positive identity through masking pain rather than facing it head on (Crossley, 2000). This is also sometimes referred to as 'avoidance coping' (Campbell et al. 2009), where patients make "efforts to emotionally move away from thoughts or feelings associated with a traumatic event" (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020: 654). To survive a trauma or overwhelming experience, a victim might disconnect from it, but

reconnection and re-evaluating a sense of self after an assault can help facilitate the recovery process (Sinko and Saint Arnault, 2020; Draucker et al., 2009). Thus, survivors do not merely attempt to go on with their everyday lives or survive in a literal sense but change and even grow due to the traumatic experience (Joseph and Linley, 2006; Tedeschi and Calhoun, 2004). Evidence has found that most victim-survivors do experience some level of healing measured through a decrease in trauma-related symptoms (Koss and Figueredo, 2004); some go further and experience positive life changes post-violence (Ullman, 2014; Draucker et al., 2009; Frazier et al., 2004)

Resilience, strength and resistance in survivorhood

Resilience is also a common attribute underpinning discussions of recuperation in the survivor discourse, often attributed to survivorhood (Walklate, 2011; Reich, 2002; Lamb, 1999). A robust, thorough understanding of survivors' reactions to sexual violence is still considered somewhat elusive in public framing, as well as within the criminal justice system (Muldoon, Taylor and Norma, 2016). Whilst 'victim resilience' is a conceptual idea (Bonnano, 2004), it is more readily attributed to survivorship (Dunn, 2005). Yet under survivorship, survivors are considered to be resilient from all angles, such as physically, socially, psychologically and even spiritually (Ben-David, 2020). A common thread among survivors and resilience is the idea of unexpected inner strength despite facing extremely traumatic circumstances (van Dijk, 2009), continuing to live (Papendick and Bohner, 2017) and even thriving (Ben-David, 2020).

Resilience is also quite tangled up with the idea of survivors showing strength (Jordan, 2013; Reich, 2002). Several studies have found that survivor identity is often synonymous with survivors showing or having strength (Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Leisenring, 2006; Thompson, 2000). This is because individualistic cultures "prizes strength and personal responsibility" (Loseke, 1999: 14); thus, framing survivors as potent, wilful agents due to their ability to move towards recovery and resist patriarchal violence places them as preferable to victims (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Mills, 1985). However, suppose we appear to reward or value people who still experience injustice but disregard the societal systems that contributed, allowed or condoned their injustice. In that case, we inadvertently enable both oppression and the re-production of rape culture (O'Shea et al., 2024).

Disability scholars have criticised cultural narratives where survivors attempt to undergo a quest for normalcy but could be viewed as trying to overcome a disability and, as a result, create stigma for survivors with mental illnesses who are unable to do so as successfully (Kafer, 2013; Mitchell and Snyder, 2000; Linton, 1998). As a result, "other members of the group from which the individual has supposedly moved beyond are not as brave, strong, or extraordinary as the person who has overcome that designation" (Linton, 1998: 18). McRuer (2006) noted that normative societal frameworks have the propensity to view 'ablebodiedness' as normative, and alternative ways of navigating the world fall short; thus we have a climate of 'compulsory ablebodiedness'. Along this vein of thought, Larson (2018: 689) applied this formulation to victim-survivors, arguing that emphasis on strength and resilience creates a 'compulsory survivorship' wherein victims must try to become free from mental disability, so for instance, no longer suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and this forms an unseen standard between victims and survivors; where victims, unable to maintain normal mental functioning, are "socially beneath their able-bodied counterparts." Of course, we must be cautious of homogenising people with disabilities and victim-survivors of sexual violence (Chopin, Beauregard and Deslauriers-Varin, 2023)), particularly as victimisation of people with physical disabilities is conceptualised as distinctive from others with psychological disabilities (McCabe et al., 2012). So, considering victim-survivors with psychological disabilities related to trauma, 'survivorhood' being equated with resistance can be somewhat problematic. Survivors themselves are "positioned as the problem, as opposed to the violence itself. The trauma of sexual violence inheres in a personal failing rather than in the crime" (Larson, 2018; 689).

Along a similar dimension, 'strength' is also considered to be a stereotype within a cultural narrative about black women, and this may shape their views of 'survivor' in a different manner (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). The 'strong, Black woman' stereotype historically emphasises the need for black women to place their racial struggles before their well-being, translating into modern-day archetypes of black women being expected to cope well in the face of adversity (Watson and Hunter, 2016; Collins, 2004). Thus, strength can add a dimension of 'sacrifice' for black survivors (Wyatt, 2008). Here, we see clear examples of how structural and cultural forces can impact the coping strategies of black female survivors (Long and Ullman, 2013).

There has arguably been a shift in feminist discourse starting in the 1990s from a 'political survivor movement' to a 'recovery movement' (Ovenden, 2012). Yet within the 'recovery

movement,' more onus is placed on survivors being responsible for their healing (Reavey and Warner, 2001; Haaken, 1996), where individual change has received greater focus than political change (Crossley, 1999). Here, popular representations of the survivor focus on responsibility, neglecting some of the socio-political structures that may contribute to or facilitate their victimisation (Ovenden, 2012), where recovery is measured by the ability survivors have to discuss the unspeakable (Illouz, 2008). The "very act of speaking out became used as a performance and spectacle" (Alcoff and Gray, 1993: 266-7).

It would be overly simplistic to assert that survivorship was solely bound by recovery and that only those deemed to have 'recovered' can be granted the moniker of survivor; 'damage' done by sexual violence to survivors is recognised (Larson, 2018) and understood but relatively the trauma itself is considered to be evocative of active resistance (Bahar, 2003). Thus, survivors are viewed more as a "warrior, enraged and equipped to challenge those who pity her" (Larson, 2018: 689), seeking to resist the shackles of victimhood associated with sympathy and passivity (Dunn, 2005). For example, Patterson and Campbell (2010) found that women who felt empowered and like a 'survivor' were more likely to continue with the criminal justice system after initially reporting their assaults.

Resistance to oppression is a pretty complicated concept in the survivor discourse. Haraway (1988: 584) proposed that women subjugated by oppressive forces "are knowledgeable modes of denial through repression, forgetting and disappearing acts." Here, Haraway stressed the importance of situating both the dynamics of power and social locations within the construction of knowledge, particularly as denial and repression continue to contribute to the abuse of women within society (Naples, 2003). However, caution must be heeded in conceptualisations of active resistance in the survivor discourse, as anger and disruptive politics are not present in the survivor discourse (Illouz, 2003); it offers "little room and practically no legitimacy for anger" (Orgad, 2009: 152). However, this is somewhat contested. Seghal (2016: unpaginated) argued that whilst survivors were allowed to have anger, their "rage feels divinely sanctioned" in the sense that it is considered acceptable by societal standards.

The questioning of agency in representations of survivorhood

The idea that survivorhood is explicitly tied with agency is not without criticism; Convery (2006) even cautioned us about adopting a 'knee-jerk' acceptance that exclusively survivorhood is intrinsically bound with agency, whilst 'victim' is not. For example, Mahoney (1996) noted that within feminist thought, the survivor discourse often seeks to divert attention towards women's resistance to oppression with a new contemporary preference for 'survivor.' Yet Mahoney (1994) suggests that, in actuality, it is essential to unravel the cultural and legal parallels between victimisation and an absence of agency rather than simply eliminating victimhood as having any possibility with the agency, citing examples of ways domestic violence victims exercise agency whilst being abused. Indeed, even Dunn (2006, 2005 and 2001) has highlighted the myriad ways that the 'survivor' label can bring for victims of intimate partner violence. Dunn (2005) notes that there are some limits to agency; whilst 'survivor' may allow for agency, it reconfigures responsibility onto individual victims, diverting it from the damaging patriarchal social structures and forces victims must navigate. Spry (1995) highlights that neither 'victim' nor 'survivor' can be accepted as agentic labels as female experiences are silenced due to both terms being responses to the male body. Thus, the achievements of survivorhood may be a 'hollow victory' (Dunn, 2001:309).

Indeed, under the question of agency, it has been proposed that the adoption of the 'survivor' label as a substitute has not furthered our understanding of the experiences of victims (Gavey, 1999) and may have worsened our understanding through unintentional collusion in denying the impact of oppression (Lamb, 1999). Convery (2006) likened the divide between victim and survivorhood in feminist literature to social Darwinism, particularly as the association with victimisation with inadequacy creates a hierarchy amongst victims (Elias, 1993). For, in a victim-survivor context, 'survivors' are likened to the 'fittest' victims, and under Darwinist thought, non-survivors (namely victims) should be 'deselected' (Convery, 2006: 240). This does leave some unanswered questions, for it positions 'victims' and 'survivors' as "entirely distinct sets of individuals" whereby survivors possess intrinsic qualities unavailable to victims (Convery, 2006: 241), further reinforcing the idea of a hierarchy of victim-survivors (Boyle and Rodgers, 2022). Furthermore, tensions arise within perceptions of the survivor label, where some cases of sexual violence

unintentionally become marked as more deserving of sympathy and support, which can have particular consequences for marginalised groups such as LGBTQ+, people of colour, and Indigenous groups (O'Shea et al., 2024), people with disabilities (Loney-Howes, 2017), groups disproportionately represented in sexual violence statistics (Conroy and Cotter, 2017)

The survivor discourse also seems to ignore the fact that not all survivors are on a level playing field to make the transition from 'victim' to 'survivor' as "victims need more than just their 'selves' to become survivors" (Orgad, 2009: 153), it requires external resources and clinical tools that are not equally available. However, 'survivorhood' is often associated with activism and helping behaviours, such as volunteering (Frazier, Mortensen and Steward, 2005; Stidham et al., 2012; Staub and Vollhardt, 2008). Little research has been conducted on how participation in activism can impact a survivor's identity (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020). However, Edwards (2016) reported that survivors experienced a mix of both positive experiences (such as less feelings of powerlessness) and mixed feelings about their own identity. Edstrom and Dolan (2018) also found that male survivor activists reported more significant healing through activism. Healing also occurs in a particular social-political context, particularly with the recent MeToo Movement and TimesUp (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020). Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (2018) found that feminist activism could build a strong sense of community among survivors.

The Victim-Survivor Paradox

At around the turn of the twenty-first century, criticisms surrounding the potentially problematic nature of the 'survivor' label began to emerge (Young and Maguire, 2003). One of the earliest rejections of both terms 'victim' and 'survivor' was Spry's (1995) analysis, which viewed both labels emerging in response to the male body, silencing the female voice. Thus, both were still enshrined in patriarchal language. Indeed, some people with lived experience of sexual violence opt not to self-label at all (Williamson and Serna, 2017; Leisenring, 2006) due to either not wanting their abuse to affect their primary identity or refusing to give the assault any more power in their everyday lives (Williamson, 2023).

Constructions of the labels 'victim' and 'survivor' had very much framed the two terms as being mutually exclusive, distinct categories (Boyle, 2016), where both are framed as binary categories that victim-survivors must choose between (Convery, 2006; Dunn, 2005). As a result of these constructions, victim-survivors find themselves caught in a 'VictimSurvivor Paradox' where they are forced to choose between the two terms and thus must sacrifice the benefits the alternative label brings (Thompson, 2000: 328). This is because "the choice of language used to describe oneself about the attack can result in different experiences for different women" (Thompson, 2000: 329). For example, whilst the 'survivor' label may grant those with lived experiences of abuse agency not afforded to their victim counterparts, survivors may be expected to be well into recovery and thus denied social or therapeutic support should they require it (Young and Maguire, 2003; Thompson, 2000).

Alternatively, the assuming of a victim label may allow access to support as "the awfulness of rape can be appreciated" (Thompson, 2000: 330) or afford the benefits of victimisation in terms of perceptions of innocence (Dunn, 2005). Yet victims may be perceived as weak or vulnerable (Leisenring, 2006; Thompson, 2000). Therefore, a paradox is created where victim-survivors must choose to either reduce their agency by selecting a victim label or adopt a survivor identity but minimise their trauma (Thompson, 2000). Thus, the specific label a victim-survivor chooses triggers certain responses from others at the expense of others (Hockett and Saucier, 2015); it is a 'dilemma of conflicting consequences' that victim-survivors must face (Papendick and Bohner, 2017: 4).

An earlier formulation of the VictimSurvivor paradox was the victim-survivor dichotomy (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). This dichotomy is considered discursive (Picart, 2003; Lamb, 1996), stemming from constructions of victims and survivors occupying opposite ends of the agency continuum (Dunn, 2005). Here, we see a clear division between the 'passive victim' and the 'active survivor' (Alcoff and Gray, 1993: 261). Under this school of thought, victimisation versus agency is viewed to be a dichotomous construction that "fails to address the complexities that victims live, with their divided loyalties and the chiaroscuro of agency and powerlessness they straddle from day to day" (Picart, 2003: 97). As a victim identity is a stigmatised identity associated with vulnerability and weakness (van Dijk, 2009), it becomes impossible to reconcile victimhood with agency. Thus, victimhood is seen as a negative identity, and survivor is given contemporary preference (Mahoney, 1994).

The dichotomy of 'victim' and 'survivor' and the shift to 'victim-survivor'

Feminist discourses have since attempted to move away from constructions of victimhood with passivity, creating this dichotomous division between 'victim' and 'survivor' (Convery, 2006). For instance, Kelly, Burton and Regan (1996) advocated for feminist praxis to move beyond viewing victimisation and survivorhood through two simplified binaries, Bahar (2003) advocated for disentangling the negative construction of victimhood with passivity, and Goodey (2004) questioned whether a division needed to exist at all. Minow (1993) described victimhood as a 'cramped identity' and advocated for victim discourses to be broadened to recognise victims having agency, in a similar fashion to Mardorossian (2002). Other arguments, such as Barry's (1979: 39) assertion that "surviving is the other side of being a victim," proposed that neither term was able to be separated from the other, suggesting a need for the reframing of the binary narrative (Dunn, 2001).

The emergence of the combining terms 'victim-survivor' and 'victim/survivor' is complex to trace (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). Still, the earliest uses seem to be in the late 1990s in sexual abuse (for example, Cowburn and Dominelli, 1998; Reed, 1995), rape (Moreno, 1995; Rozee and Koss, 2001; Rozee and Koss, 2001), sexual violence (Corr, O'Mahony, Lovett and Kelly, 2009) and gendered violence (van Wormer, 2009). 'Victim-survivor' itself may not be an alternative label that victims or survivors usually identify with. However, Moreno (1995) describes themselves as such but is more often instead used in a deliberate attempt for inclusivity as an all-encompassing term to encapsulate the range of victim-survivor identities people with lived experience may inhabit (Boyle, 2018; Boyle, 2016). It indicates "that women who experience sexual violence are both victims and survivors of these horrific experiences" (Macy, 2007: 628). Usage here could be considered similar to LGBTQ+ in framings of sexuality, where not all identity markers may be in the literal label. Still, the term encapsulates them (for discussions of LGBTQ+, see Thelwall et al., 2023). It can also be more inclusive in the sense that a variety of terms could be used across different agencies, support services, and institutions, as well as within policy; for example, sexual violence support providers often use both terms 'victim' and 'survivor' (DePrince and Gagon, 2018), making sure that a specific organisation's preference is respected.

In using the term 'victim-survivor,' theorists are not attempting to diminish the role that survivor narratives played in reshaping victimisation discourses during the anti-rape movement of the 1970s-80s (Jean-Charles, 2014). Still, they wish to recognise that despite negative connotations often associated with the term 'victim' (Hester, 2006), it is still a term used by victim-survivors to describe their own identity after assault (Larson, 2018; Gay, 2017). Furthermore, it also allows for the possibility of victim-survivors to occupy both labels, as many victim-survivors choose to occupy multiple identities depending on positions in their recovery or specific situations (Leisenring, 2006; Lugones, 2003), as well as acknowledging that victim status can be beneficial to claim in particular settings (Dunn, 2001; Ben-David, 2020).

Finally, the term 'victim-survivor' allows for a certain degree of complexity to fully capture the contours of sexual violence and break away from the limits of either term in isolation (West, 1999), particularly for ethnic minority victim-survivors (West, 2005). Victim-survivors may fluctuate to include elements of both identities or even reject both terms outright (Lugones, 2003), but a broader framing as an umbrella term does allow for this (Hockett and Saucier, 2015). Although it is quickly appearing to become a normative term in feminist discourses and even slowly being used in some legal discourses, there is still a contemporary preference for either 'victim' or 'survivor' in isolation in therapeutic, clinical and most legal arenas, particularly within the criminal justice system (Boyle, 2017).

Journey from victim to survivor

There is a common framework that people who have experienced sexual violence may embark on a transformative process, where they may begin by labelling themselves as a 'victim' and later come to adopt the term 'survivor' (Williamson, 2023: 15). One of Williamson's (2023) participants described this as "if you survive being the victim, you are a survivor." Common cultural representations of survival position 'surviving' as happening at some point after the assault (Jordan, 2013), usually during the 'recovery' stage (Ben-David, 2020). Studies have found that some people firstly view themselves as a 'victim' and then later come to prefer to identify with the term 'survivor' (Williamson, 2023; Pollino, 2021; Hunter, 2010).

The most well-known formulation of this idea of growth is the 'journey' metaphor, where victims transition into survivors (Atkinson, 2008; Dunn, 2005). Kelly, Burton and Regan

(1996: 90-91) stress that "the notion of a journey from 'victim' to 'survivor' is a widespread metaphor" historically within sexual violence research, therapeutic literature and self-help guides. Within this metaphor, initially, people with lived experience of abuse view themselves as victims of sexual violence. Still, through a transformational process involving therapy, possibly reporting their assault or, in some cases, even engaging in activism or helping behaviours, they bloom into a survivor role (Hunter, 2010). Thus, we see a transformation narrative surrounding survivors (Williamson and Serna, 2018; Hunter, 2010). This 'journey' is considered therapeutic and transformative, where victims receive support to heal and move beyond the trauma they have encountered (Gavey and Schmidt, 2011), as well as hold more positive self-identities (Williamson and Serna, 2018).

A key hallmark of this journey, and a significant point of contention, is the notion of linear progression, where survivors transition from a supposed negative emotional state to a positive one with external support (Baker, 2010). Jordan (2013) describes this as a multidimensional path that victims must navigate with various personal and emotional challenges associated with having a victimisation experience to progress towards a survivor mentality, which is understood as a second stage toward fully overcoming the impact of victimisation (Ben-David, 2020). Kelly, Burton and Regan (1996: 94) expressed concern at positioning victim-survivor identities as stages within an ongoing recovery journey as "naïve and inappropriate." The conceptualisation of the path to survivorship being linear is not at all without criticism (Boyle, 2016), particularly as it arguably does not represent the multiple setbacks on the said 'journey' that survivors often encounter through its suggestion of linear progression (Roddick, 2015). Furthermore, the idea that there even could be a completion stage of recovery has also been questioned as being unrepresentative of victim-survivors' experiences of trauma (Leisenring, 2006). In particular, the idea of 'completion' of recovery can create pressure for victims to appear resilient and aim for recovery through the denial of the impacts of their victimisation, encouraging them to hide their own negative experiences and insecurities (Walklate, 2011).

We can see some parallels to the 'journey' metaphor in the understanding of rituals concerning the identity of victims of sexual violence in anthropology, where during recovery, "empowering performances and liberating rituals can challenge enduring and debilitating effects of violence and promote post-traumatic growth" (Wozniak and Allen, 2012: 82). According to Turner (1969), rites of passage needed three stages of completion; namely, 'separation,' 'liminality' and 'incorporation.' In this first stage, a person needs to

separate from their previous life through a transition marked by liminality (this usually involves a period of ambiguity, or where the person experiences a loss of roles or even danger) wherein the person was transitioning into something personally or socially distinct from before (Turner, 1969). This process was usually spurred on by 'communitas,' an emotional bond formed between people undergoing similar transitions (Turner, 1969). Once this process was complete, the person could shed their previous identity and better understand their new identity, thus becoming reborn into a new role or identity (Goodenough, 1963).

In terms of sexual violence, victims distance themselves from their abuser (the separation stage), yet come to identify themselves as 'victims' or 'survivors' during liminality, then through healing rituals, come to view themselves as 'thrivers' (Wozniak and Allen, 2012). This is because "ritual brings about healing by defining and resolving the naturally occurring disruptions in everyday life" (Rubenstein, 1984: 3) through the development of stories about themselves built upon hope (Swora, 2001). It is very much a transformational experience (Allen and Wozniak, 2011) through a process known as anamnesis. "Acts of anamnesis are by definition social, both embedded in and re-creating master narratives" where participants are encouraged to clearly understand the next stage of the healing trajectory and know how to reach it (Swora, 2001:74). Crucially, Wozniak and Allen (2012: 67) position 'survival' as the second stage, in a parallel fashion to Jordan (2013); summarising this through the words of a survivor of intimate partner violence in their study: "It was difficult to admit I was just a survivor. At one point, we were fighters just to stay in the game. Now, healing is within my reach. I see my life getting easier. I am where I want to be."

Alternative suggestions: Thriver and Overcomer

'Thriver' is a label occasionally presented, usually as an extension of the term 'survivor,' where definitions of survivor stem from literally making it past an obstacle, but thriving supersedes this. 'Thriver' is becoming a fashionable term in the cancer discourse to refer to someone who is flourishing because of post-traumatic growth and changes from their illness (Orgad, 2009). In terms of sexual violence, Ben-David (2020: 25) discusses the so-called 'Thriver stage' where "people are beginning to take control of their own lives, but the person is still fighting, whether through the judicial system to bring justice to the

perpetrator, to gain awareness for the cause, or to learn to live after experiencing an assault." This somewhat deviates from dictionary definitions of 'thriving,' which usually involves extensive growth, development, and prosperity (Oxford, 1989).

Viewing 'thriver' as almost a third stage, beyond survivor, 'thrivers' are expected to be much further in their recovery than survivors. They have emerged from the victimisation experience with most of their sense of self intact (Ben-David, 2020). This is typically shown by the 'thriver' through their integration of trauma in their life story rather than simply their identity, having control and agency in their daily life, as well as recognising that their victimisation experience has provided them an opportunity for post-traumatic growth and change (Littleton, Buck and Rosman, 2012). Unlike 'survivors' who continue to live despite the trauma they have encountered, 'thrivers' prosper because of their traumatic experiences (Orgad, 2009). Thus, 'thrivers' are particularly optimistic through their recognition and openness to embracing prospects (Leisenring, 2006).

If 'thriver' is considered the third stage, then 'overcomer' is the fourth. Although the idea of 'overcoming' is a concept in sexual violence literature, it is typically referred to in the literal definitive sense of survivors needing to overcome jurisdictional or legal barriers to either reporting or having their victimisation experiences acknowledged by the criminal justice system (for example, see Ben-David, 2020), or in terms of tackling problems encountered by victim-survivors in terms of victim-blaming discourses (for example, see Aldous et al. 2017). However, the idea of victim-survivors assuming an identity label of 'overcomer' is a conceptual framework proposed by victimologist Sarah Ben-David (2020). According to Ben-David (2020: 26), an 'overcomer' is a person who has moved beyond the 'thriving' stage and arrived at the point where they have overcome the effects of victimisation; individuals who "can deal with both the symptoms and outcomes of the traumatic event."

In a parallel fashion to the 'victim,' 'survivor,' and 'thriver' labels, the 'overcomer' is not merely a word but a self-identity characterised by resilience, determination, self-esteem, empowerment and compassion for others (Ben-David, 2020:27). It is very much concentrated on forward-thinking but also self-actualisation and awareness; as an overcomer "acknowledges responsibility for the good and the bad in life, takes guidance and constructive criticism, and creates goals for him/herself and tries to achieve those goals" (Ben-David, 2020: 26). Interestingly, Ben-David (2020) posits that every victim has the 'right' to reach the overcomer stage but does not believe there are any intrinsic or innate

qualities that separate 'overcomers' from 'thrivers' or victim-survivors, so does not fall prey to the criticism levied by Convery (2006) against the survivor discourse.

However, there are some apparent issues that this conceptualisation falls prey to in a similar fashion as the survivor discourse. Ben-David (2020: 26-27) described overcomers as understanding that they are 'fortunate' to have reached the overcomer stage. Again, this perhaps does fall into the hierarchy trap which the survivor discourse fell into, similar to social Darwinist ideas about survival of the fittest (Convery, 2006; Elias, 1993). In a parallel fashion, Ben-David (2020: 26) almost pits overcomers as the fittest of the fittest at the top of the hierarchy and very much reinforces the passive, dependent victim narrative (referring to victims as being considered 'weak'). Furthermore, the emphasis on the manner overcomers' 'acknowledge responsibility' also walks the thin line between placing responsibility of recovery onto victim-survivors themselves (in a similar fashion to Holstein and Miller's 1990 criticism of the survivor discourse) and diverting attention from those responsible for victimisation (such as Mardossian, 2002's critique of the survivor discourse).

Chapter 2: Summary

In summary, this chapter has explored the theoretical foundations of victim-survivor concepts, positioning this within feminist constructions of rape, sexual violence and sexual assault (Research aim one). To fully appreciate the victim-survivor dichotomy, binary and paradox that victim-survivors face, it is essential to position this within more expansive dominant narratives and cultural constructions of victim and survivor identity. Concepts not only affect the ways victim-survivors are constructed within society but can also, in turn, affect victim-survivors' sense of self. The decision of language choice is a complicated one for victim-survivors, with considerable socio-political consequences beyond mere language usage. Through understanding the dominant narratives of passivity, vulnerability and innocence within victimhood, as well as ties to agency and recovery within survivor identity, we can more readily understand the complexity and experiences of victim-survivors' language choice.

This chapter demonstrates that identity can be multifaceted and sometimes even paradoxical, making language choices challenging to trace. However, understanding language choice becomes integral to exploring the victim-survivor binary and cultural constructions of victim-survivors. The next chapter examines the critical fundamentals of

arts-based research, particularly the visual arts. It traces its definitions and key rationale and explores how arts-based research has been used within violence and abuse, especially in domestic violence and sexual abuse literature.

Chapter 3: My methodological journey

Introduction and chapter overview

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed and outlines some of the key practical and ethical challenges I had to navigate during my research. Firstly, I start by outlining my rationale for drifting away from traditional mixed-methods approaches and introduce the mechanism of methodological braiding that I utilised throughout my study. Secondly, I briefly go over some of the key challenges I faced before commencing research, particularly surrounding the issue of dual identity for professionals working with victim-survivors of sexual violence, who may have lived experience of sexual assault themselves (Anderson and Overby, 2020). Next, I explain my epistemological positioning and my integration of symbolic interactionism and feminist standpoint epistemology. Once completed, I will give an overview of my research calendar, practical framework, and procedure for each aspect of the research methodology. Then, I present how I navigated the distinctive ethical challenges within my research, including the dual ethic aspect of arts-based research (ABR). Finally, I consider positionality and critical reflexivity, examining how they shaped my research.

Drifting away from traditional mixed-methods approaches

Mixed-methods designs in violence and abuse literature focus on integrating qualitative data collection methods with quantitative techniques at differing points in the research process (Cresswell, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Despite this, solely qualitative approaches to mixed methods practices and research designs have a long-established history within the broader discipline of sociology (Hesse-Biber, 2010), including the field of violence and abuse (Willmott, Mathew, Saleme and Rundle-Thiele, 2022). At the core of the qualitative approach is the theoretical assumption that reality is socially constructed and multiple (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

However, despite their popularity, mixed methods have not been immune to criticism. It has been noted from an empiricist viewpoint that mixed-methods approaches can sometimes unintentionally reaffirm and replicate traditional knowledge hierarchies within research without adequate critical examination (Moses and Knutsen, 2012; Denzin, 2012). In addition, despite multiple methods, there is a tendency for one singular method to take primacy in the research process, whereas other methods add to core findings (Plano Clark and Crewsswell, 2008). Hence, methods are not appropriately amalgamated, and the 'mixed' aspect of the methodological design is not achieved (Denzin, 2010). Furthermore, there have also been raised validity concerns (Morse and Niehaus, 2009), worries about the qualitative aspects being given appropriate prominence in designs incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods (O'Caithain, 2010) and even some methods being considered 'incomplete' (Morse, 2010: 340). Other issues also noted have been the blurring between methodology and method (Gorard, 2013) and researchers over-stressing research methods to the detriment of overall methodological design (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Methodological designs have actively sought to combat this by emphasising the need for consistency, dynamic design and synergy of methods through every stage of the research process (for instance, see Nastasi et al., 2010). Denzin (2012: 85) notably offered the idea of bricolage to help create an interconnected approach to mixed methods design.

Arts-based research also has been somewhat neglected in discussions surrounding mixed methods designs (Watson, 2020; Morse, 2010). Examples that included ABR in mixed methods discussions have separated the two within discussions (Leavy, 2017; Barone and Eisner, 2011). In light of this, rather than trying to cobble together limited research into effectively incorporating ABR into mixed methods design, particularly as arts-based research forms a weighty component of this design, I also wish to counterbalance this with a concern surrounding ABR taking over, I have made use of Watson's (2020) innovative methodological braiding technique.

Methodological braiding

The methodological braiding technique is a 'practical scaffold' explicitly created for researchers seeking to incorporate mixed-methods research design with arts-based methods, with two core aims: to produce research where methods are both simultaneous and sequential (Watson, 2020). This is notable for allowing for some of the critical strengths of

mixed methods design: that methods, analysis and interpretation should be considered (Nastasi et al., 2010), fully amalgamated (Creamer, 2017) in a synergistic fashion (Hall and Howard, 2008). In addition, as ABR practices often prioritise empowering and collaborative research approaches (Foster, 2015), empowerment is also facilitated. Perhaps we may even say it is a creative approach to a methodology that allows for incorporating creative techniques.

Visual imagery is essential in understanding methodological braiding. Metaphors can be used in research to increase the accessibility of meaning, and within a research context, it can be seen as a way of improving the visibility of the research process; they are literary devices that are "the backbone of social science writing" (Richardson, 2003: 505). Thus, the idea of braiding is a metaphor that is used to reveal a deeper insight into the research process. Notably, braids are made up of distinctive strands or sections that are then interwoven with other strands to come together and form a much larger braid, which we consider a whole object (Watson, 2020). For example, Dixon (2005: 83) noted that in hair braiding specifically, plaited sections come together to create complex final hair designs, where the "success of the braiding is reliant on the sectioning and on the tensions between the strands in each braid and between braids," thus the braiding of each section is integral to the success of the overall final braid.

Methods braiding takes this idea and translates it to the research process, stressing the need for equal attention and significance given to each method to form an overall, complete design as the success of the overall study is reliant on how each technique is employed, as this directly influences the other methods (Watson, 2020). It has been used in a small number of different research contexts. In their examination of micro-stories in Indigenous education and decolonisation research, McGregor, Madden, Higgins and Ostertag (2018: 2) sought the use of a metaphor of a braid specifically to represent how stories "come together and pull apart" in the methodological design process

Methodological braiding accepts that methods are interdependent and have a reciprocal effect on each other. Still, quite often, each method chosen has differing conceptual underpinnings that may not be harmonious in every context, which could lead to divergences in data (Watson, 2020). Instead, it is perhaps better understood as live co-acting, where data collection, analysis and interpretation, methods co-act, and different experiences directly inform later procedures throughout the research process. Thus,

aligning with one of the greatest strengths of mixed methods studies, broader approaches can help researchers gain a more complete picture of research problems (Fielding, 2012).

Simultaneous and sequential

A key point of difference with the methodological braiding technique is that methods are used concurrently and for the same duration where possible and appropriate; thus, they much more clearly are shown to be given the same consideration (Watson, 2020). Although research phases are still utilised to split data collection, these are sandwiched together using review periods to reflect upon each phase and apply insights gained into later stages. A phase-based design adopting simultaneous and sequential methods allows the researcher to engage in reflexive evaluation (Finlay, 2002), notably offering the researcher the ability to specifically consider whether the research aims and questions are being appropriately answered. Research rationales are often neglected in cursory project design (Bryman, 2006), so this approach places research outcomes at the heart of research design. As a result, the design allows for the braiding and integration of methods through all stages, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. Notably, phase-based designs in practices incorporating ABR allow remarkably creative ways to examine synergy between various diverging conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

A synergistic research style also allows researchers to more clearly navigate frequently diverging theoretical assumptions underpinning different methods. The conceptualisation behind the synergistic approach is the idea that by combining or incorporating elements, the yield produced will have a more significant effect than the sum of their efforts in isolation (Soanes and Stevenson, 2004). Taking this one stage further, Hall and Howard (2008) note that differential paradigmatic interaction and incorporation can be fruitful and advocate for using a synergistic procedure for mixing quantitative and qualitative methods and transferring this to mixed methods designs incorporating arts-based practices. The synergistic style of research serves as a cornerstone of methodological braiding techniques. Braiding emphasises the presence of conceptual tensions in mixed-methods methodology, but notably the simultaneous ways that these tensions can be navigated (Hall and Howard, 2008).

Synergy is not a new concept to ABR practices. Previous research has stressed the tensions between multiple facets of ABR design, such as audience, collaboration, understanding,

meaning-making, knowledge production, form, and content (Leavy, 2015; Morrison et al., 2011; Cole and Knowles, 2008). In addition, the significance of inter- and multidimensional communication cannot be underestimated in ABR, and this level of communication necessitates a synergistic approach (Hall and Howard, 2008). Thus, ABR is a good fit for a project seeking to incorporate two critical methods within its design.

Before commencing the research

The first step involved determining a gap in the literature, identifying a research problem, developing clear research aims to be answered, and formulating a rationale (Cresswell, 2009). A more detailed outline of this project is identified and elaborated upon in Chapter 1. Once this was established, the aims and research outcomes needed to be considered. This bumpy process resulted in the need for adaptability to the next methodological decision, namely selecting the best methods most suitable for tackling the research problems and answering the research questions. Initially, this was intended to be a three-method design with three key elements, with a triangulation approach: policy analysis of key documents, arts-based research with victim-survivors and traditional qualitative interviewing with professionals who worked with victim-survivors in occupational settings.

However, the difficulty mainly lay in separating the two later stages due to an inability to disentangle victim-survivors from professionals fully. It must be noted that research into dual identities where victim-survivors themselves become service providers is still a relatively under-researched area; only a handful of studies explicitly concentrate on the impact victimisation can have on professional work or identity (Anderson and Overby, 2020). Instead, research typically in this area focuses on the interpersonal impact working with victim-survivors of sexual assault can have on professionals, often known as vicarious trauma (Maini and Raman, 2022; Jirek, 2015; Salston and Figley, 2003; Wasco and Campbell, 2002) or constructing frameworks to help professionals cope with the emotional demands of supporting victim-survivors (Osofsky and Putnam, 2008). However, more generalised research that may have some transferability has also been conducted on trauma and adverse childhood experiences becoming an essential component within individuals' career constructions and career choices (for example, Bryce et al., 2023; Follette et al., 1994; Pope and Feldman-Summers, 1992), particularly in women in helping professions (Elliott and Guy, 1993).

Nevertheless, there are a handful of examples of researchers having to navigate the issue of dual identities. Ullman (2005: 112), when detailing her experiences interviewing professionals, outlines how even though she chose not to question her interviewees about their personal histories of victimisation as her "focus was on their experiences as professionals working with survivors, their views about services and how to improve them, and not on their lives." Despite this, she found some women chose to disclose their own victimisation experiences, some even 'at great length', but she decided not to probe deeply into how it impacted their professional work as this was not fitting with the aims of her research (Ullman, 2005: 1129-1130). Sands, Westerman and Blankenau (2023) also specifically examine the experiences of policewomen as victims of sexual violence.

The most explicit study delving into dual identity was conducted by Anderson and Overby (2020), who conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 survivors of sexual violence who were also employed as professionals directly working with victim-survivors of sexual violence. Although the critical outcome of this research was intended to focus on exploring barriers to help-seeking through their unique perspective of dual identity, discussions of their history of sexual victimisation did come up. Anderson and Overby (2020: 1572) found that many survivors directly expressed their own experiences and work in the sector, with a community organiser even believing that "I know what I went through makes me a better social worker. I know what it's like to go through that and all the things that come afterwards."

Due to this dual-identity role, it was anticipated that it would be too tricky and conceptually disadvantageous to completely separate researching victim-survivors and professionals working with victim-survivors from each other into distinct phases. Thus, methodological braiding became even more of an attractive option. Moreover, utilising an arts-based methodology for both research with victim-survivors and professionals made theoretical sense as this would allow for cross-over or dual identities to be explored more easily if professionals chose to do so, as they have more creative control in the research process. Therefore, the decision was made to utilise two essential research methods: firstly, policy analysis of key documents and arts-based research, specifically visual art, with both victim-survivors and professionals who work with people with lived experience of sexual violence (the latter of whom may or may not have personal histories of victimisation themselves). Both of these shall be outlined in detail in the next section.

The final stage of the methodological braiding technique involved determining how to integrate the two methods concurrently. This principally centred around narrowing in on critical assumptions of both methods, which were quite divergent, and determining what was required to carry each of them out both as individual methods and as a collective as part of a braided design (approach inspired by Hesse-Biber and Johnson, 2015). Once this was established, a research calendar was created to give an overall timeline of the data collection period.

Epistemological positioning

Symbolic interactionism

Micro-level constructionist analysis of victimisation and survivorship considers 'victim' and 'survivor' identities, identity labels people can give themselves or confer upon them (Dunn, 2010). Holstein and Miller (1990: 104) proposed that victims are "interactionally constituted" as "the meaning of objects does not inhere in objects, but is conferred upon them as they are interpreted, organised and represented through social interaction." Within this interactionist lens, the societal processes behind how a person becomes viewed as a victim or survivor become centralised as no person is inherently a victim; instead, it is "conferred upon them" (Holstein and Miller, 1997: 26), and this status determines how they should be perceived.

Victim-survivor identities are complicated to navigate and study due to the complexity of these specific identities, at least when explored from a constructivist-interpretive approach. As Loseke (2001:108) articulated, "the complexity of lived experience has a way of resisting formulaic presentation." From this vantage point, individuals have multiple selves and no one subjective reality (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Lugones, 2003). Within violence and abuse literature, people with lived experiences have been positioned as occupying specific identities as outlined in previous chapters, namely some as victims, sometimes viewing themselves as survivors. Still, also some occupy both terms, even if they do not identify with victim-survivor, and sometimes reject all normative framings entirely (Hockett and Saucier, 2015). The perhaps most straightforward way to explain this is that "victim assignments are always open-ended", and as such, "they may be sites of contestation and negotiation" (Leisenring, 2006: 313). Due to the lack of clear consensus on what 'victim' and 'survivor'

mean for victim-survivors, it is also a site of significant tensions and obstacles (Williamson and Serna, 2018; Young and Maguire, 2003).

Some studies have found fluctuations where victim-survivors identify with elements of victimhood and survivorship but not complete identities (Thompson, 2000). Identity work can also be problematic as victim-survivors have sometimes been found to hold multiple, occasionally even contradictory or paradoxical ideas of victim-survivor identity (Leisenring, 2006). They can even be used simultaneously but in opposition (Dunn, 2005). 'Identity' can also be reductive because identities are often rooted in inaccurate dichotomies (Leisenring, 2006). For example, "victim identity is not a solely discredited identity, but in some contexts can be necessary and even beneficial to claim" (Leisenring, 2006: 326), and survivorship is not wholly legitimate. As a result, research has taken active steps to situate itself away from positioning victim-survivor identities as being part of a simplified binary, where victim-survivors occupy one label or another (Boyle and Rodgers, 2022; Boyle, 2016; Convery, 2006)

Oppression and resistance positioned as opposite ends of a spectrum can also be rather simplistic. Lugones (2003) uses the chemical understanding of emulsification as a metaphor for illuminating understandings of resistance being present within oppression; emulsification refers to the mixing, fusing or bonding of two or more separate entities to form one new entity, for instance, the combining of oil and eggs to create mayonnaise. Within oppression, resistance does not have to be wholly active, nor does it need to be exclusively accessed within more significant contextual landscapes of oppression; it can be in deference or stagnant (Lugones, 2003). This theoretical basis can also be applied to understanding victim-survivor identity (for example, Hockett and Saucier, 2015), further explaining the dynamic, multifaceted nature of resistance within the binary.

When examining the intellectual traditions of victim-survivor identity work, veins of identity theory, affect control theory and affect control theory of the self are embedded in metatheoretical toots of classical symbolic interactionism (such as Mead, 1934) and structural symbolic interactionism (for example, Stryker, 1968 or Burke, 1991). These are considered the cornerstones of identity theory research in sexual assault experiences of victim-survivors (Boyle, 2016). Burke and Stets (2000:3) defined identity as "a set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as

a unique person." A person usually occupies multiple identities, which bind an individual to social situations (Burke and Stets, 2009); they are socially constructed, maintained through social processes and performed (Goffman, 1959). They are also symbolic and reflexive (Burke and Reitzes, 1981; Stryker, 1968; Goffman, 1959).

From this theoretical window, 'victim' and 'survivor' concepts should not be considered as simply static concepts but rather as identities with certain levels of stigma attached to them (Dunn, 2010; Loseke, 2001), and identities are performed through the complex process of emotion and impression management (Leisenring, 2006; Konradi, 1999). Thus, labelling oneself as a victim or survivor cannot simply be seen as a person rejecting or accepting a concept based upon events that occurred or victimisation experiences. Somewhat, the decision is affected explicitly by the cultural constructions of victims and survivors (Dunn, 2006; Holstein and Miller, 1990). In cases where typologies contradict or diverge from normative societal expectations or categorisations possess stigmatising traits, individuals might engage in repair work as a type of collective identity management (Dunn, 2005; Goffman, 1963). Hence, label adoption, from a symbolic interactionist standpoint, is discursive (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015).

Sexual assault or victimisation is positioned as a rupture to victim-survivors, and this rupture can sometimes precipitate an apparent "assassination of the true self" (Kline, 2007: 737). It has been something that has historically been positioned as a catastrophic event in a victim's life due to its adverse effects on a victim's self-esteem and sense of self (Krayer, Seddon, Robinson and Gwilym, 2015). Abuse can have long-term psychological damage for victims (Easton, Leone-Sheehan and O'Leary, 2019), although this framing is undoubtedly not without criticism. Sexual assault has also been framed as impacting all aspects or parts of a victim-survivors self-identity (Fater and Mullaney, 2000), where a person's victimisation experience can become the most dominant or salient label, it can overwhelm their total sense of self and take primacy (Jordan, 2013). Victim-survivors may wish to avoid being subjected to a transcendent narrative (Hunter, 2010). This has been described as the destruction of their sense of self before victimisation, their authentic self, so to speak (Kline, 2007), whereby they may even take on or craft an artificial identity as a result. This is very similar to affect control theory's understanding of deflection, where in sexual assault instances, victim-survivors may re-identify their sense of identity to relieve negative emotions (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015).

Feminist standpoint epistemology

Feminist standpoint theory (FST) works from the same ontological assumption as symbolic interactionism, that there is no singular objective truth (Campbell and Wasco, 2000). FST began through feminist empiricists (Leckenby and Hesse-Bieber, 2007) questioning and challenging paradoxical dualisms that positivist research hinged on, namely, concrete and abstract, subject and object, as well as rational and emotional (Sprague and Zimmerman, 1993). In tandem with this, direct challenges were made to positivistic conceptualisations of objectivity at the heart of their methodology (Sprague and Kobrynowicz, 2006). Under this vein of thinking, feminists suggested that positivists' assertions and notions of objectivity had created a historical legacy of scientific oppression. This legacy had neglected certain minority groups, such as women, ethnic and sexual minorities, as well as those with a disability, displacing them to be categorised as 'other' (Halpin, 1989).

There is a large body of feminist literature devoted to examining how science has continuously reflected the concerns and social values of groups dominant within society (for instance, Riger, 1999; Westkott, 1990; Nielson, 1990). Due to this over-concentration on dominant groups, there has been historical precedence within social science research to neglect issues specifically about women (Gurung, 2020; West and Zimmerman, 1991), where criminology has found itself in an 'androcentric slumber' and due to this androcentric bias, female experience has not been adequately represented through the traditional scientific gaze (Cook, 2016). Here, feminists have noted that scientific discourses stemming from male perspectives silence anything beyond the constraining grounds of objectivity and rationality (Gurung, 2020), explicitly devaluing and diminishing female lived experience to disconnected variables (Naples, 2007). Therefore, FST advocates for the divergence from the 'context of justification', a research priority in positivism, but also pay attention to the 'context of discovery' (Harding, 1993).

In addition, members of oppressed or less powerful groups must be cognizant of the socio-culture of those in dominant groups in order 'to survive' (Campbell and Wasco, 2000: 781). However, oppressed individuals may have a sense of reality with less distortion and possibly even a more complete understanding of social reality than their counterparts due to their subordinate position (Crasnow, 2013). This postulation is known as 'double vision,' where members of disadvantaged groups are believed to have insights from living both in the dominant culture and their position, a double vantage point, so to speak, which allows them

to have a more comprehensive and complete notion of social reality (Hartstock, 1987; 1989). They occupy a specific standpoint crafted through individual experiences amidst political and intellectual struggles against racial, gender, class, and sexuality inequalities (Harding, 1987; Hartstock, 1987, 1998; Collins, 1987, 1989). Thus, feminist standpoint epistemology is perhaps best understood as a mechanism for understanding the effect that a hierarchical social order has on producing different 'standpoints,' with standpoints referring to the experiences and subsequent aligning perspectives of individuals (Leavy, 2015).

To use the example of women in feminist knowledge, FST believes that women have an epistemological advantage as they are positioned within contradictory social locations within a society riddled with sexism; thus, they are considered 'as both subject and object' (Sprague and Kobrynowicz, 2006: 38). As such, they are the 'outsider within' and can make meaning of the tension between gaps in their experiences of oppression (Smith, 1987; 1990; Collins, 1990). Yet crucially, there is no one singular privileged standpoint (Harding, 1991), as the category of 'women' encompasses a wide range of people positioned in diverse social locations due to divergence in class, ethnicity, sexual identity and disability. Due to this diversity of social locations, feminist knowledge is broad, multiple and sometimes conflicting (Haraway, 1988).

Women cannot solely generate feminist knowledge; men positioned in oppressed locations can also add to the knowledge of feminist perspectives from their own experiences (Harding, 1991). Here, knowledge is very much grounded in experience (Sprague and Kobrynowicz, 2006). Still, whilst social locations of marginalised groups can offer opportunities for critical analysis, "a standpoint can only emerge through consciousness-raising experiences" (Campbell and Wasco, 2000: 781). To achieve this, FST seeks out marginalised groups and actively encourages them to describe their perceptions and experiences and reflect on how they shape their social world (Allen and Baber, 1992). Therefore, the principle motivation of feminist research is to privilege the lived experience of women, where their voices are legitimised as sources of knowledge (Huirem et al., 2020; Campbell and Wasco, 2000), as well as allowing for the diversity of female experience and perspective (Hawkesworth, 2006). Four critical conceptualisations guide feminist standpoint theory: 1) strong objectivity, 2) situated knowledge, 3) epistemic advantage, and 4) power relations (Gurung, 2020).

Strong objectivity

Feminist theorist Sarah Harding is strongly associated with solid objectivity (Naples and Gurr, 2013). According to Harding, strong objectivity is the analysis of the links between the subject and object of inquiry; it is a helpful tool to consider existing gaps between hopes and wants an individual or group has for what they wish the world to be and how it is (Harding, 1993). Thus, strong objectivity almost operates as 'strong reflexivity' (Harding, 1991: 151), where researchers must systematically examine their beliefs. Theorists interested in this dimension are also concerned with power relations embedded secretly in traditional, conventional knowledge production, proposing that knowledge production is highly susceptible and affected by power and politics (Naples and Gurr, 2013). Some differing viewpoints focus on the domination-subordination paradigm (Wallace, 2007). For example, Mies (2007) advocated for researchers to no longer seek to maintain objectivity and conduct research free of values. Instead, they argued that they should consciously side with those who are oppressed. Mies (2007) also stressed the need for a more collective critical awareness of women's social reality. Oakley (2000) similarly noted the importance of a more reflexive relationship between researchers and those being researched, concentrating on the 'democratisation of ways of knowing.' However, she focused on how experimental research could resolve the 'subjectoobject' divide.

Harding (1993) proposed that strong objectivity could be seen through a marginalised feminist perspective, as she offered a view of the world with minor distortion and subsequently was more accurate. This was because males typically occupied super-ordinate positions and may seek to preserve the status quo, whilst marginalised and oppressed perspectives could offer more objective accounts of social worlds, thus providing less false views of reality (Harding, 1993). As these perspectives have been traditionally neglected or absent from knowledge production, this absence heightens the importance of examining research from this perspective, as the location within the social structure of those involved in knowledge production and the subsequent social context of knowledge production can heighten the transparency of research claims (Naples and Gurr, 2013).

Situated knowledge

Situated knowledge starts with the theorisation that knowledge is gained from a particular standpoint, as an individual's social location shapes and influences their experiences (Wylie,

2003). Thus, under this vein of thinking, females have access to knowledge that their male counterparts do not; they have a distinct way of knowing (Intemann, 2010). Yet standpoints should not be viewed simply as socially located perspectives; they should be reached through consciously made critical reflections on how power structures and social locations affect knowledge production (Gurung, 2020). Harding (2004) notes that a standpoint gives a unique vantage into the mechanisms of hierarchical social structures, where some political tensions and social locations further knowledge, directly opposing traditional viewpoints that local and political situatedness merely hampers scientific inquiry (Harding, 2004). From this gaze, marginalised groups are believed to be socially situated in a manner that allows them to make specific observations and offer questions that may be unattainable to the researcher (Kokushin, 2014). Here, standpoint theorists note that all knowledge is socially situated. Still, some objective social locations provide superior starting points for research, and this claim directly confronts key theoretical assumptions at the heart of positivist scientific views (Harding, 1992). Additionally, as knowledge claims are socially situated, dominant groups within the social structure neglect to interrogate their advantageous position critically and systematically, rendering their perspectives as both epistemologically and scientifically disadvantaged in producing knowledge (Gurung, 2020). Their perspectives can sometimes have unintended consequences of legitimising exploitative identity politics (Harding, 1993). Thus, situated knowledge challenges the marginalisation and deliberate discrimination of female knowledge within research (Trosow, 2001).

Epistemic advantage

Epistemic advantage proposes that members of disadvantaged groups always have a natural epistemic privilege due to their virtue of oppression (Intemman, 2010). It is also one of the more controversial and contentious offerings of FST due to epistemic privilege being claimed to be automatic (Crasnow, 2013). However, this criticism of the ascription 'automatic' to FST is misguided, as FST does not claim that any woman automatically can know the experiences of all other women, and it would also be trivial and reductionist to claim that only those with direct experience can understand a particular experience (Intemann, 2010). FST cannot claim automation because in accepting this, you must also accept, at least to some degree, that there is a sense of 'sameness of women' (Crasnow, 2013: 417). This would also create irreconcilable tensions between epistemic privilege and

situated knowledge because whilst social locations create epistemic privilege, the only social location that becomes of concern is being a woman, which does not allow for the multitude and diversity of the female experience. Thus, "the perspectives of the oppressed cannot be automatically privileged" (Harding, 2004: 31).

Due to this 'automatic' assumption issue, also known as the situated knowledge and the epistemic advantage thesis (Pinnick, 2005), the achievement thesis instead instructs the need to distinguish the feminist standpoint from the conceptual understanding of a perspective. Our understanding of 'perspective' is not the best window for understanding how group consciousness is formed and how this can differ from individual experience; after all, "standpoint theory is more about the creation of groups' consciousness than about shifts in the consciousness of individuals" (Harding, 2004: 32). This is because being able to view something from a different perspective can very well be automatic, but it does not place any requirement on a person to examine power relations, or even understand oppression (Crasnow, 2013; Harding, 2004)

The importance of an intersectional lens

Within the victim-survivor discourse, there is a consensus that there is no one, homogenous standpoint of victim-survivors (Jean-Charles, 2014); after all, "there is no singular woman's story" (Haaken, 1998: 8). Of course, it cannot be underestimated that gender does play a critical role in understanding both male and female victim-survivor experience. However, other facets of inequality central to a person's identity should be considered a principle concern, not just an afterthought or peripheral examination (Potter, 2013). In criminology, an understanding of how inequities such as gender, class, ethnicity and disability intersect is integral (Daly, 1997), particularly given the historical tendency for feminist criminology to be rooted in mainstream feminism, which has been cautioned with hyper-focusing on gender to the expense of racial considerations (hooks, 2000). Collins (2000) postulated that the mainstream had chronically overlooked black women and traditional feminist theory due to an intense focus on the singular vein of gender, where white middle-class female liberation was given precedence. Yet women from racial-ethnic minorities are not solely affected by gender inequality but also racial inequity; thus, they have been relegated to an invisible class (Crenshaw, 1994). So, whilst there was some commonality in female experience and perspective, the experience was also quite distinct (Collins, 2000). Thus, examining intersecting oppressions becomes vital (Potter, 2013). An intersectional lens stresses the

importance of exploring interconnected identities in tandem with interconnected social and power relations and distinctive circumstances that may affect some members of marginalised groups more than others.

The research calendar

Data collection began once ethical approval had been granted from Durham University in November 2021. This stage involved two essential distinctive research methods, divided into three types:
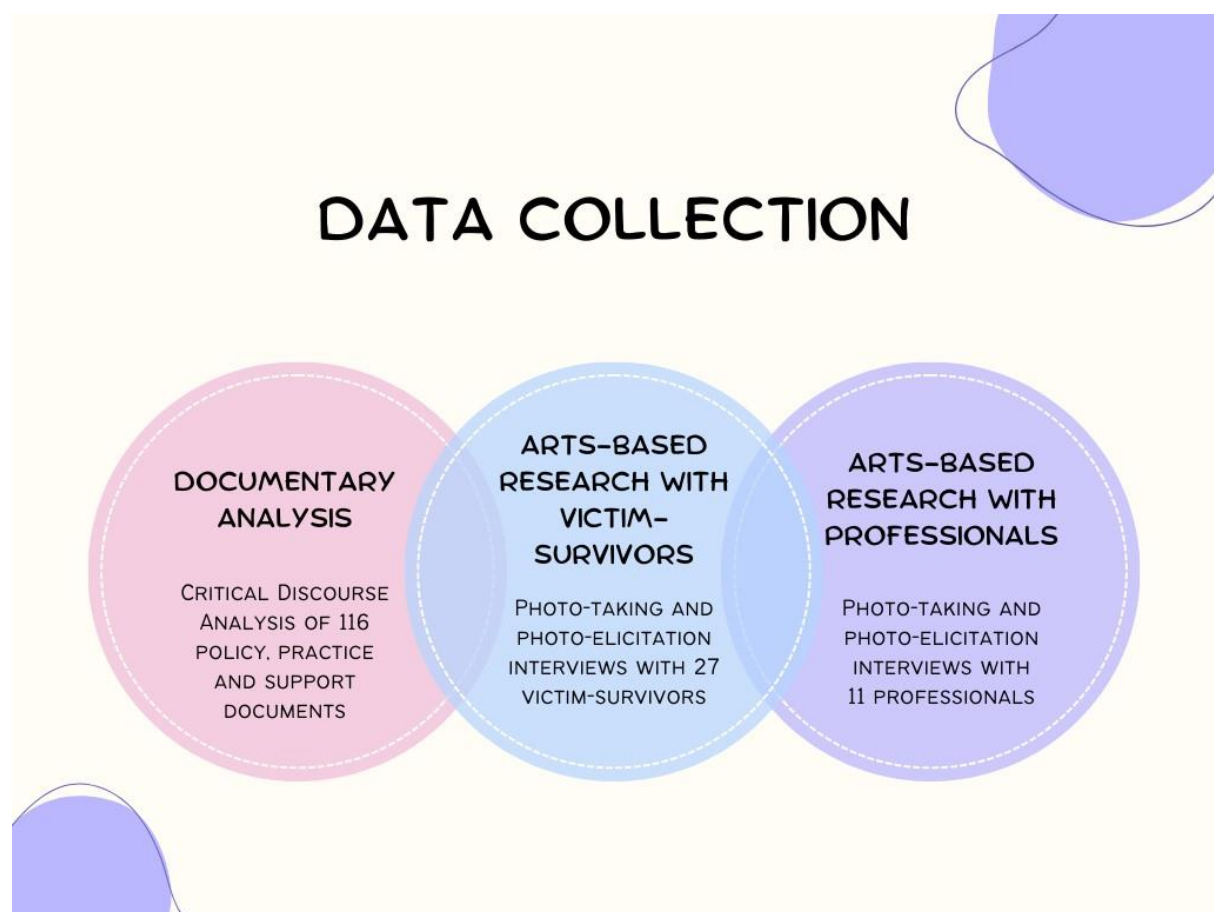
Figure 1 – Overview of research methods

As the design involved methodological braiding, each research method was used to collect data simultaneously, with three review periods every two months to ensure there were no gaps in collection due to issues with participant recruitment, as document gathering could be conducted at any time or areas for concern. Data collection lasted from December 2021 and was completed fully by December 2022, as outlined below:

Ethics approval granted – Nov 2021

Phase 1: synergistic, simultaneous employment of research methods for data collection and production (3 months: Dec 2021 to Feb 2022)

Review period: Mar 2022

Phase 2: synergistic, simultaneous employment of research methods for data collection and production (2 months: April 2022 to May 2022)

Review period: Jun 2022

Phase 3: synergistic, simultaneous employment of research methods for data collection and production (3 months: July 2022 to Sept 2022)

Review period: Oct 2022

Phase 4: synergistic, simultaneous employment of research methods for data collection and production (2 months: Nov 2022 to Dec 2022)

Data collection ends: Dec 2022

Output refinement period (3 months: Jan 2023 to March 2023)

Figure 2: Methodological Braiding Technique and The Research Calendar

Documentary and Policy Analysis

Documentary analysis in qualitative research is a systematic method for collecting, reviewing and evaluating material (Bowen, 2009). Similar to other research methods, including policy analysis, documentary analysis considers documents as forms of data and said data is analysed and interpreted to elicit meaning and discern empirical insights (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Rapely, 2007). Documents can even be considered 'social facts,' as they are created, disseminated and employed in socially organised fashions (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997:47).

'Documents' is an inclusive term to encompass material that can be both electronic and physically printed, including; "advertisements; agendas; attendance registers, and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; event programs (i.e. printed outlines); letters and memoranda; maps and charts; newspapers (clippings/ articles); press releases; program proposals; application forms and summaries; radio and television program scripts; organisational or institutional reports; survey data; and various public records," even scrapbooks and photo albums (Bowen, 2009: 27-28). Systematic data collection procedures must help find and select relevant materials (Rapl2y, 2018) and make sense of the documents. In contrast, analysis usually entails coding and sorting documents into common themes and categories (Labuschagne, 2003).

Documentary analysis is much more commonly used with alternative qualitative research methods as part of a broader mixed methods design through triangulation. Triangulation is "the combination of methodologies in studying the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 2009: 291). Triangulation is often employed in qualitative research design, mainly when using documentary analysis to explore the convergence and corroboration of several distinctive data sources and methods (Bowen, 2009; Denzin, 2009). This can be particularly useful to triangulate data as researchers can offer "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 1991: 110). Researchers can seek patterns and check findings across multiple data sources, reducing the likelihood of biases that may be more effective in a study using one singular research methodology (Patton, 1990). However, as previously outlined, studies attempting to triangulate data using a mixed methods design use multiple data sources to affirm findings. Methodological braiding steps away from this.

As highlighted previously in the research calendar, through each data collection phase, all methods should be employed as methodological braiding employs all research methods synergistically. Thus, the methodology actively seeks to interweave documentary analysis with arts-based methods. It also involves the conscious reflection and refinement of the methods employed throughout the data collection period, specifically during each review period. Within the three review periods, emergent findings from documentary analysis and arts-based research were considered individually, but at the same time, unlike mixed methods design, which would consider emergent findings sequentially, as methods are employed one after the other. In addition, specific gaps and thematic connections can be explored across all three methods. As a result, methodological braiding offers a dynamic method of data collection.

Research questions as guides

The overarching aim of conducting a preliminary documentary analysis of policy and practice documents was to gain a deeper understanding of the terms most commonly used about victim-survivors. The study is focused most specifically on answering the first research question of the thesis: What terminology is used by different professionals to describe people with lived experience of sexual violence and why within policy and practice documents? Underpinning this, several sub-considerations are needed to answer the research question honestly.

Firstly, will documents framing people with lived experience of sexual violence as 'victims' and the documents framing them in a variety of other ways have different conceptualisations of victim-survivors of sexual violence? In essence, will there be any variation beyond the concept (such as victim or survivor) used to refer to people with lived experiences of sexual violence but also explore any variations in the manner they understand the diversities of victim-survivor experiences, identities, and post-traumatic outcomes? In addition, are there any diversities based on specific identity markers, such as gender, disability, or ethnicity? Secondly, will documents frame people with lived experiences of sexual violence as 'victims' or in other ways, and will they differ in the level in which they focus on oppression, considerations of resistance to oppression and empowerment of victim-survivors, particularly when mentioning post-traumatic outcomes?

Searching, retrieving and categorising relevant policy documents

It quickly became apparent that no single database could access the required diverse sources. However, care was taken to conduct a systematic policy review, and several steps were taken to ensure that policy document searching, retrieving and categorising was as standardised as possible. The policy analysis was conducted across the three distinct phases of data collection rather than being combined into just one, as outlined previously within the research calendar. However, each phase concentrated on utilising a different database, as summarised below:
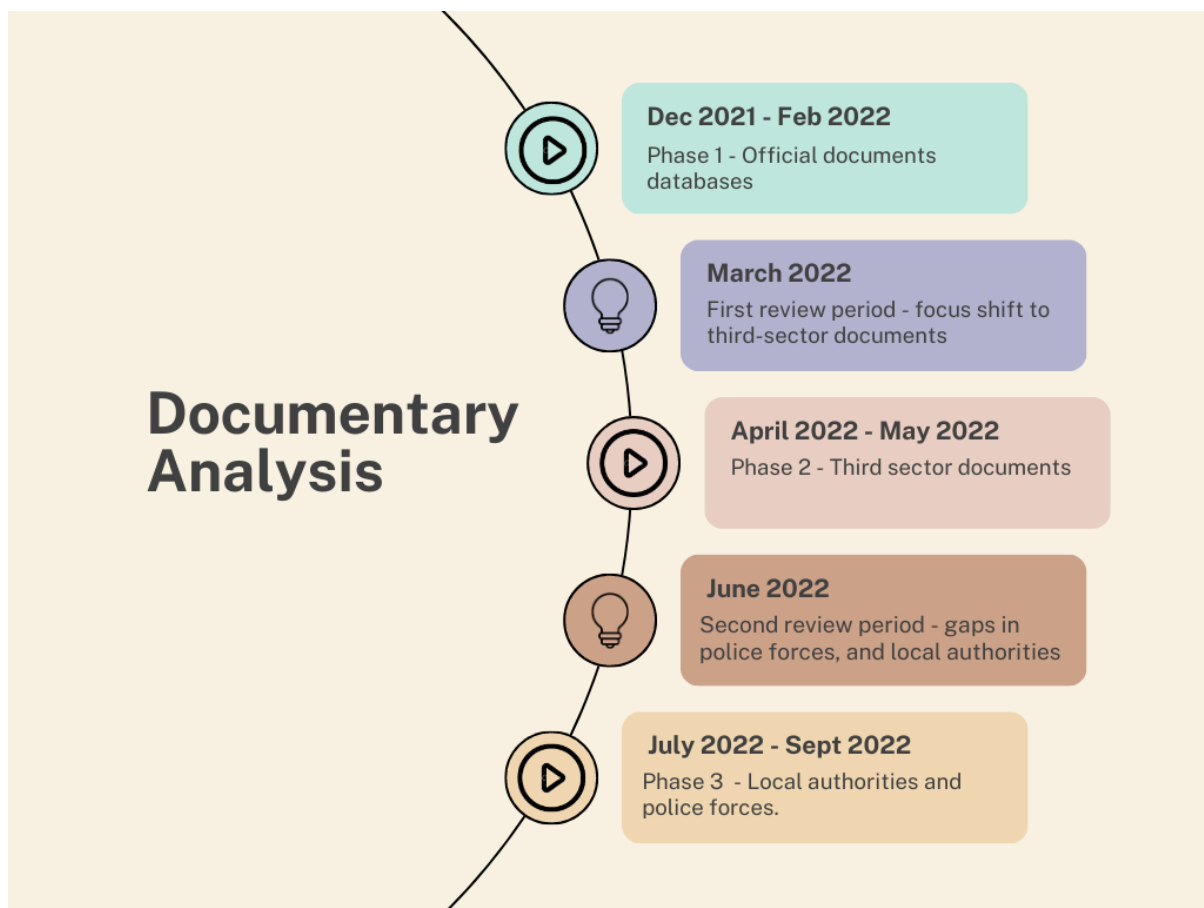
Figure 3 – Documentary Analysis Procedure

Phase 1 kicked off in December 2021, using the 'official documents' database accessed through the governmental website. The official documents database searches all current UK Parliamentary and departmental publications, the documents of local governments and the devolved administrations available electronically. All material is available online from 2008

onwards. The database includes documents from the UK parliament, Westminster government departments and agencies' outputs, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. As it does not include all publications from Northern Ireland, particularly local government and departmental documents, the Northern Ireland Official Publications Archive was also included in this phase. The Northern Ireland Official Publications Archive acts similarly to the official documents database but includes departmental publications from Northern Ireland. As the database does not allow specifically for the searching of documents within the database itself, it was used as more of a mechanism to find alternative, more appropriate databases.

The first internal database used was the 'Policy papers and consultations' data set. This database specifically searches all documents marked as policy papers or consultations available electronically from all sites included in the Government documental search engine. As of 28th February 2022, when phase 1 data collection ended, this included 18,206 results. Next, a second internal database was chosen, 'News and Communications.' This database searched through all documents tagged as either 'news' or 'communications,' and as of 28th February 2022, had 112 111 results. A final 'Guidance and Regulation' database was also included; this database searched all documents marked as official guidance or regulations. As of the 28th of February 2022, it had 33,854 results. Two datasets were not chosen; these were services, research and statistics. The services database was not included as it did not contain documents but rather results of webpages of official governmental services, like tax and universal credit. Research and statistics were excluded as the aim here was to analyse documents that referred to victim-survivors rather than research reports; they were considered more appropriate for a literature review. Across all three internal databases, standardised search terms were used. As these were considered databases that led directly to search terms, the 'combination' search terms were used.

In the first review period, it was confirmed that, as anticipated, the first phase of data collection had generated an extensive number of policy documents, with very few documents from third-sector organisations. Thus, it was confirmed that the following data collection phase should concentrate on collecting documents from third-sector organisations. Phase 2 was the most extensive but the least time-consuming, lasting two months from April 2022. With this phase starting from the 1st of April 2022, 164,198 charities were registered. Standardised search terms were used here, as outlined in a later

section. As this was not a database that led directly to documents being collected, the 'filter' search terms were used. Filter search terms were used to compose a list of charity and third-sector organisations. Due to a lack of ability to use a database to search all third-sector documents, using the checklist, documents were searched for manually using websites.

In the second review period, it was felt that there was a potential gap in documents from local authority organisations that may not have been covered in Phase 2. Furthermore, due to the outlined procedure, specific police forces produced no documents, only broader national organisations. Thus, Phase 3 was explicitly designed to address those gaps. Beginning in July 2022, the procedure started by using the Governmental list of local authorities first for England (317), then Scotland (32), Wales (19) and finally Northern Ireland (11). Using a search engine, each local authority website was searched using the terms identified below. It was anticipated that local authority websites would have results that matched Phase 2. Where this occurred, duplicates were not included. Unique documents that met the inclusion criteria were included. The same procedure was also applied to police forces using the governmental list of all UK police forces (45) and cross-checking that national police forces had already been covered in Phase 1, where they were added where not. Once established, each police force's website was manually searched using the terms below. The 'combination' search terms were used as these databases led directly to documents.

Search terms and categorisations

As 'victim' is still considered to be the normative word used to describe people with lived experiences of sexual assault (Hockett and Saucier, 2016), this was classed as a normative framing. Non-normative framings included 'survivor,' and other commonly known non-normative framings identified in the literature, 'victim-survivors,' and ones that are established but are only used marginally, such as 'overcomer,' 'women who have been raped,' and 'thriver.' Other contextually specific framings, such as 'complainant', were also further classed as non-normative framings. Documents which referred to people with lived experience of sexual violence as 'victims' and 'survivors' were categorised as part of nonnormative framings.

The same search terms were used throughout to standardise the procedure as much as possible. To better differentiate between the two search terms used in this research, each

category was given a specific name: 1) filter search terms and 2) combination search terms. Filter search terms were words about sexual assault that were explicitly used to filter out charitable and third-party organisations from the charity register, which would then be further searched actually to procure documents. Filter search terms used were 'sexual violence,' 'sexual assault,' 'sexual trauma' and 'rape.' Combination search terms were essentially an amalgamation of the search terms about sexual assault, named 'filter' search terms here, and variations in normative and non-normative framings. As outlined above, the normative framing was 'victim,' and non-normative framings were 'survivor,' 'victim-survivors,' 'overcomer,' 'women who have been raped,' and 'thriver.' Each framing was systematically searched within each database using a different word combination. Thus, there were 30 search terms for each database, including local authority websites and police forces.

	Combinations	Filter terms
Normative framings	Victim	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape
Non-normative framings	Survivor	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape
	Thriver	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape
	Overcomer	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape
	Women who have been raped	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape
	Victim-survivors	+ sexual assault + sexual violence + sexual trauma + rape

Figure 4 – Search Terms for Documentary Analysis

As a high volume of documents was expected, exclusion criteria were pre-emptively applied during initial searching. When accessing databases, wherever possible, search fields were

limited to articles produced or first published before January 2013. Due to the anticipated high volume of documents, further criteria were pre-emptively applied.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

In terms of general requirements, to be included in this review, documents must have been fully accessible in their entirety—documents where only excerpts or previews that could be obtained were excluded. In addition, documents had to be written in English to avoid translation errors and produced with a focus on the UK. Specific decisions were also made about more pinpointed criteria. To ensure that the sample offered an insight into the most up-to-date policy and practice documents, a document was only included in the sample if it was produced in the last ten years specifically; it needed to have been first published after January 2013. If it could not be established precisely when the document was produced, the date it was first published was considered instead.

Specific criteria were also used to determine what constituted a document. In keeping with Bowen's (2009) twenty-eight categories, the documents selected had to fit the qualitative research methods understanding of a document. Furthermore, documents were required to be specifically focused on sexual violence or sexual assault.

Now it, of course, must be acknowledged that sexual violence, sexual assault, rape, intimate partner violence and coercive control are all distinctive phenomena. Yet, there can be some substantial overlap and inclusion/ exclusion criteria needed to account for this to ensure documents were not included or excluded inappropriately. Thus, it was decided that papers needed to be focused on sexual violence, as this is a much more encompassing term. Whether to include documents focused on coercive control and intimate partner violence was challenging, as whilst a considerable number of coercive control cases do include sexual assault, a significant number do not (Lischick, 2009). Yet, as definitions in both literature, policy and UK criminal law feature sexual assault or violence as being a potential indicator of coercive control (Stark and Hester, 2019), documents focused specifically on coercive control were included. The same logic and rationale were also applied to papers explicitly focused on cases of intimate partner violence, as whilst intimate partner violence does not necessarily involve sexual assault or sexual violence, it is often a component (Dutton, Kaltman, Goodman, 2005). Due to this, it would be too exclusionary to simply exclude documents as their primary focus is not sexual violence. Instead, if a document was focused

on intimate partner violence, domestic violence or coercive control, a second caveat for inclusion was applied. If the document made any mention of sexual violence, sexual assault or rape, it could be included; if not, then it was excluded.

Documents that might meet the primary focus criteria outlined above were checked to ensure they met the final inclusion criteria. Documents had to meet at least one of the labelling criteria and at least one of the identity criteria.

Labelling criteria:

1) The document had to use a word to describe people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/or sexual violence. Language could include normative or non-normative framings, even a mixture.

2) The document provided a rationale as to why the organisation used a word to describe people with lived experience of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

The labelling criteria were necessary to ascertain what language was used to describe people with lived experiences of sexual violence and categorise documents into normative/ non-normative framings.

Identity criteria:

a) Documents were related to the outcomes of people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

b) Documents mentioned beliefs around people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

c) Documents mentioned attitudes surrounding people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

d) Documents mentioned perceptions of people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

e) Documents mentioned the behaviours of people with lived experiences of sexual assault and/ or sexual violence.

Data analysis – rationale

To fully embrace the synergistic, holistic approach of methodological braiding, it became integral to pre-select a data analysis technique before embarking on data collection that could be utilised for interpretation across all branches of research methods. As arts-based inquiry is used in data collection analysis and interpretation (Jones and Leavy, 2014), a data analysis technique must be employed to effectively navigate both distinctive research methods used within this thesis and bridge the two together. This led to much experimentation. As discourses became so prevalent in cultural constructions of victim and survivor identity, critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged as a fitting analytical tool, particularly given its established trans-disciplinary usage. Primarily, critical discourse analysis allows for examining discourses represented by text and spoken communication and the understanding that discourse is shaped by social practices (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997).

Critical discourse analysis examines language as discourse, where "language is conceived as one element of the social process dialectically interconnected with others" (Fairclough and Graham, 2010:188). It is "the study of talk and texts. It is a set of methods and theories for investigating language in use and language in social contexts" (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001: i). CDA examines social interaction by analysing the linguistic form of communication, aiming to illuminate "the ideological loading of particular ways of using language and the relations of power" that underpin interaction (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258). Thus, CDA explores the discursive moments within social practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) by highlighting "the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power" by exploring how they appear and are seen in discourse (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 272). In terms of analysing texts, CDA can be employed to uncover the "structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events" that create or perpetuate unequal power dynamics (van Diijk, 1993: 250).

In this context, 'discourse' has three main common uses: "(a) meaning-making as an element of the social process; (b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice

(e.g. 'political discourse'); (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective" (Fairclough, 2013: 179). To avoid conflation or confusion, 'semiosis' describes the most generalised and abstract discourses (Fairclough et al., 2004). Here, power, institutions, social relations and even cultural norms and values internalise semiosis, where semiosis is considered a part of the social process. This part is dialectically related to others (Fairclough, 2013). The relations between elements of the social processes are dialectical; they are entirely separate but not discrete, and they internalise one another but do not become reducible (Harvey, 1996). So under critical discourse analysis, analysis of institutions or organisations does approach them as partly semiotic objects; it does not treat them as purely semiotic; instead, critical discourse analysis moves beyond just looking at semiosis but also examining the "relations between semiotic and other social elements" (Fairclough, 2013: 11).

Although Fairclough has written extensively on CDA and has given a three-fold analytical framework (Fairclough, 2000), van Dijk's ideological square offered a much more comprehensive framework for analysis that could be employed across both methods in all three aspects of the research. As rigour and consistency are extremely important in methodological braiding and vital in arts-based research, although still needed in documentary analysis, CDA was chosen as the framework for data analysis.

Data analysis – Ideological square

Van Dijk (2000) believes critical discourse analysis is a tool to understand power relations and hierarchical ideological structures within discursive sites. After all, some texts are produced by groups and organisations with societal dominance (van Dijk, 1991). Consequently, ideologies are embedded within items of text or other forms of communication, and these ideologies can be showcased both explicitly or tacitly within discourse structures (van Dijk, 2000). Specifically, van Dijk (2001:355) defines this social power within parameters of control and influence over others, differentiating between two main types of social power: a) 'coercive power,' power granted by force, such as the power of the police, or even 'power of violent men' and b) 'persuasive power' stemming from 'knowledge, information or authority,' for example 'the power of parents, professors or journalists.'

Building upon this, van Dijk (2000) offers the 'ideological square,' four principles that should govern critical discourse analysis:
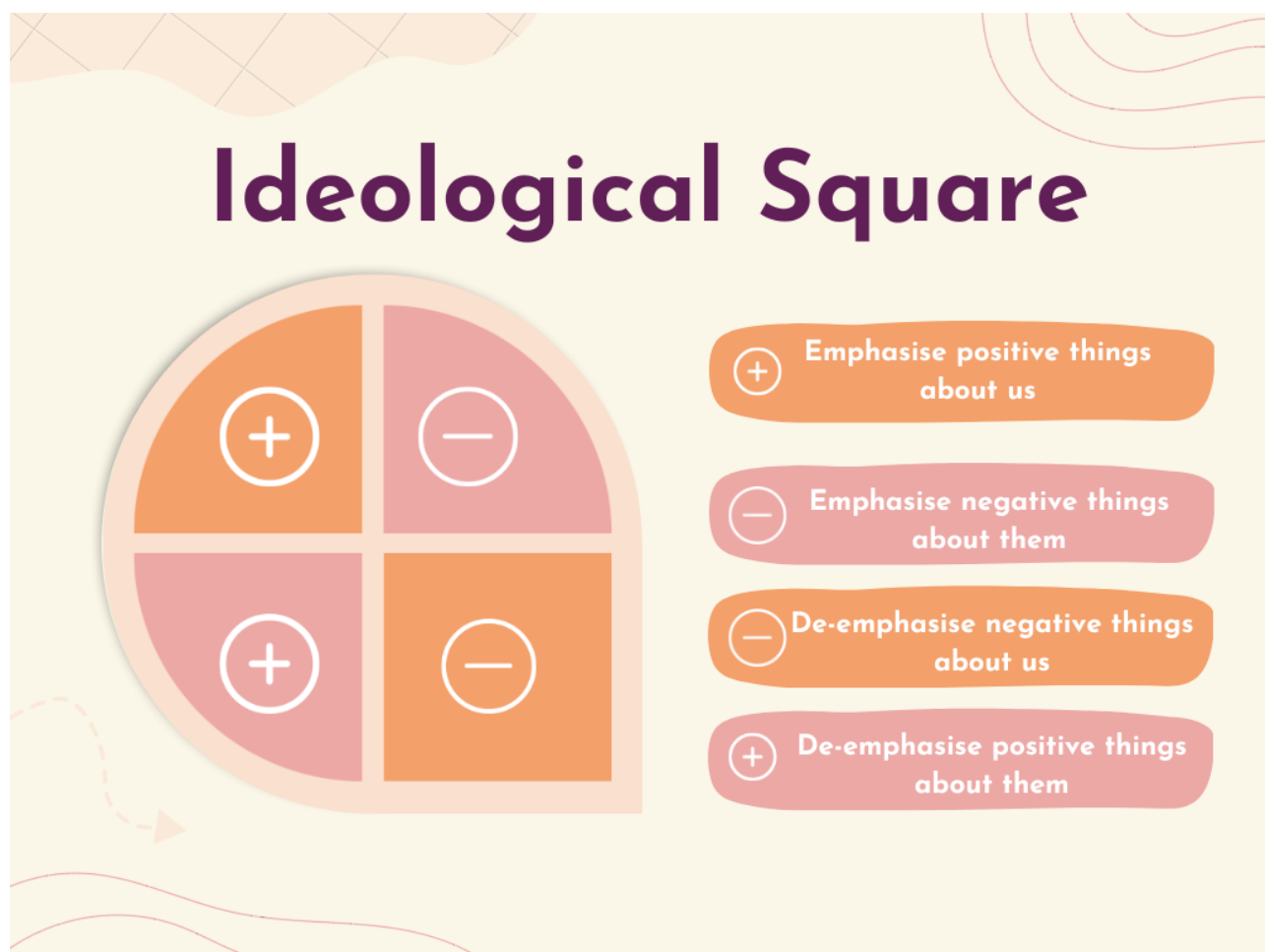
Figure 5 – Adaption of Van Dijk's Ideological Square (2000: 44)

Specifically, the ideological square aims to offer a tool to distinguish between the polarisation of dominant groups or groups with higher societal standing versus groups who are denied this. Van Dijk (2000, 2004) also offered seven categories to interpret representation within discourses better:

Figure 6 – Adaption of Van Dijk's seven categories (2000: 44)

Actor description centres on how social actors, such as marginalised groups, are described; for example, some groups are described positively or negatively. Authority notes if any form of communication or text uses or highlights the authority or power of a group or individual to support explanations. In contrast, categorisation involves categorising or classifying people into particular groups, but it also underpins this by examining if they are assigned positive or negative attributes associated with said groups. Similarly, polarisation also explores the categorisation of in-group and out-group people, particularly examining how good attributes are assigned to 'us' and negative characteristics to 'them,' focusing on framings. Focusing on negative aspects, lexicalisation centres on how lexical items are used and how these are employed in a broader strategy or framing for othering and negative presentations, and victimisation highlights the 'bad' aspects of out-groups, possibly even

using stories or anecdotes to illustrate this. Finally, vagueness captures anything that does not have a clearly defined presentation or where vague expressions are used.

Once documents had been categorised into normative and non-normative framings, they were then coded in NVivo by category, starting with normative framings ('victim') and then non-normative framings ('survivor,' 'victim and survivor,' 'thriver,' 'overcomer,' 'women who have been raped,' 'claimant' and 'victim-survivors'). All the documents falling under the term were coded before proceeding to the next. Each document was specifically coded first using van Dijk's ideological square, with specific references to us vs them framings, both favourable and unfavourable. The document was then coded using the seven categories, making notes whenever there were mentions of actor descriptions. Specifically, actor description was used to examine whether there was an in-group and out-group dynamic and if the in-group was framed as positive and the out-group as unfavourable. In addition, any instances of polarisation were also coded for, specifically leaning into the victim-survivor binary. Authority was also explored, whether there were any assertions or mentions of authority, particularly about what types of power (persuasive or coercive). Categorisations of victim-survivors where positive or negative characteristics were attached based on the identity language used, any instances of victimisation were also examined, where the 'bad' nature of an out-group was emphasised and if lexicalisation occurred in terms of negative other-presentation. Finally, any instances of vagueness were also coded for.

Journeying into arts-based research

What do arts-based research practices entail?

The term 'arts-based research' was first coined in 1993 by Elliot Eisner (Barone and Eisner, 2011), where arts were suggested to offer rich models to increase understanding within social sciences research. Innovative research methods, particularly utilising art, are starting to gain traction within social science research (O'Neill and Roberts, 2019), and artistic inquiry has received considerable attention (Conrad and Kendal, 2009; Hornsby-Minor, 2007), especially within the subsection of participatory practices (Froggett, Little, Roy and Whitaker, 2011). It is now a firm feature in handbooks of qualitative research to include an entire chapter devoted to arts-based research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Butler-Kisber, 2010), showcasing it as a cornerstone of qualitative inquiry (Knowles and Cole, 2008).

Tracing definitions of ABR

In terms of a definition, arts-based research in a nut-shell is "research that uses the arts, in the broadest sense, to explore, understand, represent and even challenge human action and experience" (Wimpenny, Savin-Baden and Cook, 2014: 1). Most pointedly, it is based on the idea that art can be used as a means to understanding action and experience (Wang, Coemans, Siegesmund and Hannes, 2017). Notably, it seeks to generate original insights in many ways, including stimulating onlookers' senses and having significance through expressions of meaning in a manner traditional qualitative research cannot achieve (Barone and Eisner, 2012). Thus, ABR practices involve "the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expression in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people they involve in their studies" (McNiff, 2008: 29). Here the artistic process involves formulating and creating expression as a means of both understanding and exploring a phenomenon (Cole and Knowles, 2010).

It is perhaps more easily understood as a set of 'methodological tools' that can be utilised by researchers throughout the research process (Leavy, 2015: 4). ABR make use of all genres of the creative arts as forms of representation to tackle critical social research questions wherein theory and practice become intertwined (Leavy, 2014). Here, artistic forms of expression and scientific research practices marry together (Leavy and Chilton, 2014), where science and art synergise and catalyse fresh insights (McNiff, 1998). The art vs science dichotomy, where the two are positioned as binary categories intangible to each other, is something increasingly being dismantled by ABR practitioners where the 'power' of art is seen to help more comprehensively address the complexity of social life in a manner of methodological innovation (Hesse-Bieber and Leavy, 2006). Art should not be viewed just as reflective of the reality it originated in; instead, "it manifests its specificity – it is constitutive. It can make visible experiences, hopes and ideas; it is a reflective space, and socially it brings something into the world" (O'Neill and Roberts, 2020: 81). This is because ABR makes use of the richness in the arts themselves; where art can be both oppositional but subversive, as well as transformational and resistive (Leavy, 2009). "Art as inquiry has the power to evoke, to inspire, to spark the emotions, to awaken visions and imaginings, and to transport others to new worlds" (Thomas, 2001:274); thus, art is considered a way of inquiry.

The visual arts: why use them?

Arts-based visual research is a growing research area across the social sciences, with more researchers incorporating images into qualitative research (Huss, 2013) and has been used across various disciplines historically (Leavy, 2017, 2015). One of the most well-known is visual anthropology (Hockings, Hegardt and Arnold, 2016; Collier and Collier, 1996), but also visual cultural archaeology (Rolling, 2005), visual phenomenology (Noe, 2000) and even technology (Holm, 2014), have incorporated visual art or some form of image component within research.

Visual research involves using tools of academic inquiry to "explore questions of visuality," in the sense of examining both the seen and visible aspects "of social life, of knowing; reflecting in part, our highly visual culture" (Macdonald et al., 2022: 244). "Art making as a way of knowing" becomes the research process (Leavy, 2018: 4). Art forms themselves become methodological tools as part of the research process (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Finley, 2005), wherein participants create art that can both serve as data itself and also representative data (Leavy, 2015). Methods utilising arts-based visual research challenge the existing boundary placed between science and art, seeking to bridge the gap (Holm, 2008b). Visual research as a methodology approaches images critically by analysing not only how they were created and constructed but also how they may be viewed, what context they may be viewed in, how they are shared and also the creator's self-reflection (Pauwels, 2010).

The power of an image

There is a commonly articulated expression that a 'picture is worth a thousand words', which is one of the main starting points of visual art (Leavy, 2015). We live in a visual culture where humans are bombarded with images daily (Leavy, 2020). Some may have no emotional effect or influence, but several photographs strike a chord with humans, and they may experience them emotionally, profoundly, and even intellectually (Holm, 2014). Although we live in a visual age (Leavy, 2020), photographs still have untapped potential in social science research (Holm, 2014). However, visual images should not be understood as a window or a stepping stone into a social world; instead, they can create perspective (Leavy, 2015). Most notably, images are both immediate and visceral. Hence, they are powerful communicative tools that can encapsulate a multitude of meanings as well as evoke

emotional reactions in onlookers (Leavy, 2020). They often hold multiple meanings for people viewing them, even without text (Grosvenor and Hall, 2012).

Art is also highly interpretive; all perceivers have different and sometimes even multiple interpretations from which researchers can learn (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2002). Consequently, visual art can be viewed as a method of 'aesthetic intervention,' yet aesthetics is understood in a slightly different manner from traditional art (Leavy, 2015). Unlike in professional art projects, aesthetic quality and artistic ability hold less importance in visual ABR; it takes a back seat, although it can still be emotionally resonant (Chilton and Leavy, 2014). Thus, the visual arts within ABR practices become both sources of data, as well as analytical and interpretive tools and representational forms (Leavy, 2009).

Visual Culture as a site of social struggle

Art can often capture social change within sociology (Clammer, 2014). Drawing and painting, for example, which would come under participant-made art, involve a process of meaning-making that is "intricately bound up with power relations, social experiences, and technological interactions" (Guillemin, 2004: 275).

Visual art holds excellent importance in locations where struggles or conflicts, even dichotomies, and over-representation of minority populations occur and, as a result, can offer an appealing solution to researchers looking to examine lived experience from feminist, postcolonial and critical perspectives (Leavy, 2015). Most famously, hooks (1995) described how visual art can play two significant roles in achieving group representation; firstly, it allows for identifying and recognising what is familiar, and secondly, defamiliarisation. This is because not all groups receive equal or even considerable representation in art, and those underrepresented groups may not witness legitimate representations identifiable to them, or there may be unflattering distortions or exaggerations centring around stereotypical characterisations (hooks, 1995). Consequently, "visual art can foster stereotypical ways of thinking" because certain groups receive systematic privilege in 'legitimate' artistic representations (Leavy, 2015: 228).

In terms of defamiliarisation, visual art can challenge onlookers to approach a topic differently, and this challenge is intrinsically tied and integral to social change (hooks, 1995). Thus, visual art becomes a medium to challenge dominant cultural, economic and political structures at the heart of identity; it has transformative potential to resist and

dismantle stereotypical representation (hooks, 1995). It can be emotionally jarring and unleash the oppositional power of art, challenging social consciousness and triggering social change (Amos, 2019). Hence, ABR has sometimes been labelled as an 'aesthetic intervention' and can have the ability to draw attention to historical precedents of oppression within representation (Leavy, 2015).

Positioning ABR in Violence and abuse literature

Domestic and intimate partner violence research

The arts-based inquiry has been highly underutilised when investigating domestic and intimate partner violence within research (Bird, 2018). Despite this, some notable examples of literature utilising an arts framework exist. One of the earliest examples was research conducted by Lev-Wiesel and Kleinberg (2002) in Israel, where victim-survivors were requested to compile drawings of themselves and their partners. Within this study, the "male figures evidenced numerous indicators of violent aggression, whereas the female figures evidence helplessness and passivity such as lacking or disconnected hands, empty or shadowed eyes, and unstable stance" (Lev-Wiesel and Kleinberg, 2002: 16). Although Lev-Wisel and Kleinberg were able to position these drawings and images within theoretical understandings of learned helplessness, the actual application of art itself was limited in this study due to a lack of contextual information about the production of the image from the women themselves (Bird, 2018).

Frohmann (2005) conducted a collaborative, participatory action project with Hispanic and South Asian migrant women in the United States with lived experience of domestic violence. Within the Framing Safety Project, participants produced photographs they considered 'zones of safety' in domestic and public places to inspire discussions around safe-keeping strategies (Frohmann, 2005: 1413). Alongside theoretical discoveries surrounding the idea of viewing safety as a fluid, conceptual thought, Frohmann also made methodological illustrations using artistic enquiry, including offering participants access to therapeutic support and researchers taking steps to protect their mental health. Yet, in the same vein, Frohmann (2005: 1401) also believed arts-based inquiry had healing potential in empowering participants. Similarly, Haymore et al. (2012), in their study with five women using photovoice, found that arts-based inquiry gave participants a creative space to navigate their experiences of leaving an abusive partner and offered social support.

Although a limited sample, again, this study placed a significant emphasis on participation in ABR, which was somewhat emancipatory for those who participated.

Another key conceptual idea within arts-based inquiry into domestic violence is examining transitional stories that attempt to carve out narrative meaning (Allen, 2011). A vital component of this research branch is centred around the empowerment victim-survivors experience when feeling as though they are listened to (Abrahams, 2010). Transitional stories being depicted visually can be a powerful tool to help give participants agency, as found in Bird's (2018) study using visual storytelling with domestic violence victim-survivors.

Sexual Abuse and violence research

Similarly to domestic violence research, a growing body of literature within the sexual violence arena has sought to generate new methodologies to capture power relations within sexual violence (Renold, 2018). Within this arena, phematerialists have experimented with fusing creative and arts-based methods inspired by new materialist activist philosophies (Bird, 2018; Ringrose and Renold, 2019). Here, approaches seek to explicitly connect how academic research practices come to be understood (Barad, 2007). Whilst many scholars walk a fine line between research and activism when exploring sexual violence and youth (Renold, 2018), distinctly there is a lack of research seeking to examine the micro-processes surrounding change and transformation, attempting to reach beyond the human 'politics of effect' (Massumi, 2015), beyond the research-activism space (Meissner, 2014). As Manning and Masssumi (2014: 87) noted, it is not deep enough for literature to merely comment critically on the 'state of things,' but rather the examination of the complex formations of how sexual violence can affect victim-survivors social worlds needs to be given consideration. Now, there is an ever-growing amount of literature, particularly within the field of gender and sexuality education (like Allen and Rassmussen, 2017), looking to generate new methodologies to gain a much deeper insight into research on young people's experiences of sexual violence (such as Coleman and Ringrose, 2013).

Another critical historical development in research exploring creative methodological practices and sexual violence research is a seismic shift in moving away from the individual and less anthropocentric understandings of sexual violence itself (critical examples of this are, but are not limited to, Renold and Ringrose, 2019; 2016; Huuki & Renold, 2016; Renold

and Ivinson, 2015; Ivinson and Renold, 2013; Holford, Renold and Huuki, 2013). At the heart of the post-humanising of sexual violence is the direct connection and aim to capture emergent configurations of both human and beyond-human power manifestations and relations (Fox and Alldred, 2015; 2013). Drawing upon the contemporary conceptualisation of 'sexual violence assemblages' proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), specifically, it is these 'more-than-human' power relations that make creative methodological practices such an enticing option epistemically (Huuki and Renold, 2016; Renold and Ringrose, 2016b). Under this vein of thought, different creative methodological practices allow and even offer original onto-epistemological cartographies for the infusion of sexual violence in victim-survivors lives (Taylor and Hughes, 2016; Hughes and Lury, 2018), as well as allowing for the innovative examination of the relations victim-survivors may 'survive' and occasionally even 'transcend' (Renold, 2018: 39). It is the innovativeness of the arts that make them so attractive as they, by definition, encourage experimental engagement that is not so easily facilitated in traditional, non-creative means; thus they have been dubbed 'occurrent arts' (Grosz, 2008), for the simple reason that they are the place where inventiveness occurs (Massumi, 2011).

Photographs

Photographs have a significant history within social science research, particularly within the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Harper, 2002), although more recently, they have begun creeping into psychology (Bates, McCan, Kaye and Taylor, 2017) and education research (Newbury, 1996). This is perhaps because, in psychological research, the use of qualitative methods themselves is in the minority; despite them being employed since the dawn of modern psychology (Wertz, 2014), they were notably unpopular until the 1990s in a discipline with a longstanding history of quantitative methods (Rennie, Watson and Monterio, 2002). Photo-elicitation interviewing, or to be specific 'photo-interviews', was first employed in visual anthropology by Collier (1957) in a study exploring community mental health in Canada. Collier has written extensively on the use of images in visual anthropology, noting that "images invite people to take the lead in inquiry, making full use of their expertise," as well as allowing for more fluid interviewing than simply conducting verbal interviews (Collier and Collier, 1986: 105). Anthropologists such as Collier and Collier (1986), but also Grady (1996), Prosser and Schwartz (1998) advocated for photographs to be employed in a scientific framework, whilst contemporary ethnographers,

such as Pink (2007) steered away from this approach, instead preferred textual and photography to work harmoniously.

Photographs have also been utilised in sociology, particularly within sexual violence (Sinko et al., 2019). Desyllas (2013: 772) noted that for sex workers, in particular, "academic research is consistently being done *on* sex workers instead of *with* them," and arts-based research allowed for more empowering, shared knowledge generation. Desyllas (2013) utilised photographs to explore the lived experiences of sex workers, where they were tasked with capturing 36 photographs to represent their social world. There are also many other examples of research utilising photovoice specifically to explore violence and abuse (such as Moletsane et al., 2007; Frohman, 2005; Lykes, 2010; Haymore et al., 2012; Jatgaonkar and Ponic, 2011).

Photography, images and participant-made art as a research method

Photography within Visual ABR should be considered an art form in its own right (Leavy, 2015), but it is also a medium for capturing other visual images. An important distinction should be made between pictures and photographs; images refer to various representational forms, including artwork, drawings, cartoons, and even maps (Holm, 2014). Due to the broad array of representational forms it encompasses, 'images' within research open up a world of possibilities within research, as does photography (Holm, 2014; Knowles and Cole, 2008). Photography as a data collection method within the social sciences typically falls into two categories of usage: 1) illustration and 2) documentation (Holm, 2014). As this thesis focuses on illustration, it will be explored further.

Photographs are designed to capture and record the photographer's perspective; outsiders can quite literally see some aspects of the social world through the lens of the photographer (Leavy, 2015), grounded in truth and reality (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). Photographs can tap into more profound aspects of human understanding and convey meaning that words cannot encapsulate, thus facilitating knowledge translation (Harper, 2002). Art can offer "new routes to communicating beyond conventional boundaries" (Pink et al., 2010: 4). A critical differentiator between visual and more textual-based research centres around how they are experienced and how meaning is expressed (Reavy, 2011). "What is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in

visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of colour or different compositional structures and this will affect meaning. Expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 2). It is this 'difference' that is crucial to visual research (Holm, 2014), as often distinct data is obtained (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011).

Staged photographs are deliberately engineered to showcase how participants feel about their identity and place in the world (Booth and Booth, 2003). Here artists are in the driver's seat regarding how they represent identity and how they depict their feelings about the labels ascribed to them (Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). Subsequently, the process challenges established politics of representation by returning the balance of power to the victim-survivors' hands (Strack, Magill and McDonagh, 2004). Through the photographs created, we are invited to view victim-survivor identities through the same lens as the photographer and view the message they wish to convey (Ponic and Jatgaonkar, 2012). Although researchers need to take care of their influences on a situation when using staged photography, mainly if they arrange the scene (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Flick, 2002), this effect does not automatically influence the content of the photograph, particularly when artists are given complete creative control rather than relying on pictures composed by the researcher themselves (Hom, 2008). Photographs taken or created by artists themselves may provide the researcher insight into an area they may not have considered necessary (Warren and Karner, 2005).

However, increasingly, photography begins with the assumption that there is a clear intention behind capturing a photograph (Holm, Sahlström and Zilliacus, 2018). In a nutshell, the photographer is always motivated to take a photograph (Holm, 2008a). Most pointedly, photographs unbalanced understandings of 'truth' bound up with singular interpretations (Pink, 2005: 13; McQuire, 1998: 47). Rather, more accurately, 'reality' is a "negotiated version of reality' that researchers and artists offer their experience to (Pink, 2005: 20). This is because despite the photographer possessing specific motivations behind capturing a photograph, viewers and the audience themselves could have an entirely different interpretation due to their own distinct life experiences (Berger and Mohr, 2016). Thus, photograph interpretations are not predictable nor controllable (Holm, 2008a), making the context of production and understanding the photographer's motivations vital to avoid misinterpretation. Ambiguity is one of the most significant difficulties in using photography, especially when considering the idea of construction vs truth (Holm, 2014).

Due to this ambiguity, research including photographs is often used in tandem with photo-elicitation interviews, where photographs are used as prompts to 'unlock' or discover knowledge (Holm, 2008a) or can be used to gain an insight into the context of production (Sweetman, 2009).

It is perhaps also important to note that due to photography being considered both a medium of art and a representational form, there can be some cross-over or blurred boundaries with participant-made art. Participant-made art refers to any form of art artists made on a particular theme used as data within research, which can sometimes pre-select the mediums artists are required to use (Leavy, 2015). Therefore, we often see a blurring of boundaries within the use of photography with participant-made art, as artists may choose to use photography or video as a representational form for art they have created rather than a medium. This is certainly something that I had to navigate.

Photos and images required

The artists fit within two categories, which they self-identified as:

1) A person with lived experience of sexual assault
2) A person with professional experience working with individuals with lived experience of sexual violence

As acknowledged previously, there was likely to be some overlap between the two categories as professionals could occupy a dual identity, also identifying as someone with lived experience of sexual assault.

Both categories of artists were given the same task. Artists were asked to create and submit a minimum of two photographs. One photograph should be based around the word 'victim' and their understanding of the concept as applied to people with lived experience of sexual assault. The second photograph needed to be centred on the word 'survivor' and their understanding of the concept as applied to people with lived experience of sexual assault. Artists could use any visual art medium, but the final image should be a captured photograph. In several cases, this 'captured photograph' was adapted to include a series of images to serve as a narrative and short video clips to offer a 360-degree view of the participant-made art. As 'photography' was the representational form rather than the medium to be used, this flexibility was considered justifiable to capture artists' work fully.

Participant recruitment

I adopted a pragmatic approach to sampling, recruiting twenty-seven artists who identified as having lived experience of sexual assault and eleven artists who were professionals working on a day-to-day basis with victim-survivors of sexual violence. Again, both types of artists were recruited sequentially to account for the anticipated issue that professionals may identify as victim-survivors themselves. Research posters were used in all aspects of recruitment (see Appendix A).

Firstly, the research recruitment call was shared by various service providers, who acted as gatekeepers. The call sought professionals in the provision of sexual violence services, social workers, local councils and third-sector organisations focused on sexual violence and assault, as well as research networks that commonly advertised research participation, such as the Violence Against Women and Girls Network. Although it was not explicitly intended to recruit solely within the North-East and Yorkshire, it was helpful to draw upon pre-existing professional relationships, mainly due to the established difficulties in recruiting victim-survivors of sexual violence to participate in arts-based research (Desyllas, 2014). Gatekeepers were asked to disseminate research recruitment posters via social media and share information about the study through emails. It was imagined that gatekeepers might have felt pressure to participate, so if they expressed a desire to participate, three did; they were asked not to be involved in the study recruitment.

During Phases 2 and 3, fifteen additional artists were recruited using social media. I was very kindly allowed to write a blog post for one of my collaborative partners, Rape Crisis in Darlington and County Durham, in July (Hepworth, 2022), which I was able to share and disseminate to interested artists, as well as a small, private personal blog. This allowed artists to look over further information in the study privately, and two artists approached me to participate after reading these. With permission from group organisers, I also shared a variety of recruitment posters in private Facebook groups centred on sexual violence and intimate partner violence, as well as some activist groups focused on sexual violence.

Social media recruitment is naturally imperfect; Facebook users are traditionally considered younger than the average population (Daniels, 2016). This was why I endeavoured as much as possible not to rely solely on recruiting from social media and was able to recruit some artists over the age of fifty; however, I was unable to recruit artists over the age of sixty.

Whilst this was somewhat anticipated due to one of the recruitment criteria involving artists working with victim-survivors on a day-to-day basis, it had been hoped to avoid contributing to older people being excluded from research on sexual violence (see Bows, 2018).

Inclusivity of language was also essential in this study to avoid alienating people who may have a clear preference for 'victim' or 'survivor.' As a result, I refrained entirely from using the terms 'victim,' 'survivor,' or 'victim-survivor'. I asked all gatekeepers to do the same, only using the term 'people with lived experience of sexual violence' or 'people who have experienced sexual violence.'

Inclusion criteria

In terms of inclusion criteria, artists had to meet the following requirements:

- They had to be at least eighteen years old
- They either must self-identify as a victim-survivor of sexual violence, or they must identify as a professional who works on a day-to-day basis with victim-survivors of sexual assault.
- They must not have experienced a sexual assault less than twelve months before participating.

Here, 'sexual assault' was used rather than the umbrella term of sexual violence. It was self-identification, so this was left up to the artists' interpretation. Still, when asked by potential participants, I used the statutory definition outlined in the 2003 Sexual Offences Act. It was also anticipated that artists may have had multiple, differing experiences of sexual violence, hence why it was felt essential to leave this down to self-identification. Timing about the victimisation event is vital, as minimising the risk of harm is critical to any ethical research protocol. Still, it becomes imperative in research with victim-survivors of trauma (McClain and Amar, 2013). If it is in too close proximity, victim-survivors of trauma may not have the emotional energy to recount their experiences. Therefore, a reasonable amount of time should have passed before the research (Cowles, 1988). This notion of 'reasonable time' is quite ambiguous, particularly as literature examining whether participation in research within the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event is ethical for victim-survivors of sexual violence makes suggestions that this can be done if needed (for example, Campbell,

Goodman-Williams and Javorka, 2019). However, given that the focus was not on the immediate aftermath, and with the added emotional dimension of participating in arts-based research, a more cautious approach was taken within twelve months.

In one case, a participant did express that their experience of sexual assault had happened ten and a half months prior; as it was early in the research process, I invited them to re-enter contact with me if they still wished to participate, which they did two months later. Also, in terms of safeguarding and the specific production context of this study, artists could not reside at the same address as their abuser. This was to minimise the potential risk of causing harm to artists if their participation in the study was discovered, particularly with the possible element of artists producing art.

In tandem with this, there is also a debate or grey area on how broadly inclusive research into professionals working with victim-survivors should be encapsulated (Kadambi and Ennis, 2004). Most researchers tend to allow for the inclusion of professionals working in a variety of different fields, including those in social work, health care, counselling (Jirek, 2015), voluntary (Walker, 2007), police and criminal justice sectors (Sands, Westerman and Blankenau, 2023). However, there are some differences in how directly professionals work with victim-survivors, with some sector workers encountering them frequently but in broader clinical or healthcare contexts, such as mental health professionals and substance abuse workers (Anderson and Overby, 2020). Thus, the inclusion was kept deliberately broad to self-defined professionals, with the caveat that they must work in a professional capacity on a day-to-day basis with people who have experienced sexual violence.

Participant demographics

Perhaps not the most creative mechanism, but due to the complexity of the methodology, a table giving an overview of the demographic information of both sets of artists was felt the most effective and beneficial. Still, a full breakdown of participants' demographic information can be found in Appendix B:

Participant Demographics

CATEGORY	VICTIM-SURVIVOR	PROFESSIONAL
GENDER	FEMALE: 21 NON-BINARY: 2 MALE: 4	FEMALE: 10 MALE: 1
SEXUALITY	HETEROSEXUAL: 19 BISEXUAL: 3 GAY/ QUEER: 3	HETEROSEXUAL: 9 GAY/ QUEER: 3
AGE	18-19: 4 20S: 17 30S: 3 40S: 1 50S: 2	20S: 6 30S: 4 40S: 2
ETHNICITY	BLACK: 3 WHITE: 20 ASIAN: 2 LATINX: 1 MIXED: 1	BLACK: 1 WHITE: 8 MIDDLE EASTERN: 1 MIXED: 2
CLASS	WORKING: 16 MIDDLE: 10 UPPER-MIDDLE: 1	WORKING: 7 MIDDLE: 5
NEURODIVERSITY/ DISABILITY	YES: 9 NO: 18	YES: 4 NO: 8

Figure 7 – Summary of Participants' demographic information

Artists' terminology and self-definitions were used when capturing their demographic characteristics, and the identity they supplied was used. To avoid taking for granted omissions, artists were asked follow-up questions if they identified as cis-gendered; where two artists expressed a substantial lack of identity with this term, it was not used to respect their wishes. In the cases of disability, two artists in the professionals' category did disclose having a disability. However, they felt that this could create a possibility where they may be identified, particularly as quite a lot of identity markers were being disclosed. Thus, the term 'yes but redacted' was used, and their disabilities were not mentioned to protect anonymity.

The vast majority of artists are cis-gendered, heterosexual females under the age of forty, particularly amongst the professionals category, female artists (n= 23). However, in terms of class and disability, artists were more diverse. There was also a good amount of variation in the background of the professionals, given the smaller sample size.

Individual dialogue sessions

All artists were invited to participate in an individual dialogue session with the researcher before participating in the research. These sessions took place in whatever format the artists felt was most comfortable and practical, either in person in a public place, over a telephone conversation, or via an online video call using Microsoft Teams. Sessions, on the whole, took less than half an hour, during which the researcher checked that artists fit the inclusion criteria, went over the participant information sheet, and answered any questions artists had about participating.

A typical contractual model of consent is not equipped to deal with the complex situation of researching violence and abuse (Mcnutt et al., 2008), nor are artists in ABR able to give fully informed consent at the beginning of their research journey due to several complexities unique to this methodological genre. These include copyright, ownership, confidentiality, the use of external artists and dissemination. All of these issues will be addressed separately in later sections. Due to these tensions and obstacles, negotiation and communication throughout the research process are paramount. Thus, a negotiated authorisation approach to consent was utilised. Negotiated authorisation refers to researchers seeking consent from artists at multiple stages of the research process, particularly at the end of data collection with artists, to account for the changing nature of their consent (Howitt and Stevens, 2005). In this case, it allows artists to consent to their final agreed photographs and usage of their artwork rather than hypothetically agreeing to participate. For instance, if a participant wished to use their artwork for another purpose, artists were asked to sign consent forms for the first time during an individual dialogue session. They were reminded that they could withdraw at any stage of the research process. They were also informed that further consent would be sought once their photographs had been produced.

Individual dialogue sessions ended when the next steps for creating their photographs had been agreed upon. Five possible outcomes were agreed upon:

1) Artists were unsure of what they wished their photos to be
2) Artists wished to make their photographs
3) Artists wished for the researcher or an external person to create their photographs

4) Artists wished to make one of their photographs but wished for the other to be created by an external person.

5) Artists wished to use at least one existing image.

It varied regarding how sure artists were about what they wanted their photographs to be during the Individual Dialogue Session. Where artists were unsure about their photographs (three artists in all), an agreed-upon amount of contemplation time was determined. This was usually five days or a week. Once this time was up, the researcher contacted the artists, and the production method was agreed upon.

When artists wished to produce both photographs independently (two cases total), a date was set for a follow-up photo-elicitation interview, a date that artists felt they would give time to produce their photographs. Where artists wanted complete independence, it was granted apart from the agreement with the researcher of any safety concerns and practicalities, such as the reimbursement for materials. For example, one participant wished to capture a photograph of themselves screaming underwater but was asked to modify their idea due to concerns for their physical welfare. Artists creating their photographs independently were not required to attend a creative briefing session. Instead, communication was conducted via email with me.

Typically, most artists requested assistance from their researchers to varying degrees with their photographs. The overwhelming reason for this was concerns about artists' artistic abilities, such as being unable to embroider, sew, draw or paint to a self-described high enough aesthetic standard for their vision. Upon occasion, practical reasons were also cited, such as time constraints, space and cleanliness concerns, or not wanting art pieces in their physical spaces due to other residents in their property (for example, one participant lived in a multiple-occupancy shared house and did not want her flatmates to know she identified as a victim-survivor, and another participant did not want distressing art around her children).

In one case, a participant wished to use existing images for their chosen photographs, with minor textual modifications. Once it was established that the participant previously took and currently owned the copyright for the entire image, consent was obtained for usage (see Appendix C). Then, a date for a follow-up photo-elicitation interview was agreed upon. The participant independently made the modifications they required to the image, which was completed before their follow-up interview.

Creative briefing sessions

Creative briefing sessions were used when the participant was not independently creating their photographs or using pre-existing images. This was except for three artists, all of whom had very firm or concrete ideas about their pictures and the production process, which for practical reasons were agreed upon during the individual dialogue sessions, where I followed up with any minor questions, such as checking shades of colours or exact items to purchase over email, as an entire meeting was not necessary.

Creative briefing sessions within this study entailed a video call or telephone conversation to establish and negotiate every element of the production process. Calls all lasted under an hour, but most extended beyond twenty minutes. Each image was discussed individually in these sessions. Discussions started with establishing the exact nature of what the participant wished the final photograph to look like; this included:

- What would be shown/ on display in the image?
- What is the focal point?
- What does the participant explicitly wish to convey aesthetically? For example, if text is involved, should it be quickly readable?
- What mediums should be used?
- Does a piece of art need to be created as part of the image? If so, practically and aesthetically, what should this entail?
- What materials are needed for the image? How should they be used?
- Does anyone need to be visible in the image? If so, should a model be used?

Once I had a better insight into the image, it could be negotiated with the participant about whether it was within my specific skill set. I do not personally identify as an artist. Still, I have a strong background and experience in making clothing and embroidery, so there were a few instances where I could make several of the photographs. For example, one participant requested a custom dress to be made, and several art pieces involved elements of complicated sewing or simple crafts (such as glueing on sequins or painting with stencils) that I could achieve.

With images considered beyond my and the artists' artistic capabilities to truly capture their aesthetic vision, it was agreed that an external artist would be commissioned for their

visions. This occurred in three instances for three images. This is discussed in full detail in the next section. However, regarding the creative briefing sessions, the process of how the researcher would go about the recruitment and selection process for an external artist was established and agreed upon with each of the three individuals.

Critically, no artists were given any stimulus materials, not verbally or pictorially. They were not directly provided with any stimuli or directed to any resources that could have potentially influenced them. Whilst artists can access source material that may function as stimuli, none was given by the researcher. Research has found that visual representation and pictorial stimuli can have significant impacts on replicating commonly-held stereotypes for artists in violence and abuse research (for example, Schwark and Bohner, 2019). This decision was also chosen to avoid the trap of aesthetics or artfulness that stimulus materials could potentially exacerbate.

Artistic power or 'artfulness' is considered at the heart of ABR (Chilton and Leavy, 2014; Barone and Eisner, 2012; Patton, 2002). This aesthetic power is often inextricably bound and impossible to disentangle from audience response and artistic usefulness (Leavy, 2017). Art has been described as creating an emotional connection between the artist and the audience, who engage with the creative work (Holm, Sahlstrom and Zilliacus, 2017). A core component of artistic power is cohesion and coherence, which are tied to comprehension (Barone and Eisner, 2012); however, artfulness can also be bound by aesthetic quality (Saldana, 2011). For example, researchers have to think like artists (Bochner and Ellis, 2003) and receive training in the art form they are working with (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2014). Researchers must pay "attention to the craft of the artistic practices used with usefulness in mind and creating evocative, provocative, illuminating and sensory representations of findings" (Leavy, 2011: 121). Thus, in some ways, aesthetic power helps improve the credibility of ABR through the ability to interpret, which evokes an emotional response and connects with the audience (Barone and Eisner, 2012).

Yet 'usefulness' being tied with an artistic quality creates a slippery slope that gives more weight and importance to art included in research that has higher aesthetic quality. This can develop standards that are incredibly high for some artists to meet and could significantly limit specific people from accessing arts-based research, which negates one of the main strengths of artistic inquiry (Finley, 2008). To be clear, aesthetic power is not solely derived from art that is considered highly skilful or solely uses complex techniques;

this would be a rather simplistic, one-dimensional assertion. Instead, skill is determined by the ability to utilise aesthetic elements in research to showcase an emotional experience or message the artist wishes to convey (Leavy, 2015). However, this evaluative criteria centred on usefulness amid aesthetic quality raises concerns, as people with high levels of artistic training in specific forms are more likely to meet this criterion, which could reinforce hierarchies of social privilege (Finely, 2011, 2003). It is a tricky tightrope to walk. This is because if art does not hold artistic power through not working as a piece of art, then it does not meet the standards that the method was chosen for (Leavy, 2017). So, researchers must give "attention to aesthetic quality" (Cole and Knowles, 2008: 66) or "paying attention to the craft" (Leavy, 2011: 121).

The easiest way to navigate the tightrope is to not exclude artists from participating in artistic inquiry regardless of their background. Instead, where artists feel they do not have the creative skills or levels of training in the representational form chosen, the researchers can fill the necessary art gaps (Leavy, 2011). Alternatively, where the researcher cannot do this themselves, they can work with skilled external artists outside the research team (Lafreniere and Cox, 2012; Finely, 2011).

Production of participant-made and researcher-made art

Any art pieces to be included in the final images were produced before photo-taking. Artists were compensated for any materials they already had for an agreed amount; for instance, one participant wanted to use a well-worn white tank top specifically, so she was compensated for using her pre-existing one to allow her to purchase a replacement. In addition, any materials purchased for producing art and images were also either compensated afterwards or purchased directly by myself. Artists were allowed to keep items or materials not featured in the photo, such as leftover paint.

A noteworthy complexity within this research centred around the significant time lapses between the creative briefing sessions and the final production stage (the actual photo taking). This is because several images included elements of either participant-made art or art produced by the researcher, where some pieces required the sourcing of materials, or the production itself of the art was quite time-consuming. For example, one participant's image involved the researcher hand-gluing over five thousand two mm rhinestones onto a pair of heeled shoes, and it took over two months to produce the focal point needed before the

photo-taking could take place. In instances where the sourcing/ acquiring of materials or creating art by myself took over two weeks, artists were given weekly updates via email so they were kept informed of the stages of production. In places where participant-made art would take longer than two weeks, I emailed artists to remind them to reach out if they needed further support or more materials.

Working with and recruiting external artists

All artists were allowed in their dialogue sessions to have an external artist produce an element of their photograph or image if they felt they did not have the artistic ability to achieve their chosen vision. Again, to avoid issues of aesthetic quality bound with usefulness and stimulus material traps, this was relayed to artists very open-endedly. Artists were informed that an external artist with experience working with that medium could be specifically recruited if they wished to create an image involving an unfamiliar medium. This also prevented artists from feeling as if they needed to fit their ideas for a photo or photograph into the capabilities of an external artist, for example, if the researcher had given them a list of external artists' profiles.

Three artists did request the use of an external artist. Due to the emotional nature of topics, particularly as all three artistic briefs were quite visceral and potentially triggering for the external artists themselves, they were recruited on a volunteer basis via advertising in a Facebook group for students of Durham University and an advert on the researcher's personal Facebook account. The advert described the participant's artistic brief, so the external artist was aware of the art content they would be required to produce before expressing an interest. External artists who expressed interest were asked to provide images of previous work in the same medium requested in the creative brief, mainly if they had any work fitting the artistic style outlined in the brief. All expressions of interest were passed onto the artists, who then chose which external artists they wished to create their art. Once the external artist was selected, the researcher agreed on a deadline with the external artist for when the work had to be produced and requested an estimated cost of materials for the external artist and roughly how long, in hours, the piece would take to create. All artists were given the choice of whether they wished to communicate directly with the external artist, but all three preferred not to. The external artists' material costs were covered before the pieces were created, particularly given that two of the external artists were university students. External artists were asked not to make any artistic

decisions themselves and to adhere strictly to the creative brief; they could come to the researcher if they had any questions. Two external artists who created painted canvases sketched initial designs, which were sent to artists for their approval and minor amendments were made. The other external artist, creating a drawing, sent a picture of her work when she completed the outline for approval.

Once the final pieces were created, the researcher organised the collection (in two cases) or the delivery (in one case) of the three pieces. Upon receipt of the pieces, the external artists' time was reimbursed, and they were asked to sign a form requesting that they not share any images of the work they had created until after the publication of the thesis (see Appendix D). As the external artists were specifically commissioned for the thesis and paid for their work, it was agreed that the ownership of the art would belong to the researcher.

Photo-taking and editing

Photo-taking here specifically refers to the actual capturing of the final image itself. Photographs were either captured by the artists themselves, by myself as the researcher, or, in a handful of cases, by both participant and researcher.

When the artists themselves captured photographs, they were then edited by the artists if they felt capable of doing so. If this occurred, the final agreed image was sent to the researcher. In most cases, however, artists sent raw files to be edited by the researcher. Here, I asked what kind of effect the participant wanted to be applied to their photograph, or if they were unsure, what they hoped the final image would look like, and then I sent them multiple options for their brief. This continued until artists signed off on the final image.

A similar process occurred when the researcher took photographs. The researcher requested to keep all items visible in pictures to allow for recreations if necessary if artists were not satisfied with the final image. I produced the photos according to the participant's instructions and then sent the raw files with as little editing as possible. Then, artists briefed me on what editing they would like applied to their photographs; this was fulfilled until artists signed off on the final image.

In the five instances where the participant and I completed the photograph together, four of these involved me meeting up with the participant in an agreed location. One further

example occurred when I produced the picture whilst video-calling a participant because, due to the practicalities of the photograph, neither of us knew how effective it would be. We had limited supplies (the photograph involved dissolving sleeping pills within the liquid). Here, we had pre-arranged a time for the production of the picture. The participant and I met in pre-agreed locations for the other four artists, with the materials and supplies discussed in our creative briefing, producing the photographs together. The locations were a beach, a classroom, within a wood and by a river.

For all artists once the final versions of the photographs were agreed upon, artists were invited to a follow-up photo elicitation interview. Artists who created photographs but no longer wished to participate or did not attend a follow-up interview were considered withdrawn, and their data was not included. All three approaches provide artists with the liberty and agency to either take photographs or have photographs created on their terms, allowing them to maintain both their safety and anonymity should they wish to do so (Ponic and Jatgaonkar, 2012). This is vital when conducting arts-based research, as outlined in ethical considerations.

Photo-elicitation interviews

Rationale

Although images can be considered direct sources of knowledge, production is essential if we accept that the output context can reveal considerable insight into the photographer's intentions and motivations for capturing the image (Holm, Sahlstrom and Zillacus, 2017). This is particularly relevant given that images are culturally constructed and embedded in social reality (Huss, 2012). Thus, through engaging in a complex process of image-making (photo-taking) and photo-interpretation, more understanding can be gained from making sense of images. The photos themselves, in isolation, cannot solely provide insight; instead, the meaning artists ascribe to them can generate a much deeper insight (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman and Ragland, 2018).

To strip photo-elicitation interviewing back to its core, it is the "simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper, 2002: 13). The starkest difference between traditional qualitative interviewing and phot-elicitation is that standard interviewing concentrates on words alone, whilst photo-elicitation seeks to examine two other forms of symbolic representation (Harper, 2002). Physically, it is believed that different parts of the

brain process visual and verbal information; therefore, images often pull at more profound elements of human cognisance than words do (Schwartz, 1989). Thus, when included in interviewing, artists may have more visceral or vivid emotional responses to visual stimuli (Copes et al., 2018).

The term 'photo-elicitation' was first used in Anthropology by John Collier (1957), although it has distinctive uses in visual sociology. The most commonly used is also one of the most historic, such as by Wagner (1978), who utilised photographs as stimuli within an interview setting. However, it must be noted that these approaches consider photo elicitation as a tool to use photographs within standard research interviews (Harper, 2000), where it can be viewed as an independent research method of collecting data (Copes et al., 2018). Thus, photo-elicitation interviewing has two apparent variations: 1) research-driven, such as previously highlighted examples, and 2) participant-driven (Samuels, 2004).

Participant-driven photo-elicitation refers to interviewing where artists provide the images that the interviews are built around. Thus, they actively guide data generation (Frohmann, 2005; Jansen and Rae Davis, 1998). In line with feminist epistemological aims, there is a seismic shift in the power dynamics between the researcher and artists, where artists can define what is considered necessary "to reduce the researcher bias embedded in the selection of specific images, subjects and themes used in the interviews" (Lapenta, 2011: 206). Thus, participant-driven photo-elicitation interviews allow researchers to privilege marginalised voices when attaching meaning to photographs (Ponic and Jatgaonkar, 2012). This is primarily because, within unstructured photo-elicitation interviewing, artists have far more control than in a normative interview setting as they guide the discussion and create the structure for what is discussed and in what order (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

Importantly, this diversion from researcher-driven photo-creation and elicitation helps fuel the empowerment of artists but also encourages creativity even within the interview process itself (Rumpf, 2016). Moreover, it can help cement rapport between researchers and artists, and this is of particular benefit when conducting research with historically marginalised populations, such as victim-survivors of sexual assault. This is because artists can give researchers an insight into their lives or aspects of their identity they wish to highlight (Harper, 2002), often resulting in more in-depth responses (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman and Ragland, 2018).

Ethics and Challenges

Whilst previous sections have briefly mentioned ethical considerations, this specific section will focus on addressing these concerns fully. After all, "creative methods can never be an excuse for unethical, sloppy or self-indulgent research," instead, arts-based researchers still need to maintain good research practices and conduct procedures ethically throughout their research journey (Kara, 2015:22). Ethics can often be fuelled by concern, rather than care for artists due to precedence being afforded to the management and negotiation of risks and harms (Romm, 2020). Ethical approval was obtained from Durham University (granted in November 2021), a risk assessment was conducted before the recruitment of artists, and a complete data management plan was created, mainly due to the anticipated sensitivity of the data collected.

Traditional ethical practices have been described as 'procedural ethics' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) due to a concentration on creating and maintaining ethical procedures and standards (Romm, 2020). However, due to the unpredictability of ABR practices, ethics have been considered situational and relational (as suggested by Rutanen and Vehkalahti, 2019). To achieve this, reflexive sensitivity was employed throughout the research process, not just at the ethical review stage (Graham and Powell, 2016; Hesse-Biber and Piatelli, 2012). This was because whilst there are some very clear ethical absolutes, such as researchers cannot cause or subject their artists to harm (Kara, 2015), researchers can't pre-empt every ethical dilemma they may encounter (Bowtell et al., 2013). Thus, reflexive practices become necessary in consistently reviewing ethical decisions as the research process shifts and evolves (Iphofen, 2011). Ethical considerations were explicitly negotiated throughout the three main stages of data collection: participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis.

Trauma and informed consent

Since the Belmont Report (1979), social science research has dictated key considerations for respecting artists, operating beneficence, and advocating for justice. Yet, this can create a challenge for any research involving people with lived experiences of trauma. Although a contested issue, generally, literature exploring trauma-informed research practices suggests that post-traumatic experiences can create difficulties for those with lived experience to

grapple with complicated information, and this can, in turn, impact decision-making (for example, see Cuevas et al., 2019; Kozlowska et al., 2015).

The need to obtain informed consent from artists is another key ethical absolute that is vital for valuing artists' autonomy. Edwards (2010:160) noted four conditions that needed to be acknowledged and present for a person to be considered as having given consent: 1) the person must have been provided with the necessary information to make a decision, 2) they must be mentally able to decide to participate, 3) this decision must be able to be made freely without coercion or pressure, and 4) the final decision must involve the intention to participate. These conditions needed to be met for artists to give consent; however, contractual ethical models can be problematic in ABR, mainly when the topic matter is sensitive, and artists have lived experiences of sexual violence, so they come under the banner of 'vulnerable.'

Creativity in obtaining informed consent can be an essential aspect of research (Kara, 2015), mainly when conducting ABR, due to problems with contractual ethical models. It is often impossible for researchers to obtain informed consent at the beginning of the study, as artists cannot judge in what capacity they give permission, so consent should be ongoing throughout the research process (Wiles et al., 2012; Pauwels, 2008). As a result, I adopted an ongoing consent procedure greatly inspired by Ponic and Jategaonkar's (2012) photovoice research with women with lived experience of sexual violence.

On the whole, most research surrounding violence and abuse is usually considered 'sensitive'; subsequently, artists with lived experience of sexual violence are ordinarily categorised as vulnerable. In terms of violence and abuse, this is due to the element of research exploring personal experiences that could lead to potential harm for artists who may encounter emotional distress (Lee and Renzetti, 1990). However, this has been strongly contested, particularly as qualitative research related to trauma can have an advantageous ratio of cost vs benefits (Draucker, 1999). Newman and Cromer (2011: 1537) also heeded caution of viewing trauma survivors within research as "too fragile to give informed consent or participate" as this blanketly assumes that all trauma survivors have post-traumatic stress disorder, thus require additional protections and special procedures, which is not the case. It also leads to 'vulnerability' becoming an ambiguous term (ibid), particularly given that considering victim-survivors of sexual violence as 'vulnerable' raises questions about their ability to make decisions in consenting to research, especially in terms of viewing them

as unable to understand the risks associated with participation (Downes, Kelly and Westmarland, 2014).

Informed consent in research with people with lived experience of trauma can be a double-edged sword. In one dimension, I had to be cautious of downplaying or neglecting the risks that participating in violence and abuse research can bring, as discussions of past traumatic events can have negative consequences for individuals. This also has the added dimension of ABR, bringing a significant visual component that could trigger further for artists. However, it cannot be an automatic assumption that research participation is solely negative, mainly as victim-survivors should be considered active agents. Thus, a research procedure was designed to empower artists wherever possible and ensure a comprehensive safety protocol, elaborated below.

Ongoing consent procedure

To ensure that artists had the necessary information to decide to participate, artists were provided with a detailed information sheet and initial consent form (see Appendix C). The information sheet invited artists to participate in the research project and clearly outlined the purposes of the thesis, why they had been asked to participate and the stages of the research. As a result, it was clearly outlined to artists what would be involved and emphasised that they could withdraw later in the research process, even if their photographs had been created or materials sourced.

Artists were not required to sign consent forms at this stage; they only gave verbal consent to proceed to the next stage, an individual dialogue session. Once verbal consent was obtained, artists were invited to attend an individual dialogue session with me, and photo production began. All artists had to participate in a personal dialogue session in person or via an online video call, whichever format they felt more comfortable doing. During the individual dialogue sessions, artists could ask any questions they wished, and it also allowed me to be reassured that they felt comfortable participating beyond simply signing a consent form. For any artists who withdrew at this stage (six across both victim-survivors and professionals), I did not create their photographs, nor was their data included in data collection.

However, for artists to make a final decision with intention, I felt that artists needed to see their final photographs to make a fully informed decision. After their photographs were completed, I also sought verbal consent for their approved photographs to be used and their participation in a subsequent photo-elicitation interview. For artists who withdrew at this stage (both victim-survivors and professionals), their photographs were not released to the researcher, and their photographs and any data were not included in data collection.

Upon completing photo-elicitation interviews, I asked each participant which of their completed photographs could be 'released' to me and for what purpose they could be used. It was explained to artists that any part of the interview transcript related to the chosen photograph would also be released to the researcher if the associated photograph was allowed. The word 'release' was deliberately selected here, as it was vital that artists felt they owned the photographs (and associated/ depicted artworks) produced, even if they were not the person physically creating them. Of the 78 photos gathered, all three of the photographs were released for data analysis purposes. As both belonged to the same participant, this was treated as a withdrawal, and the participant's data was removed entirely.

Additional purposes were also requested for a) potential publication in an academic journal or book, b) an exhibition in the local community (North East), c) an exhibition in the local communities of partner organisations (North East and West Yorkshire), d) a national exhibition. This allowed for the fact that in ABR, sometimes artists are happy for their photographs to be used for data analysis but feel uncomfortable with their usage in publication (Holm, 2014). It was agreed with artists that external artists involved in the research would not display any of the artwork they had produced from artists in physical or online spaces, nor would photographs be exhibited in an online capacity outside of an official publication due to potential challenges surrounding copyright and manipulation. All photographs bar one were released for publication (a), and four were not released for all other outputs (b-d). Specific approval for release was considered vital for artists to be able to give fully informed consent, given the personal nature of photographs and the potential for artists to be identified.

After this discussion, artists were asked to complete a comprehensive consent form, a photo-release form and a data agreement (Appendix C). Any artists who chose to appear in their photographs would have been asked to fill in a further form agreeing to this due to the

added dimension of the consensual break in anonymity, though none chose to do so (Appendix E). This procedure was specifically designed to maximise participant autonomy and safety, ensuring artists could consistently consider the risks and rewards associated with participation. In addition, artists were consenting to data in its final form rather than consenting to hypothetical data, again maximising autonomy.

Mitigating risk given the subject matter

Whilst ethical considerations really should be of primary concern for any research, due to the sensitive subject matter, research with people with lived experience of sexual violence has additional concerns not present when conducting research with nonvictimised individuals (Zeoli and Logan, 2019). It is perhaps fair to say that there is a consensus that sexual violence can have an overwhelmingly negative impact on victim-survivors' mental well-being and health (Dworkin et al., 2017). Researchers operating in this field must be attuned to the myriad of ways that victim-survivors may also have negative experiences post-assault from support agencies, service providers and external organisations (Smith and Freyd, 2013; Campell, 2008). For instance, 'secondary victimisation' can occur when researchers and service providers approach victim-survivors with blame or scepticism (Campbell and Raja, 1999). Thus, researchers must always be mindful of this and treat artists with care and compassion (Campbell, Goodman-Williams and Javorka, 2019; Campbell and Raja, 2005). In tandem, they should do everything possible to minimise re-traumatisation risks.

To create an empowerment-centred approach, artists were referred to exclusively by either their preferred name or, when not possible, were described as an 'artist' rather than a person with lived experience of sexual violence. This was instead of alternatives such as 'victim,' 'survivor,' 'victim-survivor,' 'service provider' or 'professional.' This, of course, also ensured that no primacy or favouritism was shown for a victim or survivor identity; it also ensured that artists felt empowered throughout their research as their lived experience of violence did not take primacy in their identity. In addition, it was designed to help contribute to attempting to make participation in research a more positive experience. Violence and abuse literature examining ethics has documented how empirical research with victim-survivors with conscientious self-reflective ethical practices can become a positive and sometimes even

a healing experience for artists (Campell, Goodman-Williams and Javorka, 2019) through sharing their past experiences (Campbell et al., 2008).

Managing participant distress

A fundamental difficulty with arts-based research is that occasionally, the researcher does not have direct contact with artists throughout data collection in the same manner as they would during in-person interviews, as artists' reactions to studies' procedures are not always witnessed. For instance, if a participant chooses to create a piece of art independently, the researcher is not present to witness reactions and manage them in the way they can be within an interview. Therefore, creating an atmosphere of respect and safety from the beginning of the research process was vital. To do this, artists were given access to what was described to them as a 'resource support bank' (see Appendix F). This resource support bank was essentially information and contact details for various support services nationally and regionally, where artists could receive support if desired. Whilst the details of the partner organisations were included, it was also my deliberate intention to include the contact details of external agencies as well in case artists wished to separate the two, particularly in case service providers worked at these said organisations (and they did feature in the participant pool). Furthermore, whilst designing the resource support bank, careful consideration was given to potential artists' needs and identities, specifically in the context of potential obstacles to them seeking support or barriers to accessing resources. As a result, services that offered specifically targeted support for male, LGBTQ+, disabled, culturally and ethnic-specific victim-survivors were included.

If a participant showed any signs of distress, either during any photo-dialogue sessions, during photo production or during the follow-up photo-elicitation interviews, I approached this by showing concern and empathy for artists in a manner suitable to the boundaries of a researcher (approaches suggested by Morse et al., 2008). This was done by following the protocols I designed to respond to participant distress. These protocols included providing artists with the resource support bank at every point of contact, requesting artists showing signs of distress for a short break to allow them to re-centre themselves (Hardesty, Haselschwerdt and Crossman, 2019), and showing empathy. For instance, using active listening techniques and expressing compassion when artists show signs of distress allowed me to validate victim-survivors' feelings, which can validate their resilience in negotiating trauma (Campbell, Goodman, Williams and Javorka, 2019). To achieve this, all artists,

regardless of whether they visibly showed signs of distress, were also offered resources that specifically focused on aiding victim-survivor recovery from trauma, which they could explore if they wished (see Appendix F). These self-help guides offered simple, easy-to-follow strategies or coping mechanisms victim-survivors could use if experiencing negative thoughts and emotions. Providing resources focused on aiding victim-survivor recovery beyond simply the focuses of the research environment has been shown to cement a compassionate atmosphere between artists and researchers (Campbell, Adams, Wasco, Ahrens and Self, 2010), thus making participants feel included in the research.

Reducing power imbalances

This study utilised a methodological framework to address and reduce power imbalances between the artist and me as the researcher. Now, I am not assuming that simply adopting arts-based research will stamp out and prevent any ethical issues about power imbalances; after all, power imbalances stem from gender, ethnicity and class differences (Kara, 2015). After all, even though I identify as a feminist researcher, my own experiences of oppression do not automatically result in me understanding other females' experiences of oppression (Mason, 2002). So, to help try to alleviate power imbalances, a flexible approach to participation was offered to artists. A flexible approach to participation provides artists with choices in the level of involvement they can have in the research process to allow them to have options that better meet their needs (McCarry, 2012). As illustrated in the outlining of the research procedure, artists were able to determine the number of photographs produced and their level of involvement in the producing of their photographs, giving them options not only in terms of their actual time commitment given but also their potential exposure to sensitive materials and recalling potentially painful experiences. For example, offering artists the option for me or an external artist to produce their photograph or artwork ensured that no participant was excluded based on physical disability. In addition, artists could also choose whether they wished to have props or materials that could be pretty distressing in their home environment, allowing them to distance themselves if preferred. As full participation can be quite arduous for vulnerable artists, giving artists choices about levels of participation is essential (Gillard et al., 2012).

Dual ethic: ABR

It has been suggested that arts-based research demands dualistic ethical considerations: 1) research ethics, as does all research, but also uniquely, and 2) the ethics of authenticity (Leavy, 2009; Park, 2004). Thus, several ethical challenges come into play in ABR, particularly regarding authorship and ownership, anonymity and confidentiality, representation, and research using art to explore sensitive topics. Cox et al. (2016) noted that ethical issues are often interrelated when conducting visual methods research.

Authorship and ownership

When producing arts-based research, particularly in visual and participant-made pieces, the question arises of who owns the work. Lafrenière, Cox, Belliveau and Lea (2013) consider this debate about ownership in ABR as a three-fold question with three potential outcomes: owners could be the research participant, the external artist (if using an external artist) or the researcher. The research featured the work of three external artists, who created pieces to artists' specific briefs (for more details, return to the working with external artists sections). When external artists' were recruited, it was made explicitly clear what the topic of the research was and the requirements for working on the specific art piece; external artists were given the creative brief in advance before agreeing to the commission and were given the space to contact me with any questions. They were also paid per hour for how long the piece took, at an agreed-upon rate, and reimbursed for all variable costs associated with producing the piece of art, including contributions towards materials already owned that were used, such as paint. External artists were also required to sign a confidentiality agreement, agreeing not to disclose their contribution to the project, release the artwork to the participant, and not share images of the artwork they had produced publicly. This was to ensure that the participant owned the artwork. It was considered most ethical for the artwork to be owned by the participant; then, the participant could release the artwork to the researcher like other artists who created it. This minimised the risk of power imbalances and allowed artists to give fully informed consent for the artwork created for their creative briefs to be used.

Photographs also have an added dimension of ownership and copyright (Pink, 2007), mainly due to the variety of ways photographs can be shared and the formats they can take. As artists who take photographs, participants often view them as their photographs. Thus,

research should be considered as co-production (Holm, 2014). This is similar to all ABR, where researchers must be mindful of 'fuzzy boundaries,' where due to co-production, artists in ABR may become more invested in the data beyond the typical role of a research participant (Gubrium, Hill and Flicker, 2014; Gubrium, Fiddian-Green, Hill, 2016). Art can also hold personal meanings for artists that they may not express to the researcher (Holm, 2008). As a result, all artists were provided with copies of their photographs to increase their feeling of ownership, and all artists had to sign photo-release forms to the researcher (see Appendix D).

Representation and authenticity

ABR also has the added complexity of raising unique questions around representation and authenticity, where, if not respected, ethical issues can arise (Dush, 2013). Typically, tensions arise from conflicting, paradoxical aims of the need to mitigate the potential of misrepresentation but also the aim to create data that has aesthetic quality and, in some cases, even audience appeal (Gubrium et al., 2014). As Scully (2008) suggested, the easiest way to circumvent this is to operate faithfully to artists' experiences. I gave artists complete creative control over whether they wanted to produce a participant-made piece of art, create a staged photograph, or capture a photograph, thus allowing them to use whichever medium they liked. This ensured that the priority of the research was not to produce photographs with high artistic quality but to produce aesthetically meaningful images for the participants. Moreover, artists were only allowed to use an external artist if they specifically expressed that they did not feel capable of producing their desired image, and the researcher was not able to, therefore avoiding the 'external artist' suggesting that their work should have high artistic quality. Artists could also choose the title of their work, further handing them creative control. They were also intensely involved in the editing process; thus, they maintained control of the final product.

Using photo-elicitation interviews also minimised the risk of misrepresenting photographs, as the researcher was not left to make inferences or assumptions about the final images. Still, the artists themselves could tell the stories behind their artwork. This is highly important in the context of this study, as victim-survivors of sexual violence may have been subjected to morally preferable identity narratives, particularly as they have faced systematic forms of oppression. Representation becomes paramount in research contexts where this is the case (for more, see Lambert, 2021).

Anonymity and confidentiality

Traditionally, the ethical gold standard in research into sensitive topics is that all data should be anonymised, and artists should be afforded confidentiality. Although 'blanket assurances of confidentiality' do raise considerable ethical concerns in research involving sexual violence, particularly victim-survivors of domestic violence, where disclosures of serious harm may arise, blanket confidentiality protocols can lead to researchers deviating from their responsibilities to participants (Dowes, Kelly and Westmarland, 2014). There is also an added dimension with ABR, where photographs, in particular, can make artists more identifiable, mainly if they appear in their photographs, belongings, or home, or they choose to stage or capture a photo at an easily recognisable location. So much greater steps must be taken in ABR, as respecting artists' rights to be photographed or their belongings must be afforded the utmost respect (Holm, 2014). Occasionally, artists may not want anonymity in ABR; they may wish to be recognised as having created visual research (Wiles et al., 2008; Grinyer, 2002), although this issue did not arise in my thesis.

To ensure anonymity, all artists could select a pseudonym that they adopted throughout the research, and they were only identified through this name. Also, due to the potential for some professionals to be identified, each participant was asked to propose a job title that encapsulated what profession they did. However, it was vague enough that they could not be identified; for instance, the organisation they worked for was not included. In addition, alternative locations were offered whenever this was required to remove the pressure on artists from having their homes photographed (see Lindeman, 2010). Also, no participant wished to appear in their photograph. A specific model was recruited as a stand-in in the one instance where a person was required. Finally, when artists wanted to use their clothes, the researcher and participant instead found a suitable alternative so their belongings were not used. This also prevented an anticipated problem, although this did not arise, where participants may wish to use the clothing they wore during their assault (Hepworth, 2022). As this could create potential problems for reporting to the police in the future, artists would have been asked not to use their clothing if this arose, but it did not.

Compensation

This has been touched on briefly in discussions of external artists in the project, but it is expanded here for clarity. Arts-based research can be costly, raising ethical tensions about

accessibility. To minimise this as much as possible, the researcher purchased all artistic materials and items involved in photographs, or the participant was renumerated for items they already owned. Artists were also allowed to keep artistic materials associated with their photograph in some cases, mainly if not all materials were used in the photograph and artists expressed a desire to keep the materials (for example, one participant requested leftover drinks, and one asked to keep plastic cups that were not used). The researcher also took the time burden of producing art wherever possible; for example, one photograph involved a piece of art that took over two hundred hours to make, which the researcher completed). Again, it minimises the burden of participating for the artists themselves.

Creating art on sexual violence

Art is usually considered a heightened or more emotional experience, as it is a sensory experience. Subsequently, arts-based researchers need to consider how producing art could impact artists differently and how artistic representations of lived experience can place a more considerable emotional burden on artists (Parsons, Heus and Moravac, 2012). The art artists wish to create can be troubling, even disturbing (Holm, 2014). Thus, the emotional well-being of artists had to be a key driver within the research methodology. As there were clear anticipated risks, I ensured that potential artists were fully aware of the emotional responses and the artistic component so they could make an informed choice to participate. In addition, at every step, artists were signposted to services that offered emotional support for sexual violence within their everyday services (Bird, 2018).

In terms of ABR, there is also an added component that 'harm' can stem from artists feeling anxious or concerned about how audiences may interpret their art, as well as a critical concern arising from worries that their art may be 'psychologised' by researchers (Wiles et al., 2012). Again, including a photo-elicitation interview specifically mitigated this to ensure that no inappropriate inferences were made about artists' mental state despite the art they produced, and the researcher used no adjectives in describing the artwork unless the participants themselves had previously offered them.

We must be cautious of solely framing participation in ABR as unfavourable, as research using creative methods has been considered potentially therapeutic for trauma survivors (Rosseau and Measham, 2007; Carey, 2006). Arts-based research has been linked to the positive development of self-esteem and improved mental functioning (Torkelson Lynch

and Chosa, 1996), self-awareness (Camic, 2008; Newsome, Henderson and Veach, 2005), and even aiding emotional well-being (Puig et al., 2006).

Given the sensitive topic, the well-being of external artists and the use of one model were also important. It was anticipated that external artists may wish to be involved in the project due to them potentially having lived experiences of sexual violence themselves. However, the researcher did not ask this. As a result, I provided them with the same list of support organisation details given to artists (see Appendix F) and arranged to collect the art in person to further check in with them. Upon collecting the art pieces, external artists signed a consent form (see Appendix D) to release the artwork to the artists, including information on how the artwork may be used. The external artists were also required to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix D). Similarly, it was also predicted that a model may wish to participate if they had lived experience of sexual violence, although again, this was not asked directly by the researcher. Instead, a model was recruited through a voluntary advert with specific details about what the photograph entailed and what they would be expected to do. The model was also able to ask questions and could withdraw at any point (for consent form, see Appendix G). Like the external artists, the model was also provided with a list of support organisation details.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is usually visualised in qualitative research as a process that deepens the study's exploration and the researcher's (Calafell, 2013). It has been described as the "heartbeat of qualitative research" due to its importance and the challenge it presents to researchers (Lindlof and Taylor, 2017: 72), although at times, it can be 'contentious' (Faulkner, Kaunert, Kluch, Saygin Koc and Trotter, 2016: 197). Berger (2015: 220) described reflexivity as the "means turning of the research lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one's situatedness within the research," a vital process wherein the researcher must explore the effect that their situatedness has on the people being studied, as well as the data collection and interpretation process (Watt, 2007).

Critically, with reflexivity, the "researcher is viewed as an instrument of the research process" (Faulkner et al., 2016: 198). The researcher is not just engaged with the research process. They are a critical mechanism (Berger, 2015). In particular, critical reflexivity in ABR stresses "an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's

subject matter while conducting research, and challenges us to make transparent our values and beliefs that inform our actions, thoughts and interpretations throughout the research process" (Bogumil, Capous-Desyllas, Lara and Reshetnikov, 2015: 362).

Thus, to be reflexive, I must consider how my preconceived notions, lived experiences, and attitudes impact my research, particularly given that reflexivity is vital to building trustworthiness within qualitative inquiry. "If we do not consider how who we are may get in the way of portraying the voice of the participant, we may miss important meanings that are being presented by our artists (Lietz, Langer and Furman, 2006: 1). By exploring how my own biases can influence this work, I can increase not only the credibility (as noted by Cutliffe, 2003) but also demonstrate rigour and ensure my process is as ethical as possible (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Being reflexive in an ethical sense means "acknowledging and being sensitised to the micro ethical dimensions of research practice and, in doing so, being alert to and prepared for ways of dealing with the ethical tensions that arise" (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 278). Reflexivity is rarely considered stagnant; Berry (2013) used the spinning metaphor to describe reflexivity to capture the idea that identity and our sense of reality constantly shift. Thus, reflexivity is a dynamic, shifting process.

Researcher resilience and critical reflexivity

Gender is usually a vital aspect of the reflexive process (Gilgun, 2008). Throughout the research, I was well aware of my standpoint as a feminist woman, a category that is usually thought of as a target for male violence. I assumed that I would have personal biases as a result that needed to be taken into account, particularly around the creation of victim-survivor identities. Moreover, when researchers have lived experience of what they are researching, reflexivity becomes essential (Gabriel, 2017), especially given the importance of analysing identities in reflective research (Faulkner et al., 2016). Yet this was something I struggled with and found quite uncomfortable to consider.

Art practices are excellent tools for researchers to explore their reflexivity and creativity (Bogumil et al., 2015). For example, Faulkner et al. (2016) utilised reflexive colleges to map out and scrutinise their research biases. "Art seizes the fullness of lived experiences by describing, interpreting, creating, reconstructing, and revealing meaning" (Watrin, 1999: 93), so I have included an exception from my arts-based journal that draws on my feelings surrounding this:

Full disclosure!
It's a game that we play
Let your darkest secrets
Give you away

Full Disclosure! Researcher image

The image features a picture of a woman staring into a mirror and wearing a mask. It was inspired by my coming across the circle of mirrors metaphor Faulkner et al. (2016: 207) used to describe the 'poeticness' of reflexivity, where it "requires a naked intimacy and level of honesty." Yet publicly 'coming out' as someone with lived experience of sexual violence is incredibly difficult (Loney-Howes, 2018), and I felt this placed a burden on me that was almost unfair in what was expected.

I love musical theatre. There is a song in the Addams Family Musical entitled 'Full Disclosure,' where the family play a game where they reveal their darkest secrets. It reminded me of this weight placed upon me as a sexual violence researcher, particularly given the statistics on sexual assault, where one in three women will experience sexual violence in the UK (Brunton-Smith, Flatley and Tarling, 2022).

Chapter 3: Summary

This chapter has illustrated my methodological and epistemological approach to examining victim-survivor concepts. By employing methodological braiding and moving away from a traditional research methods design, I have been more clearly able to combine and fully incorporate all three distinctive methods in the research design. Incorporating symbolic interactionism and FST aided my understanding of what was meant by 'victim' and 'survivor' identity, mainly as symbolic interactionism supported my documentary analysis, considering the discursive practices and mechanisms with symbolic significance. Moreover, through using an FST lens, I was also able to understand the unique experience and double vision of victim-survivors and professionals, who also sometimes occupied a dual identity, to consider their understanding of the multidimensionality of victim-survivor identity. This multi-dimensional epistemological and methodological approach came with many positive benefits whilst navigating the complexity and ethical challenges, particularly about risk of harm, power hierarchies, informed consent with people with lived experience of sexual violence and the dual ethic in arts-based research. It also facilitated different kinds of visual and textual data, helping create a much richer, in-depth analysis of victim-survivor identity.

Chapter 4: Policy and Practice Analysis

Overview

This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis of 116 policy and practice documents published from the first of January 2013 to the 1st of January 2023 that met the criteria outlined in Chapter 3. It will first begin by outlining the difficulties in classifying documents, particularly when 'victim' and 'survivor' are used interchangeably. Next, I will outline the critical discourses underpinning the concept of 'survivor' within documents using three pillars: 1) safety, 2) agency and 3) recovery. Finally, I will illustrate the discourses embedded within the concept of a 'victim' discussed within documents through the lens of agency, harm and disempowerment.

Documents and how they were selected

Chapter 3, under the ' Documentary and Policy Analysis ' section, offers a more extensive outline of the methodological procedure, including how documents were selected. However, for clarity, this shall also be summarised here.
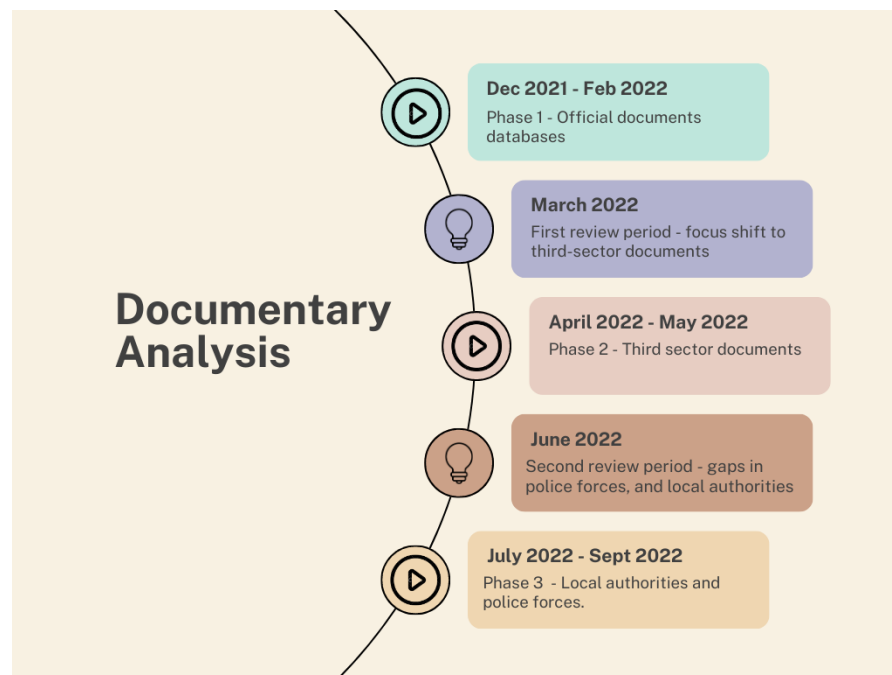
Figure 8 - Phases of Data Collection (documents)

Documents were retrieved from the UK Governmental Official Documents Database, the Northern Ireland Official Publications Archive, and the websites of third-sector organisations, which were retrieved systematically using the UK charities register for practical reasons and to ensure that the document samples would be focused on sexual violence. Initially, a combination of search and filter terms was used centred on normative framings (victim) and non-normative framings (survivor, thriver, overcomer, women who have been raped, victim-survivors). In Phase 1, these terms were used to sift documents from three databases: 'policy papers and consultations,' 'news and communications,' and 'guidance and regulation.' Whereas in Phases 2 and 3, a list of all third-sector organisations was obtained through the charities register, and a list of all local authorises was compiled from the Government database, whilst all 48 police forces were obtained from the national policing website. To create a sample of documents, during Phase 2, the search terms (outlined previously) were applied to make a list of charities that offered service provisions to sexual violence victim-survivors. Across both of these phases, the lists of third-sector organisations delivering sexual violence service provision, as well as the local authorities and police forces, were used as places to obtain documents. The website of each organisation was then scanned using a browser extension that automatically obtained all files publicly available (called 'Bulk Download Files'). This created a database of documents for third-sector organisations, local authorities, police forces and the UK government, including Northern Ireland.

In all three phases, the documents were then scanned using a search tool, with only documents meeting the below inclusion criteria were included:

- Meet Bowen's (2009) definition of a document
- Be specifically focused on sexual violence or sexual assault (see Chapter 3 for details on this)
- Meet at least one of the labelling criteria and one of the identity criteria (see 'Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria' in Chapter 3).

The documents included were from third-sector organisations, the NHS, the Police, and policy. Within both third-sector organisation documents and policy documents, several very much fit the category of academic as they were based upon research studies conducted, so a further distinction was made here. There was a slight overrepresentation of third-sector documents (n=54). A breakdown of documents is below and in the Appendix:
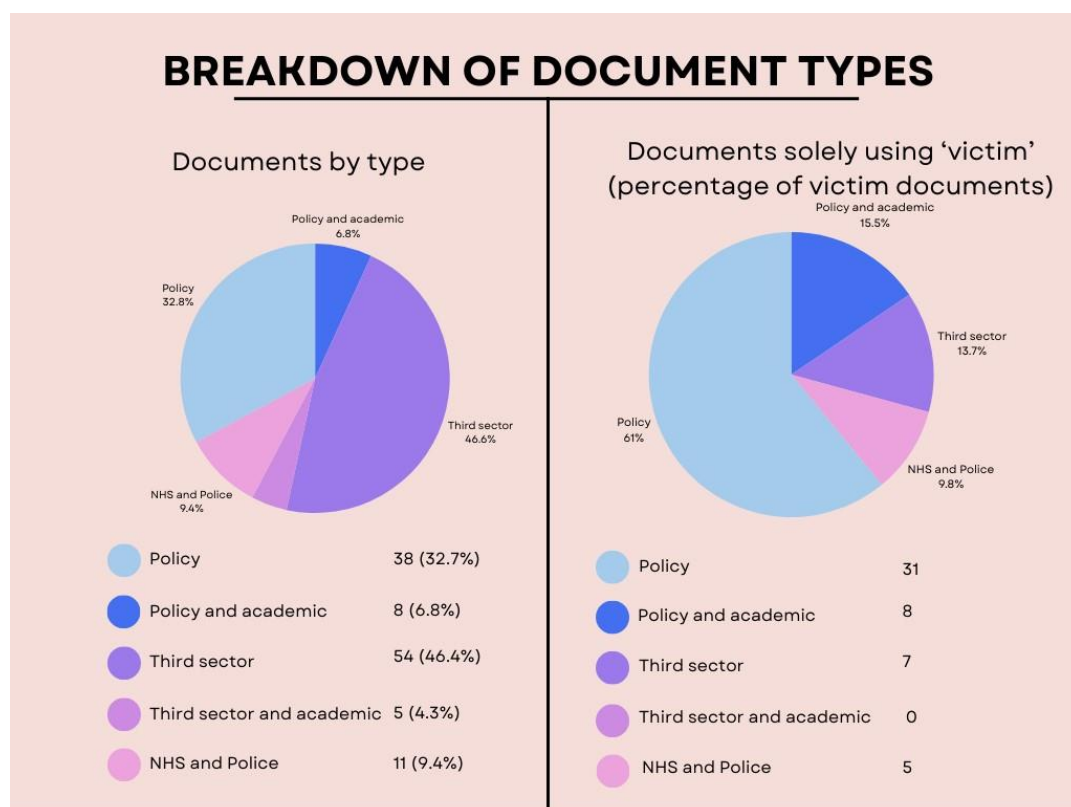
Figure 9 Summary of document types
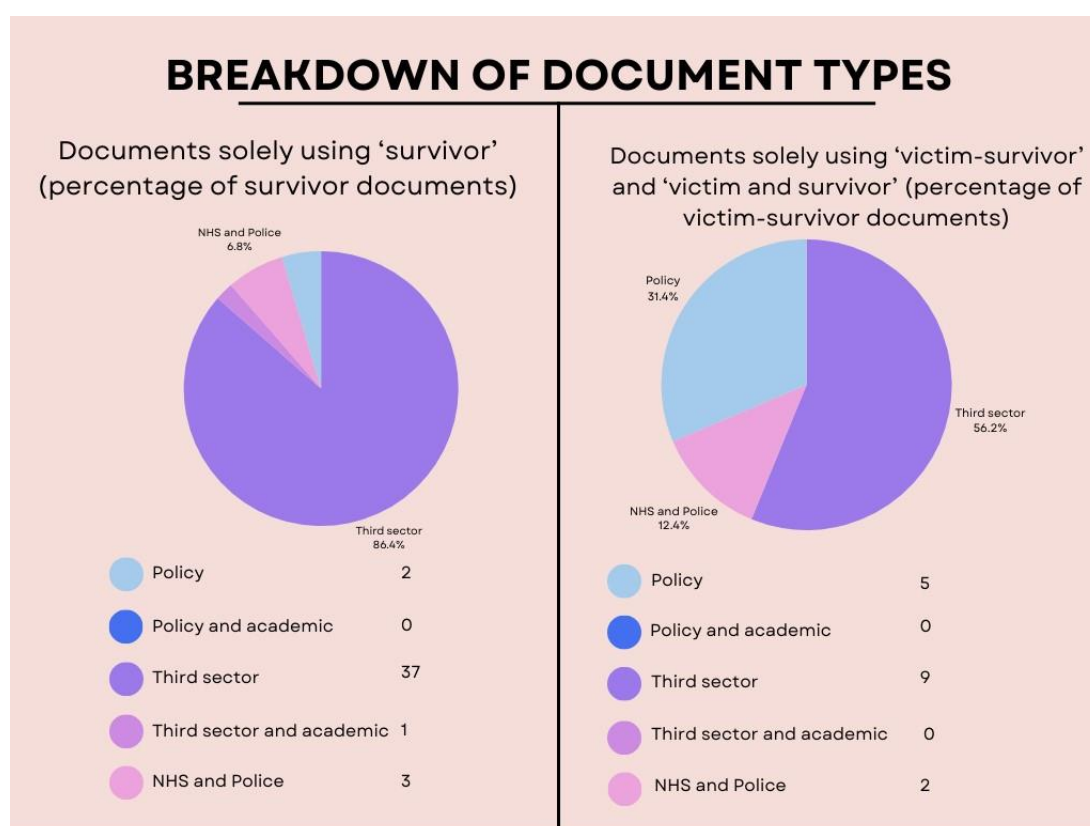
Figure 10 – Further breakdown of document types

When terms are used

This was extremely difficult to categorise given that documents did not always neatly, exclusively use one term of 'victim' or 'survivor,' so a more pragmatic approach to characterisation was needed. In total, six categories were required:

1) Documents that exclusively used the term 'victim.'
2) Documents that exclusively used the term 'survivor.'
3) Documents that exclusively used the term 'victim-survivor.'
4) Documents that interchangeably used the terms 'victim' and 'survivor.'
5) Documents that used the terms 'victim and survivor.'
6) Documents that used none of the terms 'victim,' 'survivor' or 'victim-survivor.'

However, for documents in category four, it needed to be acknowledged that there were times when clear preferences for one term were used, such as:
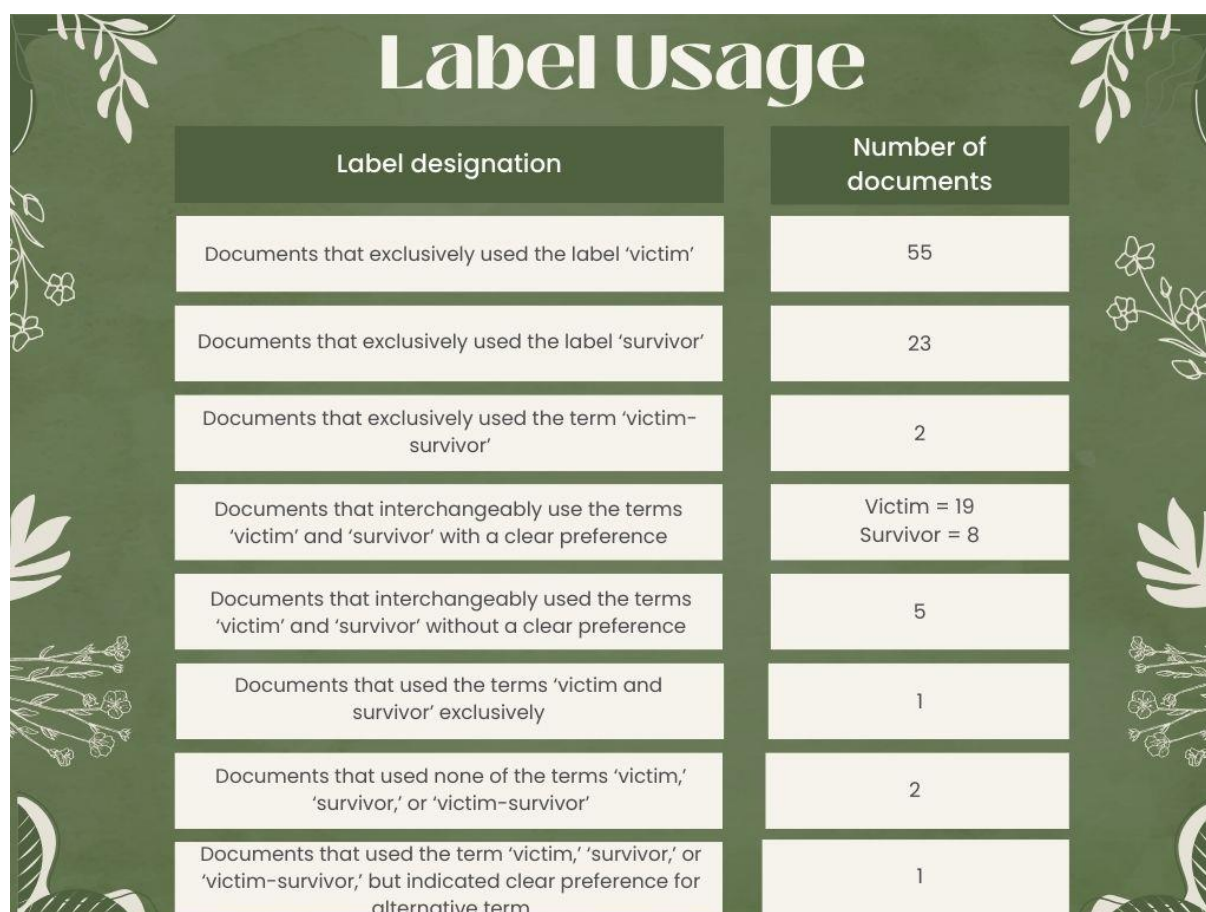
- One term was used in the title of the organisation that produced the document
- One term was used in the title of the document
- Terms were used interchangeably, but one term was used over 75% of the time.
- A term was explicitly given preference, and this was stated and justified

This acknowledgement and nuance were needed when analysing documents. So, whilst it was always acknowledged within the analysis when a document did not exclusively use one term if a clear preference was indicated, it was included in the study of the language preference indicated. However, this is not as accurate as when implicit language is used, so it will be identified where inferences of this nature were made. There was also one instance when a document clearly preferred a term and expressed this explicitly, but an alternative term was used in the title.

Therefore, the categories were finalised as follows:

1) Documents that exclusively used 'victim' (n=55)
2) Documents that exclusively used 'survivor' (n=23)
3) Documents that interchangeably used the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' with a clear preference (preference for victim n=19; preference for survivor n=8)

4) Documents that interchangeably used the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' without a clear preference (n=5)

5) Documents that used none of the terms 'victim,' 'survivor' or 'victim-survivor' (n=2)

6) Documents that exclusively used the term 'victim-survivor' (n=2)

7) Documents that used the terms 'victim and survivor' exclusively (n=1)

8) Documents that used the term 'victim,' 'survivor,' or 'victim' survivor,' but indicated a clear preference for an alternative term (n=1)

Label Usage

Label designation	Number of documents
Documents that exclusively used the label 'victim'	55
Documents that exclusively used the label 'survivor'	23
Documents that exclusively used the term 'victim-survivor'	2
Documents that interchangeably use the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' with a clear preference	Victim = 19 Survivor = 8
Documents that interchangeably used the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' without a clear preference	5
Documents that used the terms 'victim and survivor' exclusively	1
Documents that used none of the terms 'victim,' 'survivor,' or 'victim-survivor'	2
Documents that used the term 'victim,' 'survivor,' or 'victim-survivor,' but indicated clear preference for alternative term	1

Figure 11 – Summary of language choice in documents

The rationale for language choice

Some documents explicitly explained or rationalised their specific choices regarding adopting the terms 'victim,' 'survivor,' or 'victim-survivor,' although this was not offered or even touched upon in most documents analysed; instead, a term was simply used.

Whilst some documents used terms interchangeably, such as for different contexts, inclusivity or simply conflation with no explanation, the vast majority preferred one or the other. However, contextual uses seem to have some ambiguity. They can be used in two precise dimensions: 1) the context, circumstance or manner where the concepts are used, mainly depending on the organisation using them, and 2) the contextual meaning underpinning the term, which, when used, is also ascribed to victim-survivors. For example, in the first dimension, a label may be used as the contextual site where the term utilised has an unmistakable contemporary preference or normative label. Most clearly here, 'From Report To Court' (2016: 2) noted that although they frequently adopted 'survivor' to refer to people with lived experiences of sexual violence, due to the commonality of the usage of 'victim' in law, the handbook frequently also used victim, as well as other common legal jargon like 'suspect,' 'defendant,' and 'complainant.' So here, there is an explicit acknowledgement that 'victim' has a more mainstream adoption and that there is a normative expectation to use this terminology in a legal context, hence their reluctant usage. Similar parallels were observed when exploring the usage of 'victim' and 'survivor' in a variety of contexts, including academia, activism, health-care settings and popular media discourse, where despite a clear contemporary preference for 'survivor,' particularly in feminist usages, 'victim' was still overwhelmingly used in discourses surrounding crime and in legal examinations (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Dunn, 2005).

Similarly, language choice can take on a literal meaning; thus, the definitive circumstance determines language choice. For example, the Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide (2020: 7) uses survivor quite literally to denote ***"an individual who has experienced and survived any form of sexual violence and abuse,"*** whereby survivor denotes someone who has survived. 'Survived' is clearly in the past tense; it implies that the victimisation event has happened, where the 'survived body' of a woman post-sexual assault becomes not only a recognised image but also a "token of women's cultural existence" (Spry, 1995: 29). Spry (1995) here conceptualised how usage of the victimised and survived body results in linguistic categories assigning explicit discursive imagery, in terms of the acts committed against women who have been sexually assaulted, rooting this cultural-language system in Darwinist frameworks. Now, she argues that both "survivor/ victim linguistic categories perpetuate and reify the powerful symbol of the powerless woman" by linguistically indicating that women who are sexually assaulted have been overpowered by men. Thus, she positions both as signalling patriarchal domination. However, the splitting

of victimised and survived further continues the social Darwinist position of "the weak and the strong" (Spry, 1995: 29), where survived bodies are considered morally superior to their victimised counterparts. Thus, the distinction between the two creates the trap of compulsory survivorship (Larson, 2018), where adopting a survivor mentality is the only acceptable response to indicate recovery.

Justification for language choice lies in concerns about usage having implications for how people with lived experiences of sexual assault are viewed. For instance, (The Full Survivors Handbook, 2019: 8) notes that ***"the terms 'victim' and 'survivor are both used, depending on the context."*** The context here refers to how language, such as 'victim' and 'survivor', are associated with myriad connotations that become attached to the person or group once the label is applied to them (Setia, Marks and An (2020). The handbook (2019: 8) continues to indicate their preference for the term 'survivor' as:

"It emphasises an active, resourceful and creative response to the abuse, in contrast to 'victim,' which implies passive acceptance. If you are reading this, then you are – at least to some extent – a survivor."

 Here, 'survivor' is bound explicitly with recovery, especially as the survivor label is often tied to recovery and healing (Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Leisenring, 2006). By labelling someone as a survivor, they are seen to be taking active steps in their recovery, such as reading the handbook itself. Hence, adopting the label deliberately deviates from commonly held perceptions of victimhood being bound by passivity. This is similar to the distinction made between Alcoff and Gray (1993: 261-262) of the cultural representations of the 'passive victim' and 'active survivor,' where the two are often juxtaposed, where women are seen as having to choose between an overly simplified binary rooted in dimensions of agency and recovery (Convery, 2006). Thus, in this site, context very much relates to the connotations attached to people with lived experiences of sexual assault due to the concept chosen.

Similarly, in Helping Disabled Adults Who Have Survived Sexual Abuse or Violence (2023), even when 'victim-survivor' is used, a differentiation between the 'victim' component of the label is still used. Here, the victim-survivor label was preferred due to inclusivity, wherein victim refers to ***"the person hurt by sexual abuse or violence. Victim-survivors have survived"*** (2023: 48). This is a little tougher to disentangle as there was not the traditional

'victim-survivor' binary that we usually see where the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are categorically and unequivocally separated (such as the binary suggested by Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). Whilst a 'victim' was defined, 'survivor' was not rather 'victim-survivor' was used in its place. Yet, if we look at the publication's definition of a 'victim-survivor,' we do see an element of a rift between the two:

> *"We call these people victim-survivors because they have been: the victim which means the person hurt by sexual abuse or violence and they have survived which means they have (or are trying to) move on with their lives"*
> (Helping disabled adults who have survived sexual abuse or violence, 2023: 3).

This actual usage of 'survived' does have an element of the definitive definition of survivor, so again, it suggests someone making progress in their recovery; the 'victim' element is the injured party. Victimhood has often been inextricably bound to the idea of someone being injured, where the label itself encapsulates a sense of injury experienced by someone (Young and Maguire, 2003; Holstein and Miller, 1990) and consequently, it re-emphasises the powerlessness of the victim of sexual assault unlike a 'survivor' who has reached or is moving towards active recovery and healing (Convery, 2006; Bahar, 2003; McLeer, 1998). Although apparent attempts are often made to disentangle the cultural linkage between victimhood and a lack of agency (Mahoney, 1994), the overarching Western-dominated survivor discourses have historically framed victimhood with passivity (Jean-Charles, 2014). It is evident again here that the concepts are contextually driven, in the sense that words are carefully crafted to avoid unfavourable connotations, usually associated with victimhood, being attached to people with lived experiences of sexual assault. This plays into the symbolic interactionist perspective that identities evoke meanings identified by label usage.

Label preference

Regarding actual label usage, the exclusive 'victim' label was most often used (n=55), with the next highest being the exclusive use of the 'survivor' label (n=23). Policy documents overwhelmingly used the 'victim' label exclusively (81.57%), whilst, amongst third-sector documents, the most common usage was exclusively the survivor label (68.51%). There was

a clear, overwhelming *preference* [2] for the 'survivor' label over the usage of the term 'victim.' This was much more evident amidst third-sector documents, but even amongst policy documents, especially those that used both terms. The major exception to this was legal documents, particularly legislation. As a result, the 'survivor' label will be explored first, then contrasted with the 'victim' label usage. To aid clarity and avoid repetition, documents were approached thematically rather than categorically; analysis will also be presented in this manner due to a considerable amount of overlap between usage.

No 'textbook' survival response

There was considerable emphasis on the idea that no two 'survivors' were the same. Instead, each was unique and suffered a unique victimisation experience. Consequently, there was substantial variation in the post-traumatic responses of survivors, with an onus on the idea that every survivor's trauma response was different. Here, although occasional commonalities can be found amongst healing journeys, the consensus is that due to variations in sexual assault experiences, as well as post-assault changes in relationships or self-identity, levels of external support and personal qualities, healing responses can vary substantially (D'Amore et al., 2021).

The 'supporting women who have survived sexual violence' resource produced by The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre noted that **"every survivor's experience is unique to her, as is her response to what has happened"** and urged practitioners to understand that guidance created to help improve survivor outcomes was not formulaic, as no survivor presentation was stereotypical (2015: 9). Whilst documents, such as 'Rape and the effects of rape' (2013) produced by Rape Crisis (South London), urged that there were **"common feelings,"** in actuality, immediate aftermath reactions to rape can vary wildly depending on the survivor and circumstances surrounding their assault. This includes the different reactions that survivors may experience: **"Some will be hysterical; some will be calm; others may be silent and withdrawn,"** as well as differing long-term effects and choices in terms of posttraumatic recovery (2013: 1). Similarly, the 'Information for Partners log'

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[2] The term 'preference' is used here in relation to documents that expressed a preference for a term. On the whole, 'victim' was in fact used more often, in terms of exclusive use, but documents that gave a clear indication or preference for a term, suggesting their language choice was deliberate, overwhelmingly voiced a preference for the survivor label.

produced by Rape Crisis Scotland, whilst providing advice to people whose partner had been sexually assaulted also stressed that *"everyone's experience of sexual violence is different. It also affects people in different ways,"* highlighting the variation in survivor responses (2016: 7). Likewise, although this time aimed towards survivors' recovery, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network maintained that *"everyone's experience is different,"* urging survivors to cherry-pick elements of the self-help guide that best suit their own needs (2019: 3).

We come to an apparent paradox when trying to reconcile the associations between the survivor label and emphasis on recovery, with frequent assertions that there is no formulaic textbook survivor response and the conceptualisation of a linear journey. Thus, this will be returned for examination in the later section exploring 'recovery.'

The three pillars of survivorhood

It became evident that three pillars are central to the survivor discourse and understanding how the 'survivor' label was adopted within policy and practice documents. 'Pillar' was chosen because pillars support or hold up the foundations of something, and just like pillars holding up a building, these three central ideas are embodied throughout the discourse. As it is much easier to trace the origins of language usage for 'survivor' rather than a victim, and we can examine the advocation for a conscious choice to refer to someone with lived experience of violence as a 'survivor' but not a victim, the pillar also becomes an integral concept. This is because pillars are symbolic, typically symbols of strength due to their roots in architecture and their association with moral character, such as a person being seen as a 'pillar of the community.' As both are reoccurring concepts in literature exploring the idea of a survivor, it offers a good vantage point to explore the origins.

All three will be explored extensively in their own right, but they are interconnected and interwoven; it can be challenging to disentangle them at points. This perhaps explains why the first pillar is often neglected when considering the survivor label.

3 Pillars of the 'survivor' label

Sexual assault is considered an affective experience the survivor most overcome. Reconceptulisation of reactions as defensive survival reactions.

Emphasis on survivors having the ability to make their own decisions and have control over their actions, reactions and body.

Survivors are positioned as wanting to understand and process their own personal reactions to their experience, taking steps to heal and recover.

Safety

Agency

Recovery

Figure 12 – The Three Pillars of the Survivor Label

Safety

Whilst agency and recovery bound with survivorship tend to be well-depicted and represented within violence and abuse literature, safety, or more accurately lack of safety, is undoubtedly less dominant. Yet, it was a critical overarching theme throughout policy and practice documents. Convery (2006:240) briefly discussed the notion of a 'reified survivor,' where survivors were explored not as a differentiated type of victimhood as they often were,

to combat the clear cultural messaging of the valorisation of survival over victimhood. However, the vast majority of theorisation tends to focus on the victim/survivor binary.

In a broad sense, being a survivor of sexual violence was linked with feelings of being unsafe, or previously occupied perceptions of safety were threatened or removed by the victimisation experience. For instance, 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London) noted that a ***"survivor of sexual violence is likely to feel unsafe, disempowered and often worthless"*** (2013: 9). Interestingly, the guide notes that this lack of safety or feelings of being unsafe may appear masked or not evident to casual observers as survivors ***"may be suppressing these [feelings] in order to be able to continue to function normally, or may be minimising how she feels"*** (2013: 9). Here we see the depiction of survivors almost employing an emotional shield as a self-defence mechanism as if they do not wish the outside world to see the true extent of how their trauma has/ is currently affecting them. This is perhaps due to the perception that survivorship is bound to coping (Schwark and Bohner, 2019). Jordan (2013) takes this one stage further, noting how survival and survivorship are often associated with positive dealing with negative experiences and traumatic events. This idea will be explored more deeply in the second pillar, agency. Still, it is worth noting here that the normative assumption rests with survivorhood being bound to functioning or coping. Yet, we do see an explicit acknowledgement here that survivorship can also include feeling unsafe. Similarly, the 'Strategic Direction Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (NHS) advocates for a ***"trauma-informed approach to care" that "emphasises the need for physical, psychological and emotional safety and helps survivors to recover, heal and rebuild a sense of control and empowerment"*** (2018: 22). Therefore, laying the foundations for the interpretation that survivor is applied to someone currently feeling emotionally unsafe.

We see a sort of two-folded safety element here that needs to be considered. Firstly, the idea of 'safety' is multi-dimensional. We might consider physical safety in terms of distance from perpetrators of violence and abuse, especially in domestic and intimate partner violence contexts (Kia-Keating, Sorsoli and Grossman, 2010; Goodman, Fels and Glenn, 2006), as well as external informal and formal support in their relationships with others (Sullivan, 2018), as well as survivors feeling physically safe when encountering criminal justice and third-sector agencies during their experiences post-assault (Patterson and Campbell, 2010; Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra, 2005). In addition, a lack of emotional safety specifically relates to survivors' mental well-being, support structures and relationships (Jobe-Shields,

Williams and Hardt, 2017). Also, any advocation for care that is designed to improve safety automatically implies that the people being cared for, in this case, survivors, are experiencing feelings surrounding a lack of safety, feelings that are rarely bound to survivorship in identity literature, where the survivor is often bound with recovery (Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2005). The problem centres around whether survivorship is bound with recovery or being recovered, which will need to be addressed in depth later in this chapter.

To delve into this, sexual assault for survivors was often positioned as an affective experience. For instance, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network observed in their self-help guide for survivors that ***"when you have suffered rape or sexual abuse it can affect how you think, how you feel, how you behave and how you see the world" (2019: 3).*** The negative emotions and feelings that survivors experienced in the aftermath of sexual assault were conceptualised in several documents as defensive survival reactions that the survivor's body had enacted to protect them and navigate through trauma. The Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network explained, in considerable detail, the host of symptoms and reactions survivors could experience after a sexual assault. Notably, these reactions were typically considered negative, harmful or damaging (2019: 6). These reactions were explained as automatic, unconscious responses that the survivor's body had enacted to offer them protection (2019: 7):

"Why do people have these reactions? The human brain is rational and intuitive. When you are exposed to danger or traumatic events, the intuitive side takes over. It does what it needs to do to survive."

The guide then descends into incredible detail, outlining the human body's five instinctive reactions when threatened. It explains to survivors that their *"mind will choose the reaction that is most likely to lead to survival and the least harm"* (2019: 7). Thus, the guide is attempting to reconceptualise actions that may be ordinarily associated with passivity or lack of action as defensive, protective survival reactions.

Negative emotions

There were a handful of mentions where survivors were described as having or experiencing negative emotions, such as feelings of isolation and anger. Three guides noted

isolation. The 'male survivors of rape and sexual assault' document produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project maintained that *"male survivors often feel isolated"* from their social circles as a result of their victimisation experiences (2018:1). Similarly, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network noted, under the heading *'loneliness:'*

"Many survivors feel they are unable to trust anyone. They might be afraid of sharing their experiences with others, and they might feel as though they are alone and that no-one could understand how they feel or what they went through" (2019: 15).

In both examples, survivors are presented as cut off and isolated from people whom they would usually receive support due to trust issues following their victimisation experience. It, of course, must be acknowledged that feelings of isolation to some degree from friends, family or other communities are a well-established consequence of experiencing sexual assault (Sanderson, 2008). Although victimhood is usually associated with feelings of isolation (Larson, 2018; Barringer, 1992), survivors are often constructed as having shifted away from experiencing isolation towards a more present and connected sense of self (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020). For example, survivors' participation in activism may even offer opportunities for survivors to feel even more connected to others, build meaningful connections and subsequently lessen a sense of isolation (ibid). Survivors can still struggle with stigma management, as sexual abuse can lead to survivors experiencing emotions surrounding negative self-perception, contributing to their social isolation (Fater and Mullaney, 2000). However, research explicitly examining victim and survivor discourses surrounding identity typically assigns isolation to the victim label and instead positions survivors as breaking free from experiences of isolation and overcoming obstacles of trauma such as isolation (Boyle, 2017; Hockett and Saucier, 2015). Yet, the inclusion of the survivor label being applied to people experiencing feelings of isolation may show this binary as overly simplistic.

In the Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide, isolation was tied to alienation (2020: 25):

"Alienation/isolation – A sense of differentness and despair is often experienced if a survivor is unable to share their experiences with others… For individuals from the LGBTQI, BME and disabled communities, such feelings can be magnified."

For the first time, we see a consideration of how specific identity markers, such as sexuality, disability and ethnicity, could impact how different survivors feel; in this case, considering what could exaggerate feelings of survivor isolation.

In another vein, anger was also mentioned as a typical reaction for survivors due to their sexual assault experiences. The Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide noted that anger was:

"A normal reaction to what has happened is part of your recovery and a survival strategy. It's part of our defence response and tells us that a boundary has been crossed" (2020: 24).

It is interesting here as anger is usually conceptualised as an unpleasant, destructive emotion. Yet, it is considered a normal part of a survivor's recovery. In particular, the stress of "it's okay to be angry" suggests this is a typical and acceptable reaction. Survivors experiencing and navigating feelings of anger is usually viewed as a critical stage in their recovery, where they come to understand their experiences and begin to accept what has happened to them; thus, anger is positioned as both an essential stage in recovery and an emotion they will likely experience (Flash et al., 2020; Abrahams, 2007). Along a similar dimension, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network expressed a view on anger that it was a typical response for survivors to have (2019: 15):

"Anger is not the enemy…The WAY a person chooses to deal with anger can sometimes be a problem, but not the feeling itself."

Again, here is a comparable conceptualisation of anger being viewed as a defensive response when the body is threatened. It is taken one stage further by the Self Help Guide (2019), as here, anger is seen as a protective force; it is not the enemy, but it can, at least in some circumstances, act as a positive force. In addition, the document 'Male Survivors of Rape and Sexual Assault' by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project also considered anger to have some positive benefits under certain circumstances (2018:1):

"Feelings of anger after rape or sexual assault are healthy and an understandable reaction; often though survivors turn their rage inwards, or suppress it entirely or direct it at people close to them."

Using the adjective *'healthy'* further stresses that anger, for survivors, is a positive force; if something is healthy, it is usually viewed as promoting good well-being. Here, there is a clear acknowledgement that anger cannot be a positive force, such as anger at the survivor's actions or anger directed at their circle of support. Boyle (2016) described how 'survivor' was often accompanied by victim-survivors having feelings of anger, as well as distancing themselves from traumatic experiences. Other negative emotions expressed in the documents about survivors frequently centred around feelings typically associated with disassociation or distancing, although these varied quite dramatically from guide to guide.

The Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network discussed how survivors experienced feelings of *'emptiness'* (2019: 15):

"The feelings are sometimes so overwhelming that - in order to cope - a survivor buries them all."

In this passage, the survivor's emotions following the assault are positioned as uncontrollably *'overwhelming,'* so much so that the survivor must distance themselves from them rather than face them. This almost shows how the survivor is unable to cope healthily with their emotions. Similarly, the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' produced by the Havens highlighted the multitude of feelings and reactions survivors experience, particularly *'shock and numbness'* (2019: 25):

"Shock and numbness - Feeling shocked and numb is a very common response soon after a sexual assault...Survivors can feel emotionally detached, drained and disconnected from what is happening around them.

Anxious – Survivors can experience extreme anxiety as a result of the assault."

Quite a few emotions were mentioned here, typically considered potentially destructive and unpleasant to experience. Under *shock and numbness,* we see again similar portrayals of survivors experiencing uncontrollable emotions, centring around disconnecting, though these are not considered defensive reactions but simply emotional reactions. A similar pattern was also noted in discussions of how survivors can experience anxieties due to their victimisation experience. This is in stark contrast to where survivors have normatively been constructed with coping with negative experiences (Papendick and Bohner, 2017; Jordan, 2013; Thompson, 2000; Kelly, 1988). Mills's (1985: 117-18) description of battered-wife

identity notably separates victim and survivor identity based on their ability to cope with intimate partner violence, where survivors "focus on the positive ways they are changing their lives," and a survivor identity is privileged due to its superior therapeutic approach. The term survivor is preferred as it gives acknowledgement to the "tremendous strengths and coping skills in surviving violence" (Proffitt, 1996: 29).

On a similar note, 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London) described the common feelings survivors can have in response (2013: 1):

"The ways in which women react immediately after being raped can also vary. Different women have different reactions; some will be hysterical; some will be calm; others may be silent and withdrawn…You may be trying to cope with difficult feelings by trying to block out the memory of what happened…Unfortunately, the memory, which you are trying to avoid is buried 'alive' and will continue to pop up when you least expect it and will constantly be just below the surface."

Firstly, quite opposing reactions to sexual assault were all considered possible, reminiscent of the idea that there is no one formulaic survivor response. Next, one survivor's response was considered again as feelings of being overwhelmed and being unable to cope with the feelings surrounding the sexual assault, positioning survivors as being unable to control their emotions in some cases. Then, there was some consideration of coping mechanisms survivors may attempt to use to deal with their feelings, including dissociation, self-medication and self-harm. This even further stresses some survivor's inability to deal with negative emotions post-sexual assault.

Again, this starkly contrasts normative discursive depictions of the survivor. Survivorship represents resilience and positive coping in the aftermath of trauma (Ben-David, 2020; Jordan, 2013). To be clear, it does not exclusively have to refer to someone who has fully healed and recovered from trauma; it can and often is applied to people in the 'healing' stages of trauma (Roddick, 2015; Salazar and Casto, 2008). However, these document positionings clearly show survivors and use 'survivor' to describe people in a much earlier stage of recovery. Ben-David (2020: 24-25) provides a comprehensive overview of the 'survivor stage' of recovery, which cannot be entered into until victims understand that "they have survived the trauma and have grown through the victim stage." A key

implication of this is that to be considered survivors, victims must themselves recognise and begin to integrate their experience of trauma into their lives (Jordan, 2013). Here, we see the application of 'survivor' to victim-survivors who have not reached that stage yet, showing an apparent disjuncture.

Lifelong trauma

There were also some mentions of how survivors could be navigating through trauma that would have some life-long effects on the survivors themselves. The strength of this portrayal did vary depending on the document, however. Starting with the documents making more robust assertions, the 'Child Sexual Abuse' factsheet produced by YWCA noted that *"Child sexual abuse can have lifetime impacts on survivors—especially without support"* (2017: 2). Also, the Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy observed that *"crimes of violence against women and girls can have a devastating and life-changing effect on victims and survivors"* (2021: 49). Both of these are pretty strong in their assertions that sexual violence can have a life-long impact on survivors of sexual violence.

To a slightly lesser extent, the 'Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse' support guide produced by Victim Support examined the impact of child abuse (2021: 2):

"Not everybody who has experienced childhood abuse will experience emotional or mental health difficulties later in life. However, it's estimated that over 50% of people may have the following symptoms that last into adulthood: • anxiety • depression • post-traumatic stress • sleep disorders • self-harm and/or suicidal thoughts • flashbacks and panic attacks."

It is slightly less concentrated as here there is an acknowledgement that sexual violence will not have lifelong trauma in every survivor's case. However, it does position long-term effects as affecting the majority of survivors. Similarly, the 'Information for Partners log' produced by Rape Crisis Scotland also made identical assertions (2016: 3):

"Survivors of sexual violence are often traumatised by the experience, whether it happened…recently or many years ago."

In this case, there was also substantial emphasis on the idea that regardless of how long ago or how much time had passed since the assault, significant trauma could still affect survivors, thus further reinforcing this idea of long-term trauma. However, this contrasts sharply with literature showcasing a contemporary preference for the survivor label. Kelly's 'Surviving Sexual Violence' (1988) is one of the first presentations of rape as a survivable crime. This crime should not be conceptualised or theorised as completely disorientating a victim-survivor of sexual violence, nor should it shape their entire life or redefine their identity. The term 'survivor' was preferred by Kelly (1988) due to the emphasis on coping and recovery. In a similar vein, McCarthy (1986: 323-324) noted the need for the adoption of a 'survivor' label, as identification with the victim label results in sexual violence becoming "the controlling and dominant event in her life and controls her sexual (or personal) self-esteem." Unlike the 'survivor' label, victimisation is often inextricably bound to long-lasting damage (Best, 1999; 1997). However, it would be overly simplistic to say the binary stops there, as this is far from the case.

Oveden (2012) specifically traced victim-survivor identities of victim-survivors of child sexual abuse, finding that post-1980s reconfigurations where child sexual abuse was reconceptualised in feminist theorisation through examinations of psychological and therapeutic variations in abuse resulted in both victims and survivors being understood as experiencing significant life-long trauma. The turning point for Oveden was Herman's (1992) construction of 'complex PTSD.' Herman (1992) applied existing formulations of PTSD to victim-survivors of child sexual, which had been more commonly afforded to war veterans. Similarly, Haaken (1998) criticised widespread feminist advocation for their attempts to counter the notion that sexual violence always leads to sustained trauma affecting victim's entire lives. Consequently, a substantial shift in configurations of child sexual abuse led to survivors more commonly being constructed in terms of significant psychological harm (O'Dell, 2003) and long-term impacts that are still a prominent understanding of survivors today (Boyle, 2017; Ovenden, 2012).

Agency

The survivor label, being bound with agency, has a long, historical precedence throughout violence and abuse literature (Boyle and Rodgers, 2022). From the 1980s, 'survivor' crept into usage by feminist theorisations wishing to concentrate on the agency people with lived

experience of sexual violence held in terms of their recovery (Kelly, 1988; Warshaw, 1988). This was no exception in the policy and practice documents.

Control

One component of agency was the notion or suggestion that survivors were working towards gaining control of either decisions around their recovery, negative emotions caused or exacerbated by their assault, or possibly even taking the lead in their healing process. Third-sector guides, such as the 'What is an independent Sexual Violence Advocate' (ISVA) service guide by the Peterborough Rape Crisis Care Group stressed that they aimed **"to assist them [survivors] to overcome both the short and long-term effects of sexual violence whilst the work to regain control of their lives and make positive decisions about their future"** (2019: 3). The aim here, quite literally, is the suggestion that during the assault and its immediate aftermath, survivors lost control and the agency wished to help them regain control in steering themselves towards recovery. After all, the ISVA Service Guide noted that:

 "Sexual violence is about taking away someone's choices. When supporting a survivor, ensure you help to engage her mechanism of choice" (2019: 11).

Again, we see a re-establishment of the idea that the survivor very much needs to be in control, particularly given the removal of choice and powerlessness the survivor experienced due to sexual violence. So, survivors are constructed as agentic, where practitioners are encouraged to support and facilitate this. Bayne (2008:183) reported that a person could be considered agentic if they take "an action that one is in control of; an action that one is performing with a certain degree of effort; and an action that one is performing freely." So control and feeling as if actions are under our control is a crucial dimension of agency. In terms of the survivor, agency comparatively is usually discussed in terms of survivors' regaining control of their lives post-assault in some dimension (Ben-David, 2020).

There was also a substantial emphasis on the idea that survivors could and should maintain considerable control in facilitating their recovery or healing. The most potent discussions are centred within third-sector documents, such as the ISVA Guide (2019: 3), which stresses that they **"believe that survivors are experts in their own healing."** Similar placings of

the survivor in this sort of 'expert' designation, where they are viewed as being the master of their recovery and being the most aware of their own specific needs, were also found in both 'survivor guides' produced by the Sue Lambert Trust. In both their survivor guides aimed at women and men, it was maintained that survivors are most attuned to their own specific needs, even over industry experts, health care professionals and service providers. This fits in with the predominant notion of agency in the survivor discourse, where 'survivors' are depicted as agentic individuals who actively face what has happened to them but also take steps to navigate through their trauma and actively participate in their recovery (Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Williamson and Serna, 2018; Draucker et al., 2009).

However, the documents were far from a one-sided portrayal of survivors having agency. In actuality, there were several instances where 'survivor' was used. Still, survivors were not, in fact, positioned as being in control of their own lives and circumstances, rather the opposite. Disempowerment of survivors, mainly as a result of their victimisation experiences and subsequent feelings, was also a common motif. If we return to the 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London), their guide to supporting survivors specifically emphasised how survivors can often experience stark feelings of disempowerment that were discussed within the safety section:

"Broadly speaking, we can say that a survivor of sexual violence is likely to feel unsafe, disempowered and often worthless. However, you may not be able to see any of the impacts the experience has had on her as she may be suppressing these in order to be able to continue to function normally, or may be minimising how she feels." (2013: 9).

This is a rather interesting framing here, as survivors are portrayed as feeling disempowered. On the surface, this is a departure from the normative framing of the 'survivor' in literature, where the term 'survivor' is often associated with strength and is used to reflect the empowerment that 'survivors' have (unlike their 'victim' counterparts) to be able to progress and navigate their traumatic experiences (Cazeau, 2015). Survivor literature in terms of sexual assault, at least with regards to agency, tends to perpetuate empowerment in terms of outcomes for people with lived experience of sexual violence (Hockett and Saucier, 2015). For example, Ben-David (2020: 25) noted that one of the hallmarks for people with lived experiences of sexual assault to move from the 'victim' stage to the 'survivor' in their recovery was experiencing a level of empowerment on an emotional

level, to the extent that this, alongside other positive emotions such as strength and resilience, "overshadow the emotions experienced within the Victim stage."

Yet this is quite a simplistic, one-dimensional framing of survivor literature regarding agency and empowerment. Convery (2006: 240) cautions us to avoid a form of "knee-jerk acceptance of the survivor's exclusive claims to agency" when examining victimhood and passivity. A body of survivor literature has stressed the diversity of survivors' experiences and conceptualisations of said experiences. For instance, Thompson (2000) stressed the multi-dimensional aspect of survivor identity, mainly when survivors are free to self-identify as such; Glenn and Byers (2009), in a similar fashion, found a substantial potential variety in conceptualisations of the self-identities of women who had been raped, and Becker et al. (1984) also noted significant variations, particularly in the framings of survivors' post-assault symptoms in a negative light. Therefore, this variation we see, where survivors are portrayed as both empowered and disempowered, in control and out of control, is perhaps not disjointed with survivor literature. This is particularly evident if we delve deeper into how survivor was used regarding control and agency.

Some guides noted that survivors could feel out of control or overwhelmed by negative emotions following their sexual assault. For example, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network (2019: 3) noted that amongst child sexual abuse (CSA) survivors, ***"it is normal to feel confused, angry, upset, anxious and a whole range of other emotions,"*** with all noted emotions being somewhat negative. Later on in the guide (2019: 15), they returned to the idea that:

"Survivors sometimes feel overwhelmed by many different feelings…They may be experienced as a mass of feelings that are hard to describe."

Again, we see a similar echo of survivors being portrayed as confused by their own feelings and potentially overwhelmed by them; this confusion element suggests that survivors can appear to have an absence of control of their emotions. We also see this move beyond just emotions experienced in isolation, but also some physiological effects of experiencing negative emotions; it is very reminiscent of the saying where someone feels 'a lump in their throat,' physiological reactions associated with people being overwhelmed with sadness or emotion, rendering them having difficulty speaking. In addition, feelings in 'their tummy' could relate to the idea that anxiety or depression can manifest itself in physical symptoms,

where sufferers experience the sensation that their stomach is tying itself into knots (Jamieson, Mendes, Blackstock and Schmander, 2010), or where psychiatric disorders such as anxiety can manifest into gastrointestinal issues (Arnold, 2013). The Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide (2020) also noted this idea of survivors being overwhelmed by feelings. The guide stressed:

"Many survivors report being overwhelmed with the feelings that they have. It is useful to understand each feeling and explore them to understand why they are there" *(2020: 24).*

Again, we see an emphasis on survivors feeling overwhelmed but being encouraged to circumnavigate their feelings and work through the confusion, as challenging as this may be.

Betrayed by their own body

There was also substantial coverage on one particular aspect or way that a survivor may feel out of control: this idea that during the assault, they may have felt betrayed by their own body. 'Freezing' is considered to be one of the body's neurobiological flight or fight responses to experiencing trauma where the amygdala senses the body is under threat (Mann, 2023), also known as 'tonic immobility' (Boyle, 2017: 71). There were several descriptions or articulations of the idea of 'freezing' and how 'freezing' is a survival response enacted by the body for protective purposes, specifically in terms of explaining how 'freezing' works and unpacking how this can manifest into survivors experiencing guilt or shame about their body's responses. However, there was a slight variation in how 'freezing' was portrayed regarding resistance.

The 'supporting women who have survived sexual violence' resource produced by The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre noted that (2015: 6):

"'Freeze' – common response from people who have been raped, but is a common source of self-blame for many survivors who can experience a freeze or floppy response as being betrayed by their own body… it is important to recognise that freeze is an active response – it is a way of 'fighting back' by shutting down the nervous system until the threat passes."

The above quotation shows a powerful motif of freezing and resistance. Firstly, it was emphasised quite clearly that freezing can result in survivors internalising blame for their sexual assault due to this idea that freezing is a passive response to sexual assault and their apparent lack of fight. Victim-survivor identities are not solely the product of feelings and emotions post-assault but can also sometimes be influenced by the specific characteristics of the assault itself (Boyle, 2017). As injury and passivity are typically associated with victimhood (Dunn, 2005), actual physical resistance to the assault itself, such as 'fighting back' is reserved for survivor identities (Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Orgad, 2009; Holstein and Miller, 1990). However, there is a clear recognition that a myriad of factors can determine whether injury may or may not occur in a sexual assault, as well as whether a person fights back, including tonic immobility (Abbey et al., 2004).

However, the guide quickly dismantles this and notes that freezing should be viewed as an 'active' response and a mechanism of 'fighting back.' So here, freezing is bound with resistance; it is portrayed as an active defensive mechanism that a survivor's body enacts to protect themselves from harm and the pain of the assault. Using the adjective 'active' can be difficult to untangle as active is traditionally associated with someone committing an action. However, it is not strictly portrayed as conscious or deliberate here, mainly due to the guilt the survivor may feel. Thus, the 'survivor' is framed even more clearly as showing resistance to the assault, even if they exhibit behaviour typically associated with passivity, making this fall in line with the dominant survivor discourse where 'survivors' display resistance to their assaults (Williamson and Serna, 2018).

Similarly, 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London) also emphasised 'freezing' as an active response; they likened this to *'fighting for survival'* (2013: 1):

"Women react in lots of different ways during assault...freezing is not a passive response, it is your body taking over and doing what it needs to do to survive. No matter how you responded at the time, remember it was the right one to help you survive."

Again, we see freezing being portrayed as a standard, in fact even quite probable, response to sexual assault, particularly with the use of *'more likely.'* Emphasis is also placed on the need for survivors to view freezing as an active response; if it is not a passive response, then

the opposite end of the spectrum is active. There is, however, very little suggestion that freezing was a conscious choice; with the use of *'your body taking over,'* it does suggest it was an automatic response the survivor had no control over. Instead, the survivor's body is seen as a protective force taking the lead in attempting to minimise the harm to the survivor during the assault.

In contrast, the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' produced by the Havens portrays freezing a little differently:

"But when faced with a threat, a person can respond automatically by fighting back, running away, freezing or submitting, to minimise harm. As these responses are automatic, they cannot be controlled or planned in advance…the brain might 'choose' the freeze or submit response during a sexual assault to reduce the likelihood of more serious injuries that could result from fighting back" (2019: 8)

Although there is some commonality as freezing is portrayed as a bodily response to protect survivors and minimise harm, the use of *'automatic'* sets this apart slightly. The RSACC leaves it a little more open to interpretation of whether freezing is unconscious; the use of automatic leaves far less room for doubt as it suggests a complete lack of conscious control. Instead, freezing is depicted as an automatic shield the survivor has no control over. Whilst *'choose'* might suggest otherwise, leaving some room for interpretation of how conscious it is, it is likely used for irony by placing it in quotation marks. There is a possibility that the quotation marks around *'choose'* were used to subvert the word's intended meaning. 'Choose' typically implies choice, usually thought of as conscious. The guide suggests that the survivor had little choice in the freezing response, as their body responded automatically. In terms of identity deflection, when examining just assault characteristics, physical resistance to the assault can be a significant predictor in survivor reidentification (Boyle, 2017:76). This, of course, must also be taken in the context of identification as having been sexually assaulted, regardless of victim/ survivor preference, as women who indicate increased resistance during a sexual assault and clear indications of non-consent are more likely to identify as having experienced sexual assault (Kilimnik and Meston, 2019).

A slightly different aspect of control, in terms of bodily response, was the emphasis on sexual assault not impacting survivors' internalisations or thoughts of their sexuality. This was particularly evident in discussions around LGBTQ+ survivors. For example, there

were mentions of how sexual assault, particularly rape, should not be allowed to define a survivor's sexuality, such as cues usually associated with sexual arousal, such as male erection, ejaculation, and female vaginal lubrication not being viewed as a survivor experiencing sexual pleasure from the assault.

For instance, in the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' produced by the Havens:

"Sexual assault has nothing to do with the survivor's sexuality. For example, a heterosexual man might be sexually assaulted by a homosexual man and vice versa. Sexual assault is a crime of power, not a question of sexuality" (2019: 33).

The term typically reserved here is 'genital sexual arousal,' used to explain the apparent disconnect where a person displays physical signs of genital arousal, such as penile erection or female lubrication, but does not find the stimuli to be sexually arousing (Wallen, 2022). Although this is sometimes conceptualised as a protective force to minimise female genitals from injury in non-consensual assaults involving penetration, genital lubrication typically does not offer substantial protection against severe injuries (Lalumiere et al., 2020). Unwanted arousal during sexual assault has been linked to feelings of shame for victim-survivors of sexual abuse (Shin and Salter, 2022), and it was found to be not uncommon amongst male victims of sexual violence, despite culturally pervasive rape myths suggesting otherwise (Stemple and Meyer, 2014). For males, penile erection triggered by the presence of erotic stimuli has been constructed and conceptualised as a reliable indicator of sexual arousal (Sachs, 2007); this combined with rape myths where there was a historical, cultural and legal lack of understanding of how a male could be 'made to penetrate' (DiMarco, Mizzoni and Savitz, 2021) have resulted in it being rather challenging for male victims of rape in particular to claim victim status.

Often following considerations of how survivors may have felt betrayed by their bodies, there were also discussions of how survivors may be experiencing/ have experienced struggles with intimacy. For example, most clearly, The 'Supporting a Survivor of Rape or Sexual Abuse' guide created by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018: 2) noted that:

"After sexual trauma survivors might feel very uncomfortable with the idea of intimacy and physical affection. Be aware that affection such as hugging, stroking and hand holding might be difficult or triggering; check with your friend or loved

one that they want to be hugged and be alert to their needs…be aware that sex may seem frightening now."

There is quite a lot to unpack in the above quotation. Here, due to their assault, survivors are positioned as having newly gained or modified feelings towards sexual intimacy with others; thus, their sexual relationships are positioned as having changed due to their victimisation experience. This is linked here to the idea that not just romantic or sexual behaviours but other ritualistic emotional behaviours, such as hugging, can either evoke emotional distress or even be a physical reminder or stimulus of their assault. Therefore, the survivor is very much constructed as a person who is currently navigating struggles with physical affection and sexual intimacy in a manner that is potentially impacting their relationships, showcasing how the assault and post-assault emotions are attached to the survivor. The link between changes in sexual intimacy post-assault has been well-documented in survivor literature, where survivors can experience a lack of interest in sexual intimacy or elevated participation in risky sexual behaviours (O'Callaghan, Shepp, Ullman and Kirkner, 2018), including male survivors of sexual assault (Stemple and Meyer, 2014);. However, risky behaviours were not discussed in documents as much (the few instances have been mentioned in other sections).

Self-reliance

Throughout self-help guides, there was a recurrent theme that survivors could be pretty self-reliant. This was particularly true because they may try to make decisions or manage their emotions independently, without external or familial support, sometimes even to their detriment. Evidence of this came from guides depicting survivors as having difficulty trusting individuals.[3] Or there was the encouragement of support agencies to help survivors build more trust with external practitioners, particularly if this had been previously fractured due to a negative experience.[4]

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[3] For example, indicated in the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' by the Havens (2019) and the 'Male survivors of rape and sexual assault' document produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018)
[4] 'Independent Sexual Violence Advocate' (ISVA) service guide by the Peterborough Rape Crisis Care Group (2019)

Self-reliance, in one instance, even went a little further. The 'Supporting a Survivor of Rape or Sexual Abuse' guide created by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018: 2) maintained that family members and loved ones should be encouraged to *"keep the focus on the survivor"* because:

> *"Sometimes survivors of abuse find themselves consoling and looking after their loved ones more than themselves…keep the focus on them."*

The above quotation suggests that survivors may feel pressure or be pressured to navigate through their emotional traumas and not only those of people they have familial relationships with, but they may find themselves burdened with having to act as a comforter to those in their wider circle. As a result, this can be quite a heavy emotional burden for a survivor to carry, and they are positioned as their trauma almost 'taking a back seat' as they take on a comforting or consoling role to those around them. This requires not only an intense mastery of one's own emotions but a further ability to occupy a caregiver role to others upset by the same trauma. Taking it one stage further than the usual construction of the survivor as an independent person who is self-sufficient (Orgad, 2009), support is usually examined through the lens of the survivor being supported, whether through formal or informal networks (Ullman, 2023).

Recovery

Again, it is pretty tricky to disentangle recovery from agency, as considerable overlap exists entirely. In terms of recovery in general, the 'survivor' was often positioned as a person who both wanted to understand and process their reactions to their victimisation experiences. In particular, 'survivor' was frequently used in tandem with the idea that survivors deserved to recover and had the right to be able to navigate negative traumatic experiences. For instance, recovery was assumed to be automatic: *"You survived the abuse. You're going to survive the recovery"* (Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide, 2020: 9).

Here, there is this automatic designation or belief that as the survivor has emerged from the assault, they will also be able to complete the journey to recovery due to their resilience from surviving the assault. However, at what point the survivor is on that journey and how language is used to describe their posttraumatic recovery is where we do see some variation amongst documents.

Linear Journey

The 'journey' metaphor has quite an established, albeit controversial, history in understanding victim-survivor identities. The first usage is often ascribed to Wood and Rennie (1994) and Thompson (2000), who observed that victim-survivors construct their recovery by moving past a victim identity towards a more positive survivor identity. Salience is given to survivors, for the adoption of a survivor label indicates recovery from sexual assault (Williamson and Serna, 2018; Hockett and Saucier, 2015). Although victims have no agency over actually being sexually assaulted, they can consciously redefine themselves from a 'victim' to a 'survivor' by embarking on a linear journey of healing on a multi-dimensional path (Jordan, 2013). Linear progression occurs from a negative state (victim identity) to a positive way of identification, namely a 'survivor' (Hunter, 2010).

Several documents used 'survivor' to describe people at the beginning or towards the very start of their post-traumatic journey to recovery; in these instances, the documents were aimed at helping aid survivors soon after victimisation. 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London) noted that survivors should (2013:2):

"Try to hang on to the belief that you will get through this – you deserve to, and you will….You are not to blame for what happened to you."

There are several dimensions to this passage to consider. Firstly, there is explicit encouragement for the survivor to internalise positive messages of self-care to try and counteract negative emotions, particularly surrounding guilt and blame. Then there is the suggestion that if survivors can do this, it will positively impact their recovery, mainly if they believe recovery is possible. Also, there is the suggestion to survivors that negative emotions they may be feeling, such as ***'guilt, blame and shame',*** are not necessary nor healthy for them to feel, and thus should be cast aside. Therefore, they should begin this therapeutic journey of moving from victim to survivor (Gavey and Schmidt, 2011). Finally, the use of ***'when you are ready'*** in their offering of counselling and external support suggests that the survivors not only have agency, but rather the decision, or first step in recovery, needs to be driven by the survivors themselves. This fits with the two-dimensional journey described by Davis and Taylor (2006), where victim-survivors need to embark on both an inner journey, a journey with their sense of self, and an outer journey

with others, through accessing formal and informal networks of support, where both of which are deemed as necessary for recovery.

Variety in emotions and shifting in mental states was also mentioned. In the 'For survivors by survivors: 13 reasons to carry on' document produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018:1), it was observed that:

"The way you feel now will be different in a day, week, month or year; give yourself a chance to know how you will feel in another moment."

Using *'now'* suggests that the survivor is at the earlier stages of recovery, as it suggests that these emotions are in flux and will shift considerably with time. Here, survivors in earlier stages of recovery are encouraged to predict the future and foresee emotional changes. This particular use of *'chance'* also suggests that it will possibly be a positive change.

One guide noted a conscious choice to use the word 'survivors' in terms of recovery, this being the SARSAS 'Self-help guide for men and boys' (2022:6):

"This guide uses the word 'survivors.' It may not feel like it, and right now, you or those around you might feel you're finding things really tough, but you have survived and you are now moving beyond surviving."

This conscious decision to adopt 'survivor,' even though some readers may not view themselves as a 'survivor' or as having 'survived,' shows a strong preference for survivor. In addition, *"moving beyond surviving"* explicitly indicates a link between the survivor and recovery. Here, we see similar patterns with Wozniak and Allen's (2012:95) discussion of the journey metaphor, where in therapeutic settings, victims are encouraged to 'journey away from abuse' and eventually experience an 'ultimate rebirth' when they finally accept a survivor identity, where survivors are seen as embarking on a truly transformational journey, even if they do not immediately identify as a survivor post-assault.

Sometimes, imagery or metaphors were used to describe the recovery journey. For example, 'The Survivor's Self-Help Guide: for men who have been sexually abused in childhood by the Sue Lambert Trust used the idea of a *life raft* to better illustrate the therapeutic journey survivors undertake (2022: 3):

"To help with this you could use the image of a life raft. This sees the process of recovery from abuse as being like a river running down to the sea. The aim is to get down the river to the sea. And as you do you start to feel more in control, happier and more fulfilled…It's a difficult journey, but one that has been completed many times by many survivors of abuse. Any rapids you encounter on the way are like a crisis…whilst the water will often be smooth and the raft will simply glide with the stream, the rapids are very difficult to get over."

For starters, a *'life raft'* is a noteworthy choice as we usually consider a life raft to be a vessel designed for the quite literal act of saving a person's life whilst out on the sea; it is typically used in emergencies and evacuations amid disasters. It can also be used in the metaphorical sense to be something or an idea that a person in need clings to navigate something complicated to get through; for example, Klonis, Endo and Crosby (1997: 333) described feminism as a *"life raft in the choppy, frigid waters of gender discrimination."* Here, feminism is not a literal boat, and gender discrimination is not the sea. Still, metaphorically, feminism becomes a comfort blanket or tool to help academics navigate the tricky terrain of gender discrimination. We see a similar echo here; the life raft, in this case, is an external form of support offered to survivors and positive self-imagery gained through this.

To break this down even further, metaphors are also used to depict recovery. If *'the aim is to get down the river to the sea,'* it is an interesting choice given that rivers tend to be much smaller bodies of water than oceans. This almost suggests that the recovery process involves the survivor moving on to bigger or perhaps more challenging things, given the slightly rougher terrain with the sea. By doing so, the survivor is positioned as feeling more *'in control, happier and more fulfilled',* all notably positive attributes to feel and experience, suggesting that progression in the recovery journey benefits survivors. At times, this journey is depicted as easy to follow; in actuality, this is positioned as the normative recovery path, *'whilst the water will often be smooth and the raft will simply glide down the stream.'* Smooth waters are often considered ideal, comfortable sailing conditions, and gliding equally supports this, with gliding even having the connotations of elegance, further heightening the relative ease of the recovery journey for the most part. However, it also notes that the survivor will encounter *'rapids,'* which are symbolic of tough-to-navigate obstacles. So this does contradict the idea of the journey or process of

recovery being completely linear, as a linear journey implies no real setbacks or obstacles but linear progression and growth.

The metaphor of light was also used in the 'For survivors by survivors: 13 reasons to carry on' document produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018: 1):

"Things will begin to get better, light always follows darkness."

Light is quite a multi-layered metaphor. Light is traditionally thought of to symbolise goodness and good things, particularly as its polar opposite; the absence of light, darkness, is often associated with evil (Forceville and Renckens, 2013). Light can have religious significance, usually related to the kind of manifestation of spiritual significance (Corrigan, 1993), but is frequently tied to knowledge as well (Derrida, 1982), hence the term 'enlightened' (Shapiro, 1985). Specifically, in terms of recovery, darkness is usually tied with "people experiencing depression – darkness, descent and weight", whilst the light is freedom from that darkness, often linked with recovery (Charteris-Black, 2012: 204). In addition, light following darkness may indicate dawn after dusk, another common metaphor where light is associated with a new beginning (Marks, 1982). Here, survival is bound with recovery, specifically with the idea of the survivor being able to move on from the negative feelings and associations with sexual assault.

A final metaphor used to illustrate healing was outdoor play equipment. The Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide noted that (2020: 20):

"Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars. You have to let go at some point in order to move forward."

Occasionally called horizontal ladders, monkey bars are a popular outdoor climbing frame often associated with children playing (Greenfield, 2007). What is significant about monkey bars is that to traverse them, the climber must let go of one bar with one hand, reach forward and grab onto the next bar, propelling themselves forward as they do (Bergeron, Bergeron, Lapointe, Kriellaars, Aubertin, Tanenbaum and Fleet, 2019). So, in this sense, just as a climber must let go of one rung to move across the ladder, a survivor must also let go of some negative emotions to move forward in their recovery, though precisely what that something is was not explicitly mentioned. This also suggests that survivors themselves

need to play an active role in their recovery if they must *'let go'* of something to move forward.

There were several other uses of the term 'survivor' to suggest that healing was not exclusively linear. These tended to centre around reassurances that recovery can be pretty difficult for survivors to navigate and that there is no typical survivor recovery response; instead, recovery and their support needs can vary from survivor to survivor. For instance, the 'Strategic Direction Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (NHS) noted that (2018: 20):

"Victims and survivors will need different levels of care and different types of support at different times in their lives and this will be dependent on their circumstances, the pace of their recovery and the level of expertise and support received at the point of disclosure."

It must be noted that both victim and survivor were used here. However, they were used as separate terms, indicated by the separation, rather than opting for an encompassing term (like victim-survivor). There is very much a temporal aspect to this framing, with survivors needing *'different types of support at different times in their lives;'* this specific framing also suggests that the level of support survivors may need shifts throughout their recovery journey, although it does not allude to how this may shift, e.g. either increased or decreased.

Similarly, the 'Information for Partners log' produced by Rape Crisis Scotland (2016: 7) also noted how:

"Everyone's experience of sexual violence is different. It also affects people in different ways. Much depends on what happened; the help someone gets at the time; and the other circumstances of their life."

Again, here we see a similar framing of no one typical survivor response to sexual violence or their journey to recovery. In both above examples from the 'Strategic Direction Sexual Assault and Abuse Services' (NHS) and the 'Information for Partners log' produced by Rape Crisis Scotland, neither of these documents was specifically created or written with the direct intention of them being viewed by survivors themselves; unlike a self-help or information guide, they were written for guidance for partners of victim-survivors of sexual violence or services for people with lived experience of sexual violence. This perhaps explains why the focus is primarily on illustrating the variation in survivor experiences and

illuminating how this may impact their recovery journey, particularly the needed support levels. Similarities are clear here between the criticism of the idea of linear progression made by Flashch et al. (2015); speaking specifically of intimate partner violence, though we can see clear parallels with general forms of sexual violence, recovery is considered 'circular' rather than linear. Whilst victim-survivors may meet milestones of recovery in a somewhat linear fashion, specific events or triggers can likely throw them back to earlier stages, and regression often occurs, with differing levels of support needed throughout the recovery journey.

In contrast, 'Rape and the effects of rape' produced by Rape Crisis (South London) is directed at survivors themselves (2013: 1):

"Unfortunately, sometimes survivors experience disbelief from some people who may ask hurtful questions and make unhelpful comments: 'Why didn't you fight back?' and 'Well I wouldn't have put myself in that sort of danger in the first place'…It's important to be kind to yourself, accept whatever support is available and feels right for you. Don't expect too much of yourself and think you 'should get over it' or 'forget it'. Rape is not something that can be forgotten, but you can work through your feelings with an experienced counsellor and learn to put it behind you."

Some of the above passage is focused on dismantling some of the secondary victimisation the survivor may have experienced, such as questions about their behaviour before and during the assault, as well as reconfiguring the survivor's sense of self as a result of this— however, the later passage centres around what recovery means. Here there is a specific contradiction to the idea that rape or sexual assault is a traumatic event that should be forgotten; in actuality, the idea that rape can simply be overlooked is entirely dismissed. Instead, the survivor is encouraged to focus their recovery on navigating their emotions surrounding the assault. However, we do see a slight contradiction as they are posited as being able to ***'learn to put it [rape] behind you.'*** This does have an air of familiarity with the previously dismantled sentence that rape can be forgotten. Still, here, it is considered something that the survivor can overcome rather than learn to ignore. Again, we also see similar echoes that the length and nature of recovery, as well as the support accessed, is very personal to the survivor.

An echo of victims being silenced was also explored in depth in the same document, where they drew upon a passage written by a person with lived experience of rape. This is a tough topic to unpack as the passage title uses the term 'survivor,' yet survivor is only used twice within the person's own words; Siobhan consciously uses the term 'victim' in five instances, but due to the title, it shall be considered here (2013: 2):

"Words from a Survivor of Rape: 'Silence is the main reason that rape is allowed to keep continuing and affecting generations of women. The silence doesn't stop if you report the rape….Silence eats away at you and silence turns the rape into your dirty little secret. Not very helpful when you are trying desperately to hold onto normality and feel like you're the same as anyone else. Maybe this is a mistake that we the survivor makes….You feel like a wooden shell that it deadened to the pain and it is living like this that reminds you of what you have lost and what you have become. We become ashamed of the rape and its memories because we realise that it makes other people embarrassed and uncomfortable. We all recognise that rape is a terrible act and it takes a vile person to commit such a crime. Why then is it the victim who is ashamed? (Extracts from a letter written by Siobhan Louise Davies)."

The passage begins by explaining the misconstruction of silence as a *'healing mechanism,'* where silence is often misunderstood in the short term as a form of distance, where the survivor is seen as distancing themselves from the event. Silence is typically ascribed to victimhood (Dunn, 2006; Barringer, 1992), whilst survivors were constructed as not only engaging in the act of speaking about their assault but the breaking of the silence is positioned as essential to their recovery (Orgad, 2009). Yet an unintended consequence of maintaining silence is explored through an almost parasitic metaphor*, 'silence eats away at you,'* seen as eroding the survivor's safety, as it is a burden they must carry whilst trying to maintain some semblance of everyday life. Davies (2013) believes that if this pressure to appear as a survivor was removed if the person were allowed to act more like a victim, it would be more conducive to their mental well-being. Instead, this *'forced silence'* is *"the mistake the survivor makes."* Yet, unexpectedly, discussions of the victim are pretty damaging and harmful.

In terms of victimhood, sexual violence is seen as highly disruptive, impacting a victim's sense of identity, trust and sense of self. There is a prominent positioning of a before and an after of sexual assault, where the victimisation event is seen as a complete disorientation in a victim's life. Here, the metaphor of a *'shell'* describes the effects on a victim's emotions, with shells usually relating to hollowness and lack of emotions, an almost dissociation or depressive state. Again, there is a return to *'silencing,'* where victims are also viewed as silenced due to the shame and judgment from others they experience. The imagery of a *time bomb* is very expressive and metaphorical here; the victim is positioned as something that could break or explode at any minute; they are thus conceptualised as highly vulnerable and breakable, primarily due to a lack of support and understanding from others. This clear, almost paradoxical discussion perhaps stems from the fact that dominant discourses have silenced all victim-survivors; survivors are not immune to this (Malinen, 2018); in fact, silencing is one of the two mechanisms, the other being 'recuperation' that has allowed for these discourses to dominate (Alcoff and Gray, 1993: 268).

Healing

There were some general associations with the 'survivor' and healing. Again, healing is challenging to disentangle from recovery, so there was considerable overlap. Generally speaking, though, there were frequent mentions of survivorhood and healing, both explicitly and some more covertly. For example, the SARSAS 'Self-help Guide for Men and Boys' noted (2022: 15):

"You have survived and you are healing."

In a similar vein, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network (2019: 4) emphasised that just through survivors seeking external support, they had already begun the healing process:

"Choosing to start working on the healing process takes courage. Opening this booklet is you already starting."

Both examples here indicate the 'active survivor,' as described by Alcoff and Gray (1993: 261-262). Survivors are viewed as opting to be a 'survivor' by taking steps in their recovery and engaging in active resistance (Bahar, 2003; Hengehold, 2000).

Hope, resilience and strength

Additional motifs associated with recovery, hope, resilience, and strength were tied to the survivor. Hope was the least frequently found, but there was one noticeable instance where survivor was used to showcase the association. The 'From reporting abuse to the trial – how to cope, advice from a survivor' self-help sheet produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project expressed its intention to (2018: 2):

"Offer support to survivors, to enable you to live a life with hope and confidence which is free from abuse."

What is quite significant here is that, specifically, the goal is to help survivors essentially become free from past victimisation experiences, where optimism or hope is tied to being separated from abuse. In contrast, resilience and strength were a much more common theme. One aspect of resilience was this idea of innate strength, where the natural, instinctive strength of the survivor was emphasised:

"The human spirit is stronger than anything that happens to it" (SARSAS 'Self-help Guide for Men and Boys, 2022: 11).

Similarly, there was also an emphasis on stressing the strength and resilience of survivors despite them not feeling resilient themselves or identifying as such. For example, 'For survivors by survivors: 13 reasons to carry on' document produced by the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018: 1):

"Even if you don't realise it yet, you have the strength to move beyond this temporary despair and pain."

Here, survivors are positioned as possessing the strength needed to be able to recover from their victimisation experience, with the negative emotions that they are feeling post-assault being described as *'temporary.'* In another parallel fashion, 'Childhood Sexual Abuse (Adult Survivors)' produced by NHS Scotland also noted (2019: 5):

"Many survivors demonstrate a good deal of resilience and strength in dealing with their experiences."

Amidst all these documents, there are clear parallels between the linkage between the 'survivor' and the qualities of strength and resilience made and re-produced within the survivor discourse. The survivor discourse aimed to offer a label that indicated and denoted the qualities that people with lived experience of sexual violence held in their resistance and recovery (Jordan, 2013; Walklate, 2011; Lamb, 1999).

In addition, even when a document clearly expressed a preference for the term 'victim,' survivorship was still bound with strength and resilience:

"Throughout this document, we will be using the word victim in recognition of the fact that a victim of domestic abuse is a victim of a crime. However, we understand that many victims prefer the term survivor to place focus on their strength and resilience rather than the crime committed against them." (Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse: Consultation Response and Draft Bill, 2019: 5)

The preference here perhaps should be considered loosely, as although the guide adopts 'victim' as the normative term, there is an explicit acknowledgement of the alternatives and reasons behind their employment. Here, quite clearly, the survivor was associated with strength and resilience; in fact, it was noted as the motivation behind victim-survivors having a personal preference for the term survivor. There are transparent illusions here to the body of research which has explored the existence of victim-survivors of sexual assault openly preferring 'survivor' and, in turn, actively rejecting the 'victim' identity due to the negative associations attached to the victim. Leisenring (2006) found that women may reject victim identities and prefer survivor due to the 'survivor' role being less stigmatised than the victim identity, which is quite often discredited. Young and Maguire (2003) also found that several women preferred the term 'survivor' as it better encapsulated the stage they were at in their recovery. However, it must be clear that a rejection of victim does not automatically result in victim-survivors embracing the 'survivor' one; for example, Koelsch (2014:21) found that whilst women may reject being called a victim due to an apparent perception of a lack of agency, none of them chose to claim 'survivor' instead.

Negotiating shame

Survivor was used when describing how people with lived experiences of sexual assault may experience feelings of shame as a result. For example, the 'Supporting women who have

survived sexual violence' resource produced by The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre observed that, in actuality, the majority of survivors experienced feelings of shame (2015: 6): *"Sexual violence for most survivors induces shame."* Similarly, the 'Information for Partners log' produced by Rape Crisis Scotland also noted that shame was an emotion quite commonly experienced by survivors of sexual assault, although this was mainly due to regret surrounding their actions in the build-up or during their assault (2016: 7):

"Blame and shame

It is very common for survivors to think that they somehow caused the abuse, and that, had they done something or behaved differently, or been somewhere else, it would not have happened."

It is interesting to see *'blame'* used in a survivor context, as the survivor discourse intended to use the term to deflect blame and responsibility away from survivors themselves (Larson, 2018). Victims "are presented as trapped," unlike survivors who "are shown as making choices" (Dunn, 2005: 2). However, it, of course, must be acknowledged that survivors, like their victim counterparts and those who choose to claim neither victim nor survivor status, are still viewed as internalising self-blame; Williamson and Serna (2018) found that victims and survivors did not differ in their levels of self-blame. So, we must be cautious of falling into the trap of freeing the 'survivor' entirely from self-blame.

In addition, the 'Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse' support guide produced by Victim Support discussed how child sexual abuse survivors can also blame themselves for being victimised due to the perpetrators' actions making them feel responsible, both of which can lead to feelings of shame:

"Often, people abuse others because they want power and control over them. It's important to remember that it is never the child's fault. Abusers may try to make the child responsible, or make the child feel like they allowed the abuse to happen, and this can lead to survivors feeling shame or guilt in adulthood. Abusive behaviour towards children is always wrong and the child is never to blame." (2021: 2).

Comparatively, the Self-Help Guide produced by The Survivors Network also stressed the impact that feelings of shame could have on a survivor, linking this to low self-confidence and self-esteem (2019: 15):

"Shame is one of the most destructive emotions. People usually feel shame because they feel they are not good enough or that something is wrong with them."

'Destructive' is quite a powerful, resonant adjective, as we usually conceptualise destructive emotions as harmful to the experiencer (Flanagan, 2000). So, we see shame quite literally as damaging not only to the survivor but also to their relationships, as it can make survivors hesitant to reach out for help or support.

In a somewhat similar dimension, the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' produced by the Havens encouraged survivors to internalise messages, almost in a manner comparative to positive affirmations aimed to combat feelings of shame:

"Remind yourself that what happened to you was not sex, it was assault. Tell yourself you are not dirty, you are a survivor!" (2019: 33)

Here, we see affirmations centred on two clear messages: firstly, the survivor is encouraged to remember that they were victimised, that they were assaulted, and secondly, they are encouraged to view themselves as a survivor. In the secondary aspect, we see affirmations centred on two clear messages: firstly, the survivor is encouraged to remember that they were victimised, that they were assaulted, etc, *'dirty'* is an interesting choice and likely refers to 'internal dirtiness' where victim-survivors of sexual assault are believed to experience a form of 'mental pollution,' describing feelings of people who have been sexually assaulted as immorality, disgust and feeling polluted (Fairbrother and Rachman, 2004).

There were also discussions of how survivors could experience shame in policy documents. The 'Strategic Direction Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (NHS)', explained that (2018: 23):

"When supporting and caring for victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse, professionals need to ensure that they display an appropriate understanding of and empathy for its impact on both men and women. When this fails to happen, it can exacerbate the burden of victim and survivor shame and unnecessarily prolong the length of time that it takes to access the right support. This can have a significant impact on diagnosis, recovery and trust."

Whilst survivors were described as having a ***'burden'*** of shame initially, concerns were also raised surrounding professionals contributing, adding to or exacerbating that shame as well, essentially secondary victimisation. Similar echoes of not wanting to cause secondary victimisation to survivors were also observed in the 'Government Response to the Report of the House of Lords Sexual Violence in Conflict Committee' (2016:7). This was regarding external members of the community rather than industry professionals.

"The Government wants to work with the international community to do more to change the social norms or perceptions that accept, condone or justify sexual violence, so that victims are no longer shamed or punished. This is crucial not just for the survivor's recovery, but also for that of their families and communities."

Guilt was often either closely interlinked with shame, or there were several clear parallels. There were several suggestions that survivors should try to navigate feelings of guilt by repositioning responsibility with the offender rather than questioning their actions or behaviour. For example, the 'Self-help guide for survivors of rape and sexual assault' produced by the Havens (2019: 6) noted that ***"responsibility for the offender's actions lie with the offender, never with the survivor of the crime,"*** emphasising that survivors are negotiating guilt surrounding their actions. Similarly, the 'Adult Survivors of child sexual abuse' support guide produced by Victim Support also stressed that child sexual abuse survivors may also be negotiating guilt surrounding their victimisation (2021: 2):

"Abusers may try to make the child responsible, or make the child feel like they allowed the abuse to happen, and this can lead to survivors feeling shame or guilt in adulthood."

Self-blame and guilt of survivors were also touched upon in the Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide (2020: 24)

"Guilt and shame – These are what many survivors report after an assault and can be the most destructive of feelings. Guilt is an aspect of trauma where the mind protects you by taking back control…Unfortunately, for survivors, blame is also a response to social conditioning and victim blaming in a world that holds survivors responsible."

Thus, it is clear that whilst a survivor may be viewed as less stigmatising than a victim, it would be neglectful to blanketly assume that the two are positioned on a binary in terms of

experiencing shame and guilt; that is to say that survivors can, and are, susceptible to blame and guilt (Leisenring, 2006; Convery, 2006).

The three lenses of victimhood

As aforementioned, the victim should be viewed through three essential lenses, which are mutually connected and tie into the three pillars of the survivor label. It is much harder to trace the usage of the term 'victim' in feminist violence and abuse literature due to the historical precedence of the term. However, the expansion of survivor literature post-1970s sought to re-examine victimhood in the process. Moreover, connotations underpinning the term 'victim' are much more deeply entrenched than 'survivor' (van Dijk, 2009). Hence, a lens, which is commonly used to be able to see something that was previously invisible, offers an innovative metaphor to examine victimhood. Connotations of victimhood often go hand-in-hand with discussions of survivorhood, revealing the lack of attention given in comparison to the survivor discourse, stressing victimhood's lack of visibility. In addition, connotations may be so deeply rooted that they are almost unconscious, such as embedded in language (see Papendick and Bohner, 2017).
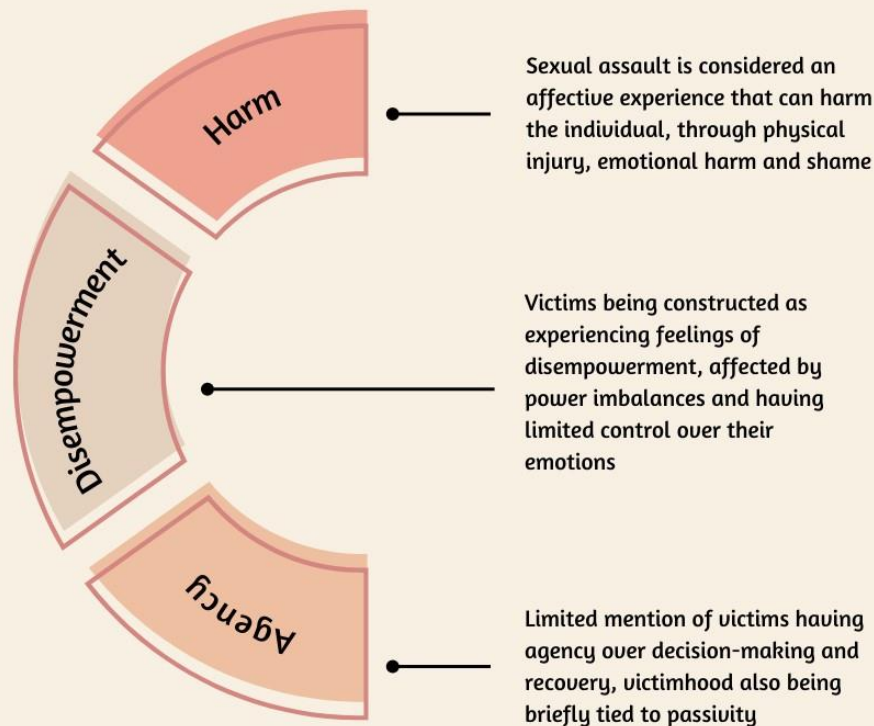
Figure 13 - 3 lenses of victim

Lack of agency and passivity

There was minimal mention of agency in consideration of 'victim', whether it concerns victims' lack of agency over decisions and recovery. The 'Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales' (2020: 14) emphasises the rights that victims have during police investigations, showcasing the degrees of agency that they could express:

"If you are a victim of sexual violence, gender-based violence or domestic abuse, you have the Right to request that the police officer conducting the interview is of a gender of your choice."

Here, we see victims being told how they can express their preferences or maintain a degree of control, such as choosing the gender of the officer interviewing them, or if they cannot decide, they must explain why. This is not necessarily the victim being depicted as having agency, but they certainly are showcased as having a degree of control. In a slightly similar dimension, the 'Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in the International Aid Sector' noted the need to involve victims and survivors within consultations, suggesting that victims (and survivors) should be listened to (2018:5):

"It is crucial to listen to those who experience and witness sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and enable their voices to inform prevention, response and continual improvement."

There was one explicit mention where the victim was tied with passivity; it was the primary motivation behind why 'The Survivor's Handbook' produced by Women's Aid preferred the term 'survivor' over 'victim' (2016: 8):

"The terms "victim" and "survivor" are both used, depending on the context. "Survivor" is, however, preferred as it emphasises an active, resourceful and creative response to the abuse, in contrast to "victim", which implies passive acceptance. If you are reading this, then you are – at least to some extent – a survivor."

We can see here the two terms being positioned within opposing frameworks, with survivorship being bound with action and active participation, whilst the victim is tied with passive acceptance, where the victim is seen as not taking an active role in their recovery and navigation of the victimisation experience. Here, reading the guide, designed to be a self-help manual, is considered an active decision in recovery. Thus, all readers are ascribed some, at least partial, survivor moniker. Within theoretical works, 'victim' is commonly connoted with passivity in particular (Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Papendick and Bohner, 2017) due to 'victim' being associated with someone who has simply experienced and lived through some form of a traumatic event (Ben-David, 2020). It is also intimately linked to disempowerment, which featured more readily in the documents.

Disempowerment

There was a much stronger motif of victims feeling disempowered than passivity. Victims could be disempowered in a myriad of ways. For example within the 'Toolkit for prosecutors on violence against women and girls cases involving a vulnerable victim' ***"the criminal justice process can feel disempowering for victims,"*** positioned the administration of justice and criminal justice procedures as evoking feelings of disempowerment from victims (2021: 3). Secondary victimisation or revictimisation through navigating the criminal justice process can occur, leading to disempowerment of victims (Robinson, Hudson and Brookman, 2008). This can be due to the system not being equipped to deal with the unique needs of sexual assault victims (Campbell, 2005), as well as shame, stigma and the emotional burden of giving evidence (Koss, 2000).

In another vein, victims could also experience feelings of disempowerment due to power imbalances, including ineffective structures and organisations involved in the reporting of sexual violence. The 'Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in the International Aid Sector'(2018: 5) noted that:

"Victim and survivors commonly fear a backlash from perpetrators, who have access to resources and people in power, and the ability to deny them vital aid."

This reinforces notions of victims' passivity and the need for state protection. This paternalistic state imagery can have unintended consequences for disempowerment, as it can infantilise victims (Hall, 2004; Gilmore, 2003).

Control over emotions

There were also several suggestions, particularly in self-help guides, that victims needed help or support to gain better control over their emotions. Now, this does suggest that victims of sexual assault have or experience difficulty in navigating through their feelings surrounding the victimisation experience. For example, the 'Coping with trauma' booklet produced by Victim Support (2020: 2) noted that:

"We want to help you get control over these feelings. We will give you some tools to help you cope with how you feel about yourself. We will also tell you how to get help if you are struggling."

Here, quite clearly, victims are positioned as feeling out of control, particularly surrounding their self-confidence, self-esteem and conceptualisations of how they view themselves. Although the use of 'if' when offering support suggests that it is not a foregone conclusion or automatic assumption that all victims will struggle to navigate this, it does indicate that many victims have difficulty here, or why mention it? This is particularly true as the guide later offers some suggestions of how victims can help cope with trauma, where quite a few of them centre around self-regulation of emotions (2020:6):

"• Talking to someone you trust like a family member, friend or support worker. Tell them what you are feeling and going through

• Try writing down what you are feeling and thinking. Ask someone to help if you need to

• Listen to music, or try some arts and crafts to express how you are feeling

• Try self-defence classes like karate or judo. Look on the internet for classes near you or there may be some online ones you could do. This might make you feel more confident

• Get help from a professional such as a therapist or find a support group

• Remember to take care of yourself and your needs."

Similarly, the 'What to do if you are a victim of sexual abuse or assault' pamphlet produced by Sexual Violence Support described how victims experience an assortment of emotions but stressed that there was no one normative response to sexual violence (2021: 6):

"You may be experiencing a mixture of emotions right now. However you are feeling, there is no right or wrong way to deal with sexual violence. This was not your fault! You may have been threatened, asleep, unconscious, or your body frozen and helpless to respond."

Here, we see a suggestion that victims are likely somewhat confused or unsure about the range of emotions that they are experiencing, mainly as there is an emphasis on victims not feeling ashamed about exactly how they react to their victimisation experience. There is also a stress on victims' need to understand the survival tactics they unconsciously

employed during the assault, with a particular emphasis on victims trying not to self-blame due to these tactics. The guide later goes on to express the said range of emotions (2021: 7):

"People experience various feelings, and every situation is unique. You are not alone…These are not limited, and your feelings are likely to change as time passes. You may be feeling overwhelmed and confused about what to do, but there is support available to help you deal with this."

Again, we see a clear re-assertion that due to the individual nature of the victimisation event, every victim's response can have some significant variation; i.e. there is no one typical, acceptable victim response to sexual violence. However, there is a suggestion that victims may feel a range of emotions, the vast majority of these typically being viewed as harmful or destructive; for example, anger, confusion, frustration, a loss of control, self-blame/ guilt, anxiety, and a sense of numbness. The more grey area emotions of *'strangely calm'* and *'hypersexuality or an increased desire for sexual contact'* leave little room for interpretation. The word *'strangely'* strongly suggests that feeling calm is atypical; instead, a normative response would be to feel an absence of calm, although feeling relaxed, in general, is usually perceived as a positive or healthy emotion, as the person is not distressed. So here, the positioning of a victim as feeling *'strangely calm'* suggests that whilst some victims may react in this way, it is an odd response, at least to most onlookers. Also, an increased desire for sexual contact could, in theory, be a positive reaction, particularly given the host of literature that examines the decline in wanted sexual contact following sexual assault or intimacy issues often associated with a victimisation experience (O'Callaghan et al., 2018; Stemple and Meyer, 2014). However, hypersexuality is often associated with damaging or risky sexual behaviour (Walton, Cantor, Bhullar and Lykins, 2017). Thus, again, we see this unintentional suggestion that victims may need to gain control of their sexual behaviour.

There was also a very overt reference to a *'stereotypical response'* and comparative assertions about the misconception surrounding the assertion that victims respond to sexual violence in a similar or expected manner. The 'Report of the independent review into the Investigation and Prosecution of rape in London' found that (2015: 52):

"The stereotypical view of how a rape victim will respond to the crime is still based on the image of a distressed individual who, having actively defended herself against

her assailant, wastes no time reporting her experience to the nearest family member or police officer. This simplistic view overlooks the self-blaming, incredulity, the efforts to normalise the situation by carrying on as usual and the profound post-traumatic stress disorder that sometimes accompany such a traumatic event."

Here, we see a clear challenge or attack levied on the construction of victims, where cultural constructions of victimhood are presented as a problem; in this case, it is viewed as a barrier for victims reporting sexual violence. The stereotypical construction offered here is a victim who is perceived as in distress, so a person who has been injured or harmed in some manner and needs assistance, support or help. This aligns with Holstein and Miller's (1990: 105) analysis of cultural constructions of victimhood, which places substantial evidence on "injury and innocence". Furthermore, victims are also presented as someone who attempted to defend themselves or took actions to try and prevent or minimise the injury during the victimising event, so they are seen as fighting back to some degree during the victimisation event. Finally, they are constructed as individuals who immediately reported the event to either another person or to the police; clearly to challenge the notion that delays can happen in reporting rape and sexual violence (Klemmer, Neill and Jarvis, 2021), as well as help-seeking treatment (Steward, Hughs and Frank, 1987). The review believes that this cultural construction is reminiscent of several rape myths surrounding victims, mainly centred around self-blame. Victims were viewed as more likely to be navigating the self-blame and shame accompanied by victimisation than their survivor counterparts (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020).

Harm and injury

Harm was also a prevalent motif throughout discussions and usages of victims, whether it was used explicitly or there were discussions of the ways victims had been harmed. The 'Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales explicitly bound the definition of a victim with a person who had experienced some harm (2020: 3):

"The definition of a 'victim' is: a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by a criminal offence."

However, the critical point of differentiation was centred around how discussions of harm developed and how harm and injury were used to describe victims. For instance, The 'Report of the independent review into the Investigation and Prosecution of rape in London' acknowledged that victims of sexual violence do suffer long-term effects. However, they may not be physically injured during the assault (2015: 15):

"Rape and penetrative sexual offences have a devastating and long-lasting effect on those who are victims of these crimes and yet it is highly probable that in most cases there will be no visible sign of injury."

Similarly to earlier discussions, this seems to be specifically curated to challenge the rape myths surrounding physical injuries and sexual assault. Although there was a substantial emphasis on the harm caused to victims by their assault, in this case, psychological injury, their victimisation experience was very strongly positioned as a traumatic experience. For instance, the 'Support following a rape or sexual assault' guide noted this in considerable detail when outlining the support available to victims (2023: 2):

"If you are a victim of rape or sexual assault, this guide will help you understand what support is available to you…Being a victim of rape, sexual assault or abuse is a difficult and traumatic experience….It is never too early or too late to ask for help."

Quite clearly in the guide, the victim is used to discuss a challenging, traumatic experience to navigate. This is in line with Best's (1999: 106) framing of the ideology of victimisation, where victims are often viewed in terms of suffering or sustaining "long-lasting damage." This does not have exclusively negative consequences; victim status can be beneficial to claim in some capacities due to its association with innocence and the need for support (Dunn, 2005). Ben-David (2020: 23) describes this as "both a blessing and a curse."

Physical injury

In a similar dimension, there were several mentions of the emotional, physical and psychological challenges that victims faced as a result of their sexual assault. Physical effects and associations with victimhood were mentioned in discussions of healthcare provisions for victims of sexual abuse. For instance, the 'Women's Health Strategy for England' outlined victimisation, domestic violence and violence and abuse in detail, noting that (2022: 101):

"Women and girls who are victims of violence and abuse are supported by the healthcare system and in the workplace, and the healthcare system takes an increased role in prevention, early identification and provision of support for victims. There is a wider acknowledgement and understanding that violence and abuse is a public health issue, as well as a criminal justice issue."

Although there was not much detail in discussing some of the actual complexities of working with victims of sexual violence in the healthcare sector, there was considerable discussion around the links between domestic violence and suicide (2022: 103), particularly in terms of prevention for victims of domestic abuse. Health concerns of victims of sexual assault were also raised, where sexual violence was considered as having a possibility for *"disrupting health and development, adversely affecting relations and contributing to significant mental health issues"* for victims (The strategic direction sexual assault and abuse services, 2018: 22).

In a slightly different direction, there were also a few discussions surrounding victims of sexual violence and physical injury, more pointedly regarding victims being subjected to misconceptions surrounding injuries. The Law Commission 205 observed, when explicitly discussing rape within marriage, that:

"An alleged victim may find herself in the unenviable position of having to struggle or fight to sustain injuries in order that she may incur protection from the law. This is ludicrous and contrary to the way in which victims behave when attacked" (2015: 17).

It describes how victims of sexual violence can sometimes be subjected to preconceived notions of what a victim should look like and whether a victim should have sustained physical injuries within a sexual assault to show that they did not consent to the assault and fought back or took steps to try and protect themselves. The aim was to challenge this preconceived idea, acknowledge the existence of these victim-blaming discourses and criticise them in terms of how they affect the legal protection a victim may be afforded. Victims who deviated from established rape scripts that did not reflect all women's experiences of sexual violence could subject women to intense victim-blaming (Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2004).

On the other side, a victim in The 'Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London' described, in considerable detail, how victims themselves may feel when subjected to these aforementioned victim-blaming discourses surrounding injury:

"I wasn't sure if I could ever tell anyone what had just happened to me, but I also felt I had a duty to tell the police because that man was still out there with a knife. I was not hysterical, just in shock…I thought people – and especially the police – would expect someone of my age to have put up more of a fight and have been beaten black and blue into submission" (2015: 53).

Although the victim initially expresses reluctance or hesitation to report their assault to the police, they also clearly worry that the police would have expected to see some form of injury as a sign that they attempted to defend themselves. Here, despite the victim having clear physical signs of being assaulted, damaged clothing, and visible, albeit minor injuries, they still feel that this is not a good enough indicator, believing the police would expect them to have sustained more considerable injuries. This preconceived notion even contributes to the victim's reluctance to report their sexual assault, further emphasising the association between victimhood and injury.

Emotional harm

Emotional and psychological harm was discussed in considerably more detail; this also often involved discussions with a temporal aspect. Some documents noted that victims had difficulty processing their own emotions surrounding the assault, exploring the immediate effects of sexual violence on victims. For example, 'Sexual assault abroad' (2013: 21) noted that *"the victim was going through a very difficult time emotionally."* Comparatively, 'Getting it right for victims and witnesses' noted that for victims:

"Many will find themselves having to contend with the emotional effects of crime…the impact can be distress, hardship, life-changing injury or bereavement" (2013: 8).

It must be noted that this was a description of the emotional effects of victims of *"the most serious violent and sexual crimes",* not just sexual violence, so not all may apply, such as grief or life-changing injury (2013: 8).

However, the vast majority of documents centred around attaching long-term emotional distress and harm to victims. The 'Rebuilding lives – supporting victims of crime' maintained that ***"for sexual offences in particular, the psychological effects can linger for many years"*** (2016: 16). The use of ***'linger'*** is fascinating here, usually when something is described as 'lingering' it is unwanted but continues to remain despite this. Thus, the victim here is used to describe how emotional harm can continue to affect victims in the long term, even if this is unconscious. Similarly, The 'Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London' also stressed the long-term effects that sexual violence has on victims; ***"rape and penetrative sexual offences have a devastating and long-lasting effect on those who are victims of these crimes"*** (2015: 15).

Taking this one stage further, sexual violence was also positioned in one document as having a life-changing, negative impact on victims of sexual assault. It must be noted that the 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' made this assertion regarding victims and survivors; ***"crimes of violence against women and girls can have a devastating and lifechanging effect on victims and survivors"*** (2021: 49). The use of the adjective ***'devastating'*** stresses both the severity and negativity that the effects of sexual violence can have on victims and survivors, here harm is positioned as negative, far-reaching and long-term for both concepts. However, in the same section, the document positioned the traumatic experience and emotional harm sustained from sexual violence as permanent, and here, only the victim was used (2021: 49): ***"The trauma will stay with the victim forever. It seriously compromises ALL life prospects and opportunities."***

Of course, it must be stressed that only one document considered the emotional harm sustained by victims of sexual assault as life-altering and permanent. However, this is a powerful assertion that the victim is bound with permanent emotional damage, as the trauma will ***'stay with the victim forever,'*** suggesting it is inescapable, with a powerful sense of finality. It is pretty reminiscent of the suggestion Kelly, Burton and Regan (1996) made when expressing their preference for 'survivor,' as victim identity allows the sexual assault to take primacy over a victim's identity. In addition, emotional harm is also described as being a recurring obstacle within victims' lives; the fact that it 'compromises' suggests that it serves as a challenge victims must constantly overcome in every aspect of their lives.

Other adjectives were also used to describe victims and the ways they had been harmed, but there was quite a lot of variation here. The adjectives themselves were quite different, and the levels of impact on victims also varied in terms of the extent to which they had been impacted. However, there was an underlying focus on how sexual assault had negatively impacted and affected victims, centring around the ways they had been harmed. The progress report 'A Call to End Violence against Women and Girls' focused on victims being silenced, describing them as ***"victims all too often hiding in silence behind closed doors"*** (2015: 4). The strong imagery here in this phrase is quite a graphic portrayal of victims of sexual violence. The selection of the verb ***'hiding'*** suggests that victims are trying to conceal themselves from something or someone that could cause them harm, in this case, the perpetrators. It is reminiscent of Dunn's (2005:2) discussion of how victims often "are presented as trapped." Strong connotations are linked with feelings of fear or fear, almost cowering away, stressing the vulnerability of victims (Dunn, 2006). ***'Silence'*** indicates that victims have had their voices taken away, indicating their inability to speak, seek support or make a disclosure of sexual assault, again stressing their vulnerabilities (Young and Maguire, 2003). Finally, the metaphor ***behind closed doors*** further suggests the hidden or concealed element; they are positioned as the opposite of visible; they are left to 'suffer in silence' (van Dijk, 2009:77) . So, this is a rather graphic portrayal stressing victims' vulnerabilities.

In a few cases, victims of sexual violence were positioned as vulnerable. 'From report to court' noted the enhanced legal protection and provisions victims of sexual violence received due to their unique vulnerabilities: ***"Victims of domestic and sexual violence and considered to be vulnerable or intimidated victims who should receive an enhanced service from the different agencies involved in the criminal justice system"*** (2016: 61).

Here, 'vulnerable' and 'intimidated' are both used in the legal sense, but both also evoke strong connotations of the need to offer increased protection to victims. Similarly, the 'Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in the International Aid Sector' uses both terms, victim and survivor, but refers to them both as the ***'most vulnerable'*** (2018: 4), comparatively stressing the enhanced protections that should be granted to victims and survivors of sexual violence, in this case, to encourage reporting. Thus, this does somewhat reflect the role of the "helpless and vulnerable victim" (Loney-Howes, 2018: 27).

There were also several other mentions of victims and concerns surrounding reporting sexual violence, mainly due to the harm they had sustained as a result of their victimisation experience. The 'Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in the International Aid Sector' stressed that *"victims think 'why take the risk when reporting when you know you will just be ignored'"* (2018: 6) as one of the victims they consulted expressed. Similarly, the 'Limiting the use of complainants' sexual history in sex cases' also stated the desire to tackle the lack of confidence victims of sexual violence felt when going to report abuse:

"We want victims of devastating crime such as sexual violence to have the confidence to report abuse, and continue to encourage victims to report current and historical sex offences" (2017: 7).

In addition, the 'LGBT Action Plan 2018' also expressed a desire to increase victim confidence when reporting (2018: 15):

"We will improve recording and reporting for victims of hate crime and domestic abuse... The Crown Prosecution Service will work with partners to improve the recording and monitoring of equalities data for LGBT victims of domestic abuse, rape and hate crime."

Now, it is clear that this lack of confidence when reporting is perhaps more clearly explained by distrust in police and other criminal justice agencies or concerns that the reporting of sexual violence is traumatic, as discussed previously. This was picked up on in the documents themselves; there were considerable concerns raised that victims could find the criminal justice system *"highly traumatic"* (Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People National Group Progress Report and Action Plan, 2015: 3), mainly due to the risk of exposure to secondary victimisation. Furthermore, 'Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London' showcased victims describing how they felt when the consensual nature of their assault was questioned or police challenged other details:

"One such complainant felt crushed when told, 'That doesn't sound historical. Sounds pre-historical'. Another who, having plucked up the courage to report to the police months after the event, was asked, 'Did you actually say no?' She told the review she felt flattened." (2015: 57).

We see some powerful, emotionally resonant, metaphorical language used here to describe the victims' feelings. McAllister (2012) explored this idea of a 'crushed spirit' in considerable length in the context of disappointment in an educational classroom setting. Still, it is comparable here, where a crushed spirit or feeling crushed involves a powerful feeling of disappointment and defeat that is crippling to the extent that it destroys the trust between two parties. Similarly, feelings of being *'flattened'* also suggest extreme disappointment.

This lack of confidence in reporting sexual assault was only expressed in documents using 'victim'; it was not mentioned at all in documents, preferring survivor. So, we do see this as a theme in victim documents. For example, the 'What to do if you are a victim of sexual abuse or assault' pamphlet produced by Sexual Violence Support (2021) reassured victims that they could report an incident of sexual violence free of judgment, even if it were a historical incident. This, albeit unintentionally, establishes that victims do experience anxieties surrounding reporting an incident of sexual violence in a manner not seen in documents focused on 'survivors.'

Shame

As was the case with documents using survivors, documents referring to victims also positioned them as negotiating feelings of shame as a result of the sexual assault experience. For example, the 'Coping with trauma' booklet produced by Victim Support noted that victims of sexual assault *"may be feeling lots of different things such as shame, guilt, sadness, anxiety and many others"* (2020: 2). Here, shame is considered to be amongst the myriad of negative emotions that victims of sexual assault commonly experience after they have been assaulted, it is one of the emotions they must navigate post-assault.

There was also some mention of the unique dimension of *'shame'* that international victims and survivors may experience surrounding their sexual assault. The 'Government response to the report of the House of Lords Sexual Violence in Conflict Committee' uses both terms, but we can see distinctive variations within the discursive site of shame that are pretty illuminating (2016: 7):

"The Government wants to work with the international community to do more to change the social norms or perceptions that accept, condone or justify sexual

violence, so that victims are no longer shamed or punished. This is crucial not just for the survivor's recovery, but also for that of their families and communities."

Here, we see perhaps the most evident distinction between victim and survivor, as the terms were easily being used interchangeably; we can make inferences that this was a conscious choice in vocabulary, at least in terms of contextual use. 'Victim' is used to describe or refer to a person with lived experience of sexual assault who is shamed or punished, as the term was used when advocating for the government's desire to remedy this; thus, as a consequence, it suggests that 'victims' of sexual violence are currently subjected to shame and punishment, or else there would be no need for intervention or *'change'.* Yet when recovery is mentioned, 'survivor' is opted for, rather than 'victim.' Thus, whether it was the intended consequence or not, the policy document binds victims with shame and survivors with recovery, creating a distinctive separation.

Shame was also examined in considerable depth in the 'Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London', although in this instance, only the victim was used. Specifically concentrating on victims of sexual violence who identified as having a minority ethnic background when considering one aspect of shame, the cultural relevance was also examined (2015: 51-52):

"One victim from a minority ethnic background told the review that since reporting rape to the police, she is regarded by her sister as the wrongdoer and of bringing shame on the community, something regarded as worse than the rape. In her family's opinion, she should have forgiven the perpetrator and kept silent."

Here, we see a slightly different examination of shame, as compared to previously, and indeed, the majority of documents tended to focus on the victim or survivor experiencing shame as an emotion, either due to their actions, bodily response or an aspect of the victimisation event itself. Instead, the victim in the review describes how her actions of actually reporting her assault to the police, so her actions post-assault, were regarded as shameful to her sister due to her bringing attention to the assault within the community. Thus, we see the victim being blamed for speaking about their victimisation experience, an action that the victim's sister viewed as *'worse than the rape'* because the shame the disclosure and sexual assault would bring on the family was considered to be more damaging than the effects of sexual violence on the victim. It is a powerful echo of victim

blaming, mainly of secondary victimisation, where the victim's actions come under more scrutiny than the perpetrator's. This is also taken one stage further, outlined in the above quotation, where the victim was expected to *'forgive'* the perpetrator. Here, the expectation is raised that victims should be silenced, morally superior to the perpetrator and forgiven.

In a similar dimension, the review also discussed how another victim they consulted experienced feelings of shame bound up with the experience of being silenced. However, this was done slightly more consciously in this case. We almost see a limited form of agency, or forced agency (2015: 51):

"'Even some friends and family found it extremely difficult to deal with me after it happened and I was shocked by the ignorance and insensitivity I encountered. I realised that rape is still a very misunderstood crime and, because it is such a taboo subject that people prefer not to think or talk about, it became and remains my 'dirty, little secret'. The fact that a victim accepts anonymity - something I did not for myself but to protect other members of my family - just adds to that sense of secrecy and hidden shame'."

There's quite a lot to be unpacked in the above quotation. We first see quite explicit depictions of the unspeakability of rape, where societal and criminal justice responses traditionally result in victims struggling to speak out about sexual violence (Thompson, 2000). It has been historically relegated to being viewed as something secretive and rarely discussed in public or private (Swanson, 2019; O'Neil, 2018; Loney-Howes, 2018), with women being silenced when discussions of male-perpetrated violence are viewed as 'out of place' of the context (Anitha, Marine and Lewis, 2020: 13). This is reaffirmed by rape being considered 'taboo,' and thus is not an acceptable topic for discussion (Alcoff and Gray, 1993). Due to this unspeakability, the victim felt the rape became their *'dirty, little secret;'* a colloquial term that is often used to describe a secret that would be shameful or cause discomfort for the person it was about if discovered due to anticipated judgment of others (Barringer, 1992).

Consequently, the victim is positioned as unable to speak about their rape and thus is silenced, but here the victim is doing this somewhat willingly as a protective, defensive tactic. The victim is seen as accepting a sort of constrained agency, where they agree to culturally transmitted norms about the unspeakbility of sexual violence to prevent family

members from experiencing further shame if the sexual assault was discovered. Whilst it cannot be seen as complete agency, due to the dominance of these culturally permeant ideas victims are subjected to, as this is a conscious decision, it can be thought of as them experiencing some form of constrained or limited agency, even forced agency.

Pulling it all together – 3 pillars of survivorhood and 3 lenses of victimhood

In sum, 116 policy and practice documents produced from the 1st January 2013 to the 1st January 2023 were explored for their usage of 'victim,' 'survivor,' and 'victim-survivor.' A discursive analysis was conducted on the language usage and underlying associations attached to said concepts. This specific language was chosen as they were determined as the most common normative and nonnormative framings (Hockett and Saucier, 2015).

While it was established in Chapter 4 that some documents used both terms interchangeably, most documents exclusively used 'victim' (n=55) rather than 'survivor' exclusively (n=23). Despite there numerically being more instances of 'victim' exclusively, in terms of documents that actively gave a clear rationale for their language choices, there was a stronger preference for the term 'survivor.' In terms of justification for a preference for the survivor, there were two key reasons given for this: 1) selection was explained in wishing to convey the literal meaning of surviving and 2) the implications of opting for the survivor in terms of determining how people with lived experience are viewed. Both of these reasons do have roots in contextual usage, as outlined, with regards to the literal meaning, documents that centred reasoning around this wished to convey someone who had quite literally denoted someone who had experienced and survived a form of sexual assault. Documents concerned with contextual usage take this a stage further, noting that language does not solely designate a word choice but attaches a concept to individuals or groups of victim-survivors, which also has implications for those labelled. These connotations above in documents gave clear rationale as having a potential effect upon how victim-survivors' self-identified and how others viewed them. Whilst this often featured indications of the literal usage of 'survive,' it was also usually taken further within these documents' rationale where 'survivor' was viewed as bound with recovery.

Within the documents are three pillars central to the survivor discourse and understanding the usage of 'survivor.' Notably, the three pillars should not be viewed in isolation but instead were interconnected and interwoven at points, especially as the first pillar, 'safety,' is notably absent from the survivor discourse within violence and abuse literature. Literature examining the concept of a survivor rarely negatively constructs survivors; constructions tend to centre on a binary idea that victimhood is negative, whilst survivorhood is associated with more positive coping (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Dunn, 2005). However, this practice and policy analysis revealed that this distinction between victims and survivors was not clear-cut; a 'survivor' was frequently constructed as a person navigating adverse post-traumatic circumstances. Instead, the depiction of a survivor fits more with Convery's (2006) notion that the two are not distinctive concepts and that nothing intrinsically separates victims from survivors.

These three pillars can also be used as supports to examine three key lenses of victim, namely, agency, harm and disempowerment, as they overlap and feed into each other. If we bring these together, we have the building blocks of victim-survivor concepts within policy and practice documents:
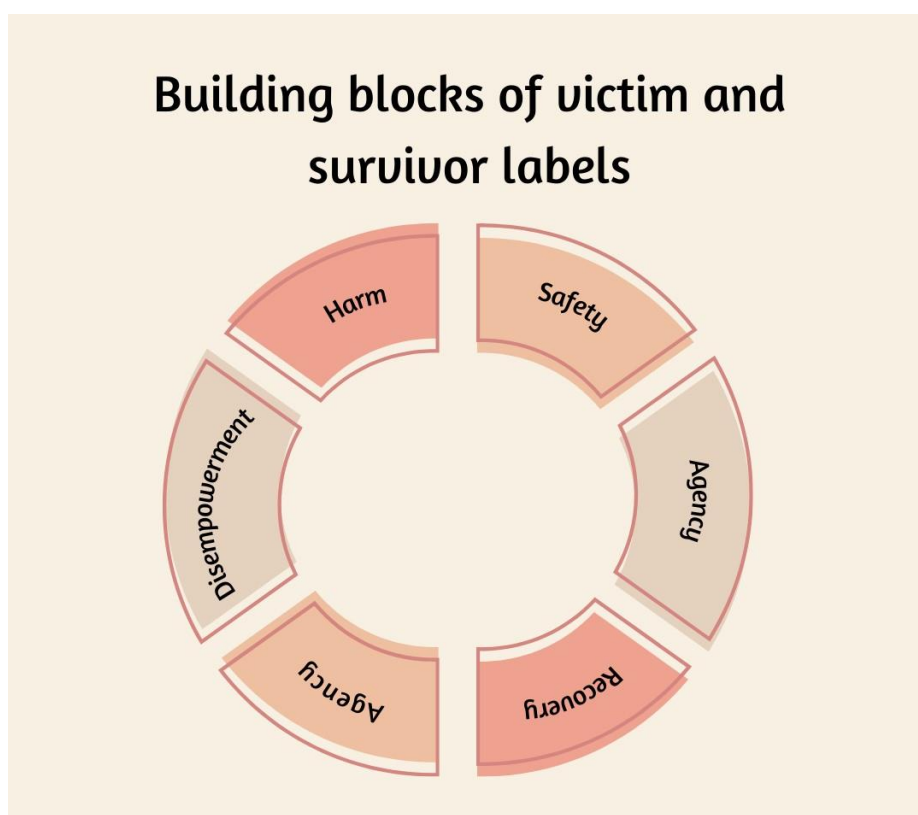
Figure 14 - Building Blocks of victim and survivor

Beginning with the first pillar, 'safety,' within policy and practice documents, safety was quite multi-dimensional, viewed from both physical and emotional safety angles. Crucially, in the documents, sexual assault was frequently positioned as an affective experience, with considerable discourses centred around survivors of sexual assault experiencing negative emotions and unwanted symptoms post-assault, usually within the immediate aftermath. However, there were some conceptualisations of life-long trauma in some cases. Given that the idea of a 'survivor' within identity literature usually exclusively frames victims as experiencing life-long trauma, rarely constructing a 'survivor' as having sustained life-long damage (Ben-David, 2020), we can see quite an apparent disconnect between depictions of a survivor in third-sector and policy documents, from constructions in academic discourses. These usages to designate 'survivors' as experiencing unwanted symptoms of trauma are rarely captured in binary depictions of survivors, so they showcase a marked distinction in dominant conceptualisations of survivors within victim-survivor literature focused upon self-identity.

However, the other two pillars, 'agency' and 'recovery,' show parallels. 'Survivor' being explicitly bound with agency has a long historical precedence throughout violence and abuse research (Boyle and Rodgers, 2022). Whilst all three pillars are interconnected, agency was depicted. Still, in stark contrast to survivor, where agency is such a dominant theme (for example, see Leisenring, 2006), there was minimal mention of agency in consideration of 'victim' within documents. In some legal documents, such as The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales (2020), there was an acknowledgement that victims could express preferences so they have a small degree of control when reporting to the police. There was also an explicit acknowledgement that victim "implies passive acceptance," and indeed merely engaging with a self-help guide meant the reader fit the moniker of 'survivor' (The Survivors Handbook, 2019: 8). So, in terms of the concept of a victim, we do see some quite clear parallels between how the idea of a victim is portrayed in literature, with depictions in policy-practice documents, such as victims being viewed as passive (Schwark and Bohner, 2019).

Agency was frequently discussed within survivor documents, yet this was hardly a one-dimensional manifestation; discourses of the agency were multi-faceted. There was quite a considerable overlap between agency and recovery, making it reasonably challenging to untangle the two. Still, there was a frequent automatic assumption or belief that survivors could embark upon recovery due to their resilience. This aligns with the frequently made

literature link wherein survivorship was bound with recovery (for example, Dunn, 2005). Within documents, there was a considerable re-establishment of the idea that sexual violence during the victimisation act itself removes agency from the survivors, so in the aftermath of the assault, survivors should very much be positioned as in control of their decision-making, with the expectation that practitioners should encourage, support and facilitate this. Thus, we see prevailing discourses surrounding the survivor of survivors' controlling their lives in some dimension post-assault. Yet, documents rarely positioned or depicted survivors as feeling in control, whilst survivorhood being seen as in control is commonly emphasised in literature (Hockett and Saucier, 2015).

Instead, in stark contrast, there were frequent acknowledgements of survivors feeling overwhelmed, confused or disempowered, such as Rape Crisis South London (2013: 9) describing that *"**a survivor of sexual violence is likely to feel unsafe, disempowered and often worthless.**"* Unlike documents considering victims, survivor documents also featured an element of depicting survivors as self-reliant, further positioning them as being in control and able to make autonomous decisions. However, self-reliance was usually framed in negative terms, such as survivors showing difficulty trusting others (Self-Help Guide by the Havens, 2019), unlikely to seek help from organisations (ISVA Service Guide, 2019) or even taking an emotional caregiving role to console family and friends (Rape and Sexual Violence Project, 2018). Here, the documents position survivors as self-reliant to their detriment, inadvertently setting expectations on their ability to cope independently, which could create a hierarchy or shame for those who fail to meet up. This is also a clear radical departure from literature, where self-reliance is positioned as a good trait a survivor possesses (Orgad, 2009).

This element of survivors being positioned as feeling disempowered and unable to make decisions makes a distinctive departure from traditional, normative framings of the survivor in violence and abuse literature, where the survivor is explicitly bound with agency (Hockett and Saucier, 2015). At least, upon the surface, it does. The concept of a survivor being bound with agency is much more complex. It is more in line with Convery's (2006: 240) warning to avoid a sort of "knee-jerk acceptance of the survivor's claims to agency," when framing survivor as the polar opposite of victim within the context of agency. Instead, a substantial body of literature has documented the diversity of survivors' experiences (such as Glenn and Byers, 2009). Moreover, Thompson (2000) and Leisenring (2006) both documented how, due to this complexity, survivor identity can, in some cases, even be

contradictory; we see similar patterns here within policy documents where survivors are portrayed as both empowered and disempowered, in control and out of control. It is not disjointed; survivor identity is contradictory and multi-faceted (Leisenring, 2006; Williamson, 2023).

Documents preferring survivor also frequently featured attempts to reconceptualise bodily responses, such as 'freezing' (Campbell, 2012) and 'tonic immobility' (Boyle, 2017: 71) that may be misconstrued as passive responses, and reconfigured these as survival responses and forms of resistance to sexual violence. This was to combat feelings that survivors may have felt betrayed by their bodies through lack of action or inability to try and fight back or prevent their assault, which could result in victim-blaming or internalised shame. For instance, The Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (2015: 6) described freezing as *'an active response'* and '*a way of fighting back*.' Along a similar vein, documents using survivor actively challenged victim-blaming rhetoric that suggests bodily cues typically associated with sexual arousal (e.g. male erection, ejaculation and female vaginal lubrication) should not have any indication of survivor's potentially gaining sexual pleasure from their assault, which would bring into question whether the act was non-consensual, or impact a survivor's sexuality. The latter was especially true during mentions of LGBTQ+ survivors. Thus, we see pretty clear challenges within survivor documents to discourses of victim-blaming, centred around the idea that survivors may feel betrayed by their bodies, even reconfiguring bodily responses as forms of resistance in some cases.

Along the lines of agency, the victim identity has long been tied to passivity within violence and abuse literature (Dunn, 2005), yet disempowerment was a much stronger motif amidst documents using victim. A vital dimension of this was the idea of secondary victimisation, wherein victims of sexual violence may experience feelings of disempowerment through the administration of justice within the criminal justice system (Toolkit for Prosecutors on Violence against Women and Girls, 2021). Amongst self-help guides, there were also common positionings of victims needing to regain better control over their emotions, suggesting disempowerment through an inability to regulate effectively emotionally, with victims frequently being positioned as overwhelmed by their feelings post-assault (Coping with trauma, 2020; What to do if you are a victim of sexual abuse or assault, 2021).

In tandem with this, the central idea of victims experiencing harm as a result of sexual violence was widespread across documents using victims. Harm was explored in multi-

faceted ways, including physical harm and injury (Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London, 2015; Women's Health Strategy for England, 2022) and much more commonly, emotional harm (for example, Sexual assault abroad, 2013). The commonality amongst victim documents was the positioning of sexual violence as a highly traumatic experience that was difficult to navigate (Support following a rape or sexual assault, 2023). However, there was some variation in the length of said emotional harm. The vast majority of documents using victims that mentioned emotional harm considered emotional distress as a long-term effect of sexual violence (for instance, The rebuilding lives supporting victims of Crime, 2016; Report of the independent review into the Investigation and Prosecution of rape in London, 2015). One document specifically suggested that emotional harm caused by sexual violence had life-alerting, permanent consequences (Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, 2021). However, this, of course, was in the minority. Yet some of the imagery used to describe the effects of emotional harm upon victims was quite visceral, with victims being positioned as *'vulnerable'* (From report to court, 2016: 61), *'most vulnerable'* (Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the international aid sector, 2018: 4) and *'hiding in silence behind closed doors'* (A call to end violence against women and girls, 2015: 4). Moreover, quite stark imagery was also used when describing victims reporting their victimisation to the police, where it was described as '*highly traumatic'* (Sexual violence against children and vulnerable people national group progress report and action plan, 2015: 3) or a victim feeling 'crushed' when challenged by the police (Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London, 2015: 57).

In contrast to victim documents, in survivor documents, there was an automatic assumption that recovery would happen. For example, the Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide (2020: 9) asserts, "*You survived the abuse. You're going to survive the recovery."* This automatic designation centred around the idea that the survivor had shown resilience through surviving the assault itself, and this would carry forth into recovery. The assumption was very much automatic, even if the survivors themselves were at the beginning of recovery and may not identify as survivors themselves (SARSAS Self-help Guide for Men and Boys, 2022: 6). Thus, we see a reproduction of recovery commonly discussed in the survivor discourse in identity literature (Williamson and Serna, 2018).

There were several metaphors used within documents depicting survivors on a journey to recover, such as a life raft,[5] or metaphors employed to depict actual recovery itself, such as light[6] and transversing monkey bars[7]. All of these symbolic ideas draw upon positive imagery, with light suggesting moving to a positive outcome, a life raft as a tool of safety to transverse a key obstacle and monkey bars, tied with letting go of negative internalisations of guilt and shame. Recovery was depicted in visually meaningful ways as highly positive. However, recovery was not framed as a linear journey in survivor documents, diverging from Jordan's (2013) famous conceptualisation of a linear transition from a victim to survivor identity. Instead, the recovery journey was considered unique to all survivors, wherein they may need differing levels of support as they encounter distinctive setbacks (Rape Crisis Scotland, 2016: 7).

Shame was also discussed extensively within documents surrounding victims, where victims were often positioned as negotiating feelings of guilt as a result of their sexual assault experience (for example, Coping with Trauma, 2020). Shame was also acknowledged within documents focused upon as more deeply affecting international victims (Government response to the report of the House of Lords Sexual Violence in Conflict Committee, 2016) and women from minority ethnic backgrounds (Report of the independent review into the investigation and prosecution of rape in London, 2015), from a secondary victimisation aspect and the difficulties victims face in disclosing their victimisation experiences. Thus, victims are seen as having a form of constrained agency, incomplete due to the dominance of culturally permeant ideas to which victims are subjected.

Amidst healing discourses within survivor documents, healing was explicitly bound to hope, resilience and strength, which were tied to survivors. Under this vein, there was an emphasis on the idea that survivors had natural, instinctive forms of strength, which enabled them to show strength; NHS Scotland (2019: 5) suggested that "***Many survivors demonstrate a good deal of resilience and strength in dealing with their experiences.***" Whilst in most cases, there was not a clear separation between victim and survivor identity, so this was not necessarily unique to survivors, but this could potentially be implied, albeit

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[5] Sue Lambert Trust Survivor's Self-Help Guide (2022: 3)
[6] Rape and Sexual Violence Project (2018: 1)
[7] The Women and Girls Network Self-Help Resource Guide (2020: 20)

inadvertently or unintentionally, if a conscious language choice is made to use 'survivor,' rather than 'victim,' or 'victim-survivor.' The Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse: Consultation Response and Draft Bill (2019: 5) even acknowledges this: "***We understand that many victims prefer the term survivor, to place focus on their strength and resilience rather than the crime committed against them.***"

Here, a 'survivor' starts to enter dangerous terrain regarding disability. Convery (2006) suggested that the survivor discourse suggests something distinctive that separates a survivor from a victim, implying that survivors have some innate, intrinsic capacity for resilience that victims do not possess. This creates an almost social Darwinist idea of 'survival of the fittest,' wherein victims become devalued by failing to live up to the high expectations set by survivors. Indeed, whilst 'victim resilience' is a conceptual idea that exists (Bonnano, 2004), resilience is still much more commonly bound to survivorship (Dunn, 2005), where survivors can draw upon unexpected inner strength despite extremely traumatic experiences (van Dijk, 2009), continuing to live despite their experiences (Papendick and Bohner, 2017), even thrive (Ben-David, 2020). This, of course, must be positioned within a broader neo-liberal framework that has emerged within a society that is quite individualistic, a society that "prizes strength and personal responsibility" (Loseke, 1999: 14). So, survivorship can have more cultural value than its devalued victim counterpart (Leisenring, 2006). Here, survivors are positioned as more active agents, able to show resilience and move towards recovery, subsequently displaying resistance to patriarchal violence (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Mills, 1985). Yet without acknowledging the social systems that simultaneously contribute, facilitate or even welcome victimisation, we unintentionally enable oppression and the reproduction of rape culture (O'Shea et al., 2024).

In terms of disability, neo-liberalist constructions of trauma start seeping into positioning, where trauma and mental illness start to become framed as barriers victim-survivors must overcome (Bower, 2023). Language rooted in these problematic ideas that people with disabilities must 'overcome' their impairment suggests that those with disabilities must lose them to achieve success (Linton, 1998). Thus, attitudes toward overcoming disability create stigma for people with mental illnesses when disabled people are unable to do so (Kafer, 2013; Mitchell and Snyder, 2000; Linton, 1998) successfully. This creates a dangerous, inescapable trap for survivors with trauma-related disabilities or pre-existing disabilities that may be exacerbated by trauma, marking them out as devalued and stigmatised. For "other members of the group from which the individual has supposedly moved beyond are

not as brave, strong, or extraordinary as the person who has overcome that designation" (Linton, 1998: 18). Naturally, this must also be contextualised within the more comprehensive, salient, dominant cultural narrative of 'able-bodiedness,' that has created a climate of 'compulsory able-bodiedness' where people with disabilities fall short (McRuer, 2006). So amidst the survivor discourse, the survivor identity is prized for innate resilience, whilst victim identity is devalued, where this emphasis upon strength and resilience creates 'compulsory survivorship' (Larson, 2018: 689). Amidst compulsory survivorship, an expectation becomes placed upon victim-survivors that to be considered 'survivors,' they must be free from all disability, including trauma-related disabilities like post-traumatic stress disorder (Bower, 2023). Victims, in turn, are constructed as having an inability to maintain normal mental functioning and subsequently are "socially beneath their able-bodied counterparts" (Larson, 2018: 689). As sexual assault is usually positioned as one of the more severe forms of trauma a person can experience (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020), victim-survivors have been known to experience significant trauma-related health conditions, like depression, PTSD, thoughts of suicide, and anxiety (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). Thus, survivors can have significant consequences for victim-survivors with trauma-related disabilities, and documents using survivors need to be quite cautious of inadvertently reinforcing problematic overcoming disability rhetoric.

Chapter 4: Summary

This chapter offers the idea of the three pillars of the survivor and the three critical lenses of victimhood that can be used to understand the associations and meanings associated with the respected concepts (Research aim three). Within documents, exclusively 'victim' was most often used (n=55), with exclusive use of 'survivor' (n=23) being the second highest category. Regarding split by document type, policy documents overwhelmingly used 'victim' exclusively (81.57%), whilst, amongst third-sector documents, the most common usage was exclusively survivor (68.51%). Yet there was a clear, overwhelming *preference* for 'survivor' over the usage of the term 'victim' amongst documents that gave a rationale for their language usage. Thus, this chapter has demonstrated that language usage varies across policy and practice documents. The usage of survivor can be understood through the three key pillars of 'safety,' 'agency', and 'recovery,' whilst in contrast, the usage of victim can be understood through a 'lack of agency,' 'disempowerment' and 'harm,' showing the interconnectedness, but distinctiveness of associations attached to both victim and survivor

when used in documents. A discursive analysis using symbolic interactionism and FST sought to examine the specific context of usage and metaphors supplied during language usage to understand how this can shape the cultural constructions of victim-survivors.

Chapter 5: Photographs and art pieces created by victim-survivors

This chapter presents the findings generated from the photo-taking and photo-elicitation interviews with victim-survivors who have lived experience of sexual violence. I begin by outlining some critical contextual information about the photographs' production. Then, I explore the essential discourses surrounding the 'victim' images, considering echoes of hurt, coping, victim-blaming, ideas of normality and fundamental misconceptions surrounding victimhood. Finally, I move on to illustrate the 'survivor' images and the discourses of challenging victim-blaming, sexualisation, masculinity, the perceptions of survivors and healing embedded within them.

Content Warning

Please note that this chapter contains images themed around sexual violence, eating disorders, mental health, spiking and child abuse.

Overview of Images

It became apparent quite early into the data collection period that for artists interested in creating three-dimensional art pieces, a simple photograph was not quite enough to convey the complexity of the work they had made entirely. In these circumstances, artists could request that a short video clip capture their final image to showcase every aspect of the piece, but a final image was also taken. This allowed artists to have the flexibility to know their entire artistic piece was captured and no meaning was lost. However, they would still be able to complete a final image to allow them to edit their image, title it, and convey a specific message that they wanted, enabling the researcher to explain aspects of the image more clearly if needed.

In addition, the artists requested a neutral or straightforward white backdrop when displaying their images in specific scenarios. For consistency purposes and to emphasise the background's lack of importance, the same white-textured wallpaper backgrounds were used in several images, especially where canvases were hung on a hook. This was also due to

practical reasons and aesthetic needs, but as it appears in several photos, this was perhaps worth mentioning.

Artists with lived experience of sexual violence captured twenty-seven final images under the concept of 'victim' and twenty-seven under 'survivor.' No artist chose to do more than one final image. Although one artist requested to create two survivor images upon completion, she felt one image better captured the message they wished to send; thus, the second image was removed from the data as per their wishes.

'Victim' images

Hurt

The most commonly discussed or mentioned motif was this idea that victims or victimhood involved, to some varying degrees, a person being hurt or suffering some injury. This 'injury' was also quite varied in its interpretation; some artists touched on physical injury but most concentrated on or emphasised the association between victims with psychological trauma and hurt.

Figure 15 – 'Blind Trust' by Tiffany, late 30s, heterosexual, Black African Woman

Tiffany decided to create a piece of art rather than a standard image, but she felt her artistic capabilities couldn't quite capture what she wished to convey, so she requested one from the pool of external artists. The artist, A, was given the following brief:

"Please create a painting of a woman under the age of thirty, but older than a teenager of Western African descent. She needs to be dark-skinned with identifiable African hair. Across her eyes should be a blindfold, in a red tone

with the word 'trust' painted in white, completely covering her vision. The background should also appear foggy."

When asked to convey the meaning behind some of her artistic choices, Tiffany described how she wished to portray a woman who had gone to report her sexual violence to the police and how she had put her faith in them to achieve justice for her. However, Tiffany wanted to capture the negative experiences post-assault that she felt victims sometimes experienced and how difficult it was to be successful in gaining a conviction. Although this was not her experience, she felt that victims often experienced a 'blindside' when they realised how difficult it was to report their victimisation to the police:

Tiffany: Oh the blindfold was just a good way to show quite quickly what it's like. I think it is well-known how difficult it is for women to actually go to the police; they worry that they might not be believed or even if they are, it might not even matter as you can go through the whole process just for it to amount to nothing... I felt like I'd been blindsided, like it didn't even matter if I reported it, so that's why the blindfold.

Tiffany's ideas strongly align with our conceptual understanding of institutional betrayal discussed within rape culture. Smith and Freyd (2014: 577) described institutional betrayal as "a description of individual experiences of violations of trust and dependency perpetuated against any member of an institution in a way that does not necessarily arise from an individual's less privileged identity." Whilst there are two critical types of institutional betrayal, Tiffany explicitly refers to the sub-type where victims feel that they have been disappointed by an institution. As a result, they feel like trust has been violated (Parti et al., 2023). This is also exacerbated by these institutions often being positioned as gatekeepers when victims are reporting sexual violence without any clear alternative (Ullman et al., 2007). The 'blindside' that Tiffany describes has parallels to Symonds's (2010) idea of the 'second injury,' where adverse reactions to disclosure or lack of explicit support result in consequences for recovery, where higher levels of institutional betrayal were linked to post-traumatic symptoms (Smith and Freyd, 2013), as well as diminishing faith in justice (Herman, 2015; Ullman, 1999).

Tiffany was also particular about the woman in her canvas being a dark-skinned black woman, as she felt they were particularly let down by the system due to historical, long-

held tensions between the black community and the police, further emphasising her depiction of victims, particularly black victims being tied to institutional betrayal and hurt as a result. This is particularly prominent as discourses surrounding sexual victimisation have a historical precedence for centralising the experiences of white females (Linder and Harris, 2017) and as stereotypes centred on the promiscuity of black women can restrict their access to being viewed as victims (Hansen, 2020).

In a similar dimension, Catherine also wanted to create an artistic piece to showcase how victims of sexual assault had been hurt and manipulated in the past, particularly emphasising their being taken advantage of:

Figure 16 – The Puppet Master by Catherine, mid-30s, heterosexual, white, woman

Again, Catherine felt she would struggle to convey the meaning she wanted to capture if she painted the canvas herself, so she requested the commission of one of the pool of external artists, L. This was a rather large canvas, painted on A1 and a deliberate aesthetic choice. L, the artist, was given the following brief, and Catherine provided her with a supplementary inspiration picture:

"Please can you portray a shell or a husk of a young woman with contorted limbs, and twisted features. She should be naked, with her head hung in shame and exhaustion. Her crotch should be on display, with a dark shadow effect, to emphasise how she has been violated. From her limbs, there should be strings attached to control her, like a puppet master would in a circus. But the hands should be well-manicured as they belong to a woman. Please use dark shading like the example picture given, with some touches of red on the limbs to appear like blood."

As Catherine's message was very multi-layered, we tried to unpack every message she was trying to convey during the interview. Primarily:

Catherine: I saw this image online of a ballerina being controlled and I knew that's what I wanted to do, it felt really similar to how I did. Cause the worst thing for me really was all the catty comments and little digs I received after I was assaulted. I was talking about what had happened with one of the mum's at my daughter's school, why I don't know as we'd never been close. But we were talking about the night and it came up, she was a proper bitch to me, asking if it was even assault since we'd slept together numerous times before. She didn't say it quite as bluntly as that, I don't want you to get the wrong impression. But she dropped all these hints that he might have assumed it was okay as we'd been together before. It was stuff like that that made me feel like how I acted was under scrutiny, people were looking at me with a fine-tooth comb. And I expected women to be nicer cause they'd understand but they weren't, they were the worst.

Catherine's discussions of receiving judgment as the result of her previous sexual behaviour have strong parallels with the perceptions of women who participate in gender norm violations concerning sex and their sexual behaviour. In contrast, women who violate

existing, permanent violations experience significant negative reactions (Sibley and Wilson, 2004). Victims and victim identity can often stress the vulnerability and weakness of victims (Dillenburger, Fargas and Akhonzada, 2005). As a result, "most people in everyday life would not willingly court any of these circumstances or eagerly build an identity upon them" (Rock, 2002: 14). Yet Catherine did, precisely as she wanted to be afforded sympathy for what happened to her and to be viewed as blameless in her assault, explicitly wanting to shift responsibility away from her prior relationship with the offender, which was a judgment imposed upon her sexual behaviour.

Seligman (1991) noted that a consequence of victim identity is that claiming such an identity for the reasons outlined results in the disempowerment of victims and the idea of learned helplessness, both of which could serve as a barrier to healing (Van Ness, 1986). Yet this is at the heart of the imagery in Catherine's photograph. Catherine drew upon this metaphor of a puppet master frequently to describe her own experiences post-assault and also how she felt victims were treated in broader society, with a puppet master imagery firmly positioning victims as being controlled or shaped by some external force; their movements controlled by this.

Catherine: There's this expectation that we must act in a certain manner in order to even be understood. And I don't even know who wrote these rules, they're stupid and ridiculous. Everyone reacts completely differently. But they expect us to act the normal way, here's your box, and get in it, if not, you aren't a victim. If you've slept with him before, why wouldn't you want to sleep with him again? People just didn't get it, but then they seem to understand marital rape?

Here, Catherine is discussing how she felt like she did not fit into normative expectations of how a victim would act, using an almost 'tick box' metaphor to describe how she did not slot neatly into people's expectations; thus, she felt judgement for lack of conformity and deviation. This discussion is at the heart of secondary victimisation, starting with the premise that victims are afforded sympathy and support (Dunn, 2005; 2006). Yet, to be afforded this sympathy, "victims should be careful to comply with their role expectation of vulnerability and helplessness" (van Dijk, 2009: 17). Other photographs centred around hurt took a different approach. Two artists' images explored the idea of experiencing emotional hurt and devastation due to sexual assault when discussing victimisation.

Figure 17 - Wilted by Angelyka, late 20s, heterosexual, Asian, woman.

Angelyka decided to use the metaphor of wilted flowers to describe how she felt as a victim of sexual assault. However, she deliberately wanted to create a photograph where it was not immediately apparent to the viewer that the flowers were dying:

Angelyka: Yes I deliberately asked you to try and obscure that the flowers were dying, so it was more of a hidden message. I wanted pretty vases, and some really nice natural light shining through so on the surface, they just looked like nice flowers but if you looked closer, you can see they're completely wilted. And the water as well, at first you're like 'oh what a nice vase,' and then you see the grotty water!

To achieve Angelyka's artistic vision, a bright filter was also added to emphasise further the contrast, almost to play a trick on the onlooker:

Angelyka: When you look at someone who's been assaulted, at first you might have absolutely no idea, like me. Everyone was really surprised as I held it together, but behind closed doors I could barely cope. I felt like I was shutting down, like I was a wilting flower…I used to be really confident but now, not so much.

Angelyka's photograph touches upon considerations of agency within victimhood. In this context, research typically examines agency within sexual violence in the form of resistance rather than the victim's actions during their assault, as their lack of agency is implicit in the conceptualisation of a sexual assault (Hydén, 2005). However, Lamb (1999) explored how the idea of assuming victims have no agency whatsoever, whether intentionally or not, results in the positioning of victims as having no ability to manage their healing process. Standard cultural constructions of 'victims' strongly tie victimhood to weakness (Thompson, 2000) and long-lasting damage (Best, 1999). Thus, Angelyka's metaphor of victimhood being like a wilted flower ties quite strongly with this, as wilted flowers have passed beyond the point of being in bloom, affected by time and decay, mirroring associations around long-lasting damage.

Similar to Angelyka, Jenny also described an almost transformational process that she went through in becoming a victim of sexual assault, experiencing a strong sense of hurt:
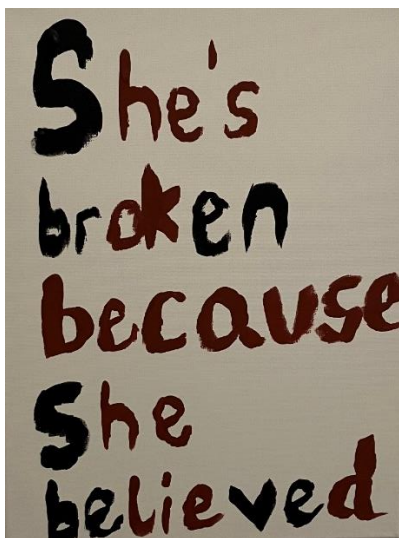
Figure 18 – Read it twice by Jenny, late 20s, heterosexual, white, woman

Jenny's image is a painted canvas that was intentionally messily done to appear as if a child had made this, to represent Jenny's own victimisation experiences in her early childhood. However, it has a dualistic meaning, hence the title, where Jenny is instructing the viewer to 'read it twice' because there is a hidden message; when read in full, in a usual manner, it reads **'she's broken because she believed,'** but when only reading the red text, there is a secret hidden message within: **'he's ok because he lied.'** Here, Jenny was conveying how differently she and her abuser were treated by family members when she disclosed sexual assault:

Jenny: When I told my mum, I thought she'd understand…to be honest I thought she'd be devastated that this even happened to me. But mum reacted really badly, I mean now I'm older I do sort of get where she's coming from, as he was my brother, he was her child too. But she acted as if I'd just imagined it because of how young I was and he lied he was just helping me get changed after swimming…he lied and nothing even happened to him, where I just got painted out to be delusional and it really, really hurt.

Jenny is talking about the betrayal and upset she felt at not being believed and how she associated this with victimhood—her use of 'brokenness' ties in with literature surrounding the harmful effects of sexual violence. Jordan (2013:48) traced perceptions of rape amongst early feminist writers, noting that "in a relatively short period of time, the pendulum swung from viewing rape as little more than harmless" to understanding nonconsensual sex as "a permanently devastating experience" (Chasteen, 2001: 135). This was through the emphasis being placed on the impacts sexual violence had on the mental health of victims (Petrak, 2002; Koss, 1993), as well as the growing proliferation of the rhetoric depicting victims' lives as being destroyed by sexual violence (Gavey and Schmidt, 2011; Kitzinger, 2009). In tandem with this, rape victims have been subjected to often experiencing scepticism and doubt when disclosing their experiences of sexual violence (Propen and Schuster, 2017; Alcoff and Gray, 1993), which Jenny touched on, exploring how she felt the perpetrator of her assault was believed over her.

Sarah also mentioned feelings of betrayal, but hers were more directed towards her abuser rather than a person to whom a disclosure was made, in stark contrast to Tiffany's photograph:

Figure 19 - Hollow apologies by Sarah, mid-20s, mixed race, heterosexual, woman

Sarah described in considerable detail her own victimisation experience with someone whom she had previously had consensual sexual intercourse with. However, after an assault that was not consensual, she explained how upset she had felt after her abuser sent her a present to 'make it up to her' afterwards:

Sarah: He didn't use the words 'rape' or 'assault' exactly, even though it was. But he sent me this stupid teddy bear with a heart on it, saying he loved me and a card where he said sorry for 'getting too caught up in the moment' and that he hoped this would 'make it up to me.' Like what the fuck does that even mean, you know? And it made me feel so rubbish like I was some stupid teenager and we'd had some silly row. I literally binned it, put it in the brown bin outside because I didn't want to look at it, it just reminded me of him. It just made me really angry.

Although anger towards the offender is not usually associated with victim identity in the literature about the victim-survivor binary, it is often ascribed to victimhood within explorations of victimology (for instance, van Dijk, 2008; 2009). Whilst Sarah's feelings of hurt manifested into anger towards her abuser's actions, Kirsten's emotions concentrated more on emotional numbness and coping.

Coping

Figure 20 – Barely hanging on by Kirsten, mid 50s, heterosexual, white, woman

Kirsten's image was captured a short distance from her home, in a place where she regularly walked her dog; her dog and former partner (perpetrator) have also been given pseudonyms, with Kirsten's permission to protect her identity:

Kirsten: Maybe this doesn't apply to all victims, but this is how I felt. I didn't really want to do anything after it happened; I don't really know how to describe how I felt. I wasn't exactly sad but I wasn't happy, I just didn't really feel anything. But I didn't want to leave the house, not at all. But Archer needed a walk and there was no one to take him. I swear it took me like an hour to psyche myself up and go, but we did. It was just our usual walk but we reached the split in the forest where it's really dry and barren – it's a former colliery – and I just remember breaking down. Because that's how I felt. Nothing. I didn't feel anything. No usual comfort from being outside, or how bloody cold it was, I was just like a walking shell.

Here, Kirsten is leaning toward some common associations between cultural constructions of victimhood and victim identity. Most clearly, she is describing an experience that fits with emotional numbness and defeat (Ben-David, 2020; Dillenburger, Fargas and Akhonzada, 2005). Emotional numbness is usually characterised as part of the first stage of the recovery process. Flash, Fall and Stice (2020: 30) described this stage as 'reception,' a period before actively acknowledging what has happened to them. Thus, emotional numbness suggests that the victim is very much still in the process of being victimised (Ben-David, 2020), such as Kirsten's experiences in the immediate aftermath.

Echoing similar themes of hurt and vulnerability, Robyn stressed how victims were often seen as very fragile and in need of support. Although they did not feel that this represented their own experiences, instead, this was how they believed other people saw them whenever they revealed they were a victim-survivor of sexual assault:

Figure 21 - Handle with caution by Robyn, late 20s, non-binary, white, queer

Robyn decided to use parcel tape with the words 'fragile' imprinted, often used to indicate that parcels being sent contain fragile items that could break. They also intentionally chose a mirror to represent victimhood:

Robyn: Mirrors are incredibly fragile as well. If you drop a mirror, it shatters. I think that's what people expect victims to be like, they think we might break down at any second.

Due to the association between victim identity and injury (Holstein and Miller, 1990), victims have often been constructed as particularly fragile as a result of their victimisation experience. As a result, they are still being affected (Ben-David, 2020). In a similar fashion

to Robyn, Louise also discussed how outsiders almost held this expectation that victims had been hurt and thus were seen as struggling or functioning poorly. Although, in her image, she focused on making a conscious effort to shatter this misconception:
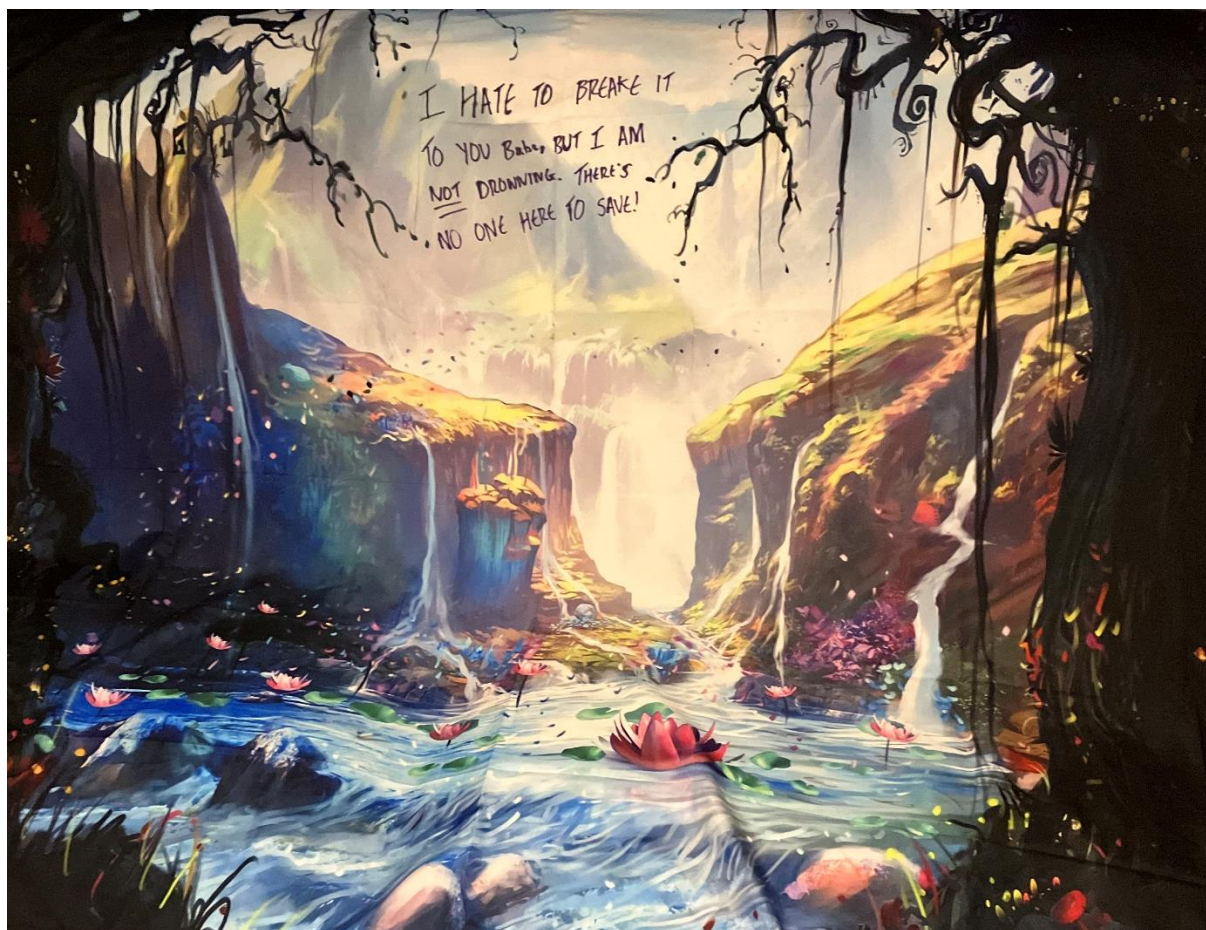
Figure 22 - Swimming, not Drowning by Louise, 18-20, white European, heterosexual woman

Louise: So the text on the tapestry is from a Sara Bareilles song but it really said what I wanted to say: 'I hate to break it to you babe, but I'm not drowning. There's no one here to save!' It's like everyone expects victims to be really struggling and barely able to cope – like they need help. But I've literally been assaulted three times and I'm fine. There's different types of victims. Some of us can just get on with it.

This frustration at being perceived as vulnerable was emphasised by Louise; she felt that victimisation experiences were often treated blanketly, and thus, there was no honest discussion of women who moved on quite quickly from their assault. Louise's photograph shows the pressing need for Kelly's (1988) articulation of the need to conduct research with

the understanding of the concept of a continuum of sexual violence; as this understanding better enables women to discuss an array of forms of sexual victimisation, and allows researchers to understand the complexity of how non-consensual sexual experiences are defined (Harned, 2005).

Unlike Louise, Jynx's photograph also centred around coping, but his focused more on his need to not show vulnerability and feign adequate functioning after his assault:
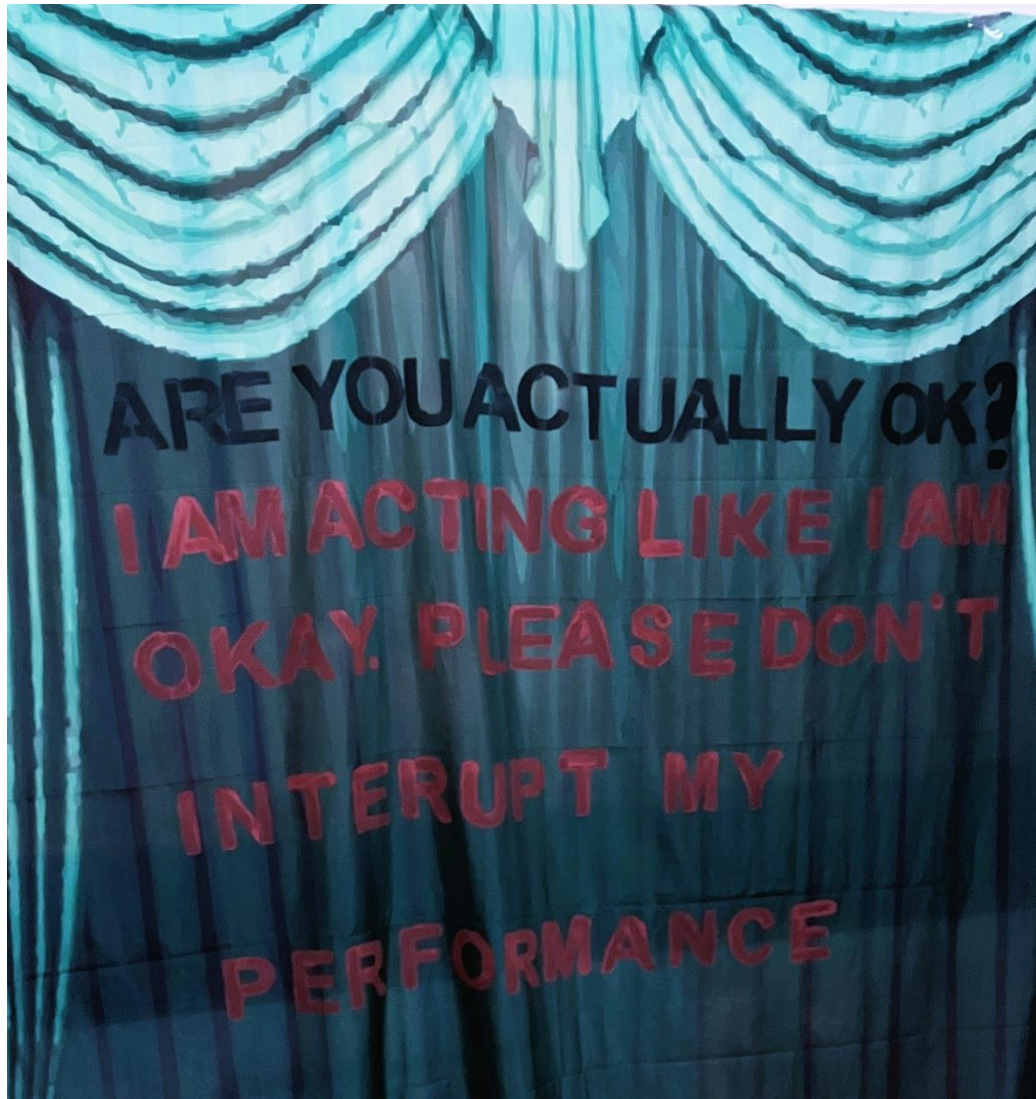
Figure 23 - 'Pretending,' performances showing now by Jynx, mid-20s, heterosexual, white, male

Jynx decided to create a tapestry with a backdrop of theatre curtains; although these typically are viewed as red, he deliberately wanted a different colour. This was because painted onto the tapestry, he wanted the question: ***'Are you actually ok?'*** with the response: ***'I am acting like I am okay. Please don't interrupt my performance.'*** As he

wanted the response to be in red, to emphasise the danger in this conscious avoidance and feigning, he needed the curtains to be in another colour, which was eventually agreed upon as green due to its association commonly with envy. Jynx described how he often felt 'envious' of other people's seeming ability to live an active life unhindered by traumatic experiences:

Jynx: I don't really talk about what happened that much but I ended up telling a friend that I wasn't particularly close with, as we'd been talking about some of the stuff with Amber Heard…and maybe I said it a bit too casually, I don't know. But she sort of looked at me like she could tell something was up. She asked me if I was 'actually ok' and I lied, and told her I was fine, but she knew….I was just pretending I was okay and she was only being nice, but I didn't want her to know I really wasn't. I just wanted to ask her if she'd play pretend and act like nothing had happened.

Jynx's performance metaphor here clearly describes a self-defensive mechanism that he felt he enacted to prevent people from seeing his inability to cope after his sexual assault. He believed that if people saw him getting emotional or showing signs of distress or upset, then this would be reflective of an inability or impaired ability to cope and function, manifesting in him feeling the pressure to act like he was unaffected.

Jynx: Because that's what it was, what I was doing. I was just pretending I was okay. I was acting like it didn't matter. I'd been cast in a play with no audition or try out, and then I had to act like I was fine.

As victimhood is a powerful social concept, it has both negative and positive implications for those described as such (van Dijk, 2018); in particular, Jynx perhaps does not want to feel 'locked in' by the negative connotations associated with victim identity (van Dijk, 2009: 2). As predominant stereotypes of victimhood centre around passivity and helplessness, within a society that idealises individual strength, victims may actively resist victimhood identity (Garland, Spalek and Chakraborti, 2006). Wherein 'victim' no longer indicates a position within power structures but rather denotes an individual's psyche characterised by incomplete personhood (Thorsby, 2004; Haraway, 1997). Thus, we can understand how Jynx has sought to break free from this, mainly because he felt he did not want to be seen as exaggerating what had happened to him. In this vein, there is a clear hierarchy between

legitimate victims and those over-emphasising their victimisation. Convery (2006: 242) noted that whilst legitimate victims elicited sympathy, "those peddling victimhood clearly do not," this explains the pressure Jynx felt not to be viewed in this manner. Concurrent with this, masculinity norms perpetuate the idea that men should be able to control their emotions, which can lead to feelings of demasculinisation when they fail to live up to this (Walsh, 2015), particularly when considering their identity as sexual assault victims (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020).

In a similar vein, Reece also linked his emotional challenges after his assault to a perceived inability to cope. In response, he focused on the self-affirmations and positive thoughts he encouraged himself to have when navigating his poor self-image. To be clear, Reece was talking specifically about his formal diagnosis of anorexia and body dysmorphia, where he believed his symptoms 'grew worse' after his experience of sexual assault but was undoubtedly 'not the only cause.'
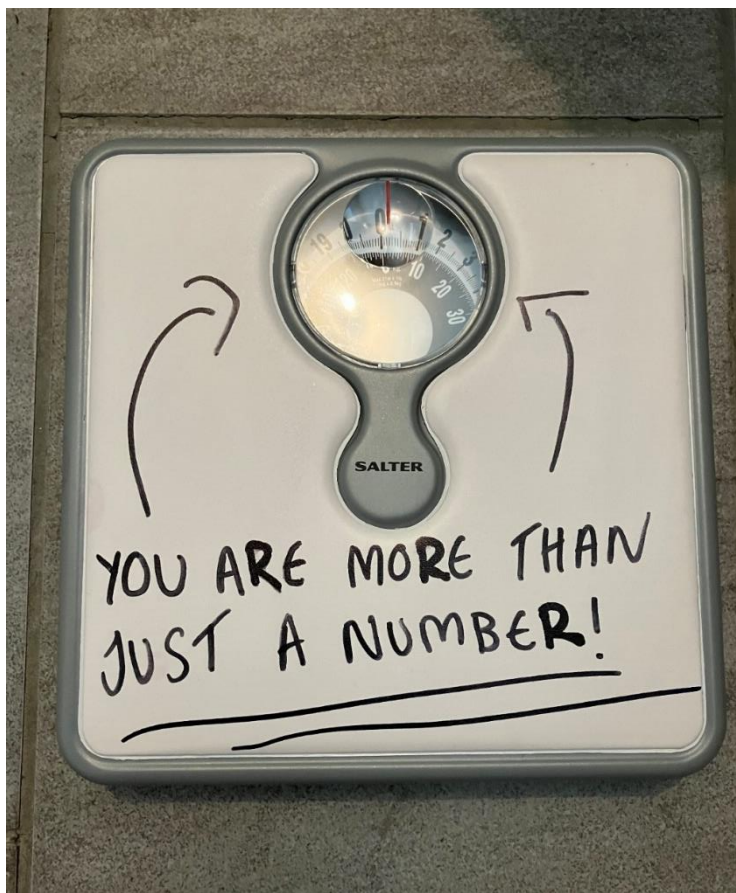
Figure 24 – Weight by Reece, mid 20s, transgender male, demisexual, white

Reece talked quite extensively about his loss of control both during and after his sexual assault, which he believed he unconsciously tried to compensate for by more rigorously controlling his already restrictive eating habits, which he believed worsened his self-esteem:

Reece: After it happened, I didn't really realise it at the time but thinking back, I felt incredibly overwhelmed – if that's the best word. Everything was spinning and I couldn't quite get a grip on it. My relationship with food was bad before but it spiralled dramatically. It was actually during a counselling appointment where I made the connection between everything and I realised I lost control in one aspect of my life, so I rigidly tried to control another. It took years for me to get to the point where I can see past everything, actually realise that I was a victim and who that person chose to be was out of my control, but I could beat my anorexia.

Reece also deliberately had the letters 'R' made bolder than the others to stress that this was his message. A message he told himself. Although 'Reece' is a pseudonym, the letter is part of his real name. The 'number' here and the scales denote Reece's problematic relationship with his weight, which he often felt defined by, and his conscious efforts to form a more positive body image in light of his sexual assault. 'Weight' in the title not only referred to Reece's relationship with body image but also metaphorically, as the burden he felt he had been carrying around for a while, both before his victimisation experience and the extensive treatment he received afterwards, which he felt was contributed to negatively by his victimisation experience.

As Reece and Jynx were happy to discuss their gender, sexuality, and identity, this was explored further, as both brought this up of their own accord. Jynx identified as a heterosexual cis-gendered male, although he noted that he had questioned his sexuality as he was married to a person who identified as non-binary; he felt the category of 'heterosexual' best described his identity. In contrast, Reece identified as a transgender male who was demisexual, although he stressed quite ardently that he did not believe there was a link between his sexual identity and his identity as a victim of sexual assault:

Reece: It actually really pisses me off that people assume you're only demi-sexual or a-sexual because you've had a bad experience. It's really offensive.

Interviewer: May I ask why do you feel that it is really offensive?

Reece: I think people think that you're only that way because of what happened to you? It's quite demeaning. I don't think anything 'caused' my sexuality.

Reece actively tries to resist understanding victimhood as a pathology, "a negative situation that paralyses a person's capacity to act on his behalf (Hoffman and Graham, 2006: 510). Here, sexual violence is positioned as inevitably affecting a person's sense of self. In this vein, victims view themselves as damaged as a result of the assault and must seek to repair aspects of their identity, almost 'renovating the self' (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, Cook, Stidham and Mweemba, 2009). Yet this is not simple nor crystal clear, particularly in terms of victims' core identities or "essential nature" that should not be considered affected by sexual violence (Draucker and Madsen, 1999: 330). Reece is establishing that his sexuality is part of his core identity and unaffected by his sexual assault, challenging rape myths surrounding the effects of victimisation and sexuality, something that men can be particularly vulnerable to. Both Reece and Jynx brought up the lack of social visibility and representations of male victims of sexual assault, although they had differing opinions on the matter. Jynx described how he felt his fears of being seen as unable to cope with his experiences were directly linked to his own gender:

Jynx: I think because I'm a guy I'm worried people will expect me to handle it more. I know there's all this talk now that 'real men cry' and 'men can be weak too' but I know I certainly feel a pressure to act tough in some way and deal with it myself…I got really annoyed actually as I told my sister I was going to the doctor's about going on anti-depressants about a year after my assault happened, and she literally said it would at least be easy for me to get them as men don't go to the doctors that much…It made me feel really pathetic for needing to go, if other men didn't.

So, Jynx did feel like there was pressure on him to appear able to function due to his gender. In contrast, Reece did not believe his associations with victimhood were affected by his gender identity:

Reece: To be fair, you don't really see that much talk of transgender victims of sexual assault, but I don't think I've heard of any even mentions of transgender survivors specifically. I don't really think about it. To me, I'm

just a man. So I think of myself as a male victim. They're not really talked about either though.

In stark contrast, Lili spoke quite extensively about her gender, and her photograph very much centred around the experiences of women as victims of sexual violence:

Figure 25 - Your corset is too tight by Lili, mid-20s, heterosexual, Black Caribbean, woman

Lili's image takes inspiration from two songs that she felt encapsulated well the feelings of women who have been sexually assaulted and her identity as a victim of sexual abuse as a black woman specifically. The first song is 'Commander in Chief' by Demi Lovato, which was an open letter directed to Donald Trump surrounding the US government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd. In the song, Lovato asks Trump, the Commander in Chief, 'How does it feel to still be able to breathe?' It is a question directed specifically at the asphyxiation of George Floyd by a police officer, where Trump, as a white person, is not subjected to the same level of racism. The second inspirational song was 'Dream Girl', sung by Idina Menzel for the Cinderella Movie soundtrack. Menzel plays the fairytale's infamous step-mother, who laments to Cinderella about the cultural expectations placed upon women to conform to societal standards of beauty and gender roles; due to these expectations, women's freedom is severely restricted as their 'corsets are too tight, and your heels are too high.'

Lili's image features a black modern-day corset top with the words 'How does it feel to still be able to breathe?' She also deliberately wanted the photograph to be edited to appear in black and white, with a significant shadow behind it. When asked about the message behind her photo, Lili described her generalised anxiety disorder and her experiences after being sexually assaulted:

Lili: I had panic attacks sometimes after and they can be quite scary. It's really hard to breathe. It kind of feels like you've got this thing wrapped around you, kind of like how I imagine wearing a corset is. They were used historically to oppress women as well, so they're kind of known for being very restrictive and damaging. That's why I chose a corset.

Interviewer: And the words?

Lili: Something rhetorical, like a question, to get people to think…if you haven't been assaulted, then maybe you can put yourself in a victim's shoes, and understand how hard it can be.

Lili's photograph ties in quite clearly with the dichotomy Larson (2018) felt victims found themselves in, in terms of victimhood often being associated with abnormal mental functioning. Boyle (2016) similarly found that victim identity was more strongly related to

mental illness than the 'survivor' counterpart. Here, Lili uses the metaphor of breathing to depict how her sexual assault has shaped her mental health journey.

Victim blaming

Another common theme discussed by artists was the idea of victim-blaming; 7 artists chose this as the central message or theme for their victim photograph. Two artists decided to concentrate specifically on the misconceptions and hyper-sexualisation that victims were often subjected to. Jasmine opted to do this somewhat metaphorically:

Figure 26 - Eve by Jasmine, late 30s, heterosexual, black (African-American), woman

Jasmine's photograph centres around the fairytale of Snow White and its association with purity. She described how people often use the term 'snow-white' to emphasise someone's innocence due to the imagery associated with the fairytale character, who was considered 'the fairest of them all' (Brubaker et al., 2023). At her request, a dark red apple was used, as it is a central component of the story:

Jasmine: People use 'snow-white' to mean pure, you know, like pure as the driven snow, I think that's from the film (laughs). If someone is snow white, they're usually a virgin. So, at least historically, they're pure, untouched.

However, Jasmine believed that this was a misconception that often resulted in the blame of rape victims for their sexual behaviour and conduct during their victimisation experience:

Jasmine: People can't seem to understand that you can be a slut and still get raped. Women are judged far too harshly by what they're wearing or what they did…victims are always treated like they did something wrong.

To illustrate this, Jasmine took the image of an apple and had it hung up on a piece of string, but had rusty nails and razor blades buried into the flesh:

Jasmine: It's supposed to be like a fall from grace…people see victims as these innocent things that have been damaged.

It appeared as if Jasmine began to contradict what she'd said earlier about victims being blamed for their own actions, so some more layered questions were asked to delve deeper:

Interviewer: Do you think people see victims as 'innocent'?

Jasmine: Sometimes yes, definitely. But some are really blamed for what happened to them.

Deeper into the interview, Jasmine explained how she felt like certain types of victims were afforded more sympathy. Although she did not believe there was necessarily a pattern as to who was more likely to be viewed as less blameworthy, she felt that women who were viewed as more promiscuous in their everyday lives or engaged in sex work received the most hostile treatment and were subjected to the most judgement:

Jasmine: People that my grandma would call 'Jezebels,' women that have casual sex a lot, or did in the past. I'd throw anyone in there who works as a stripper or some kind of escort or prostitute in there as well.

Jasmine's focus parallels articulations of the 'ideal victim,' which has resonant solid links to the victim (van Dijk, 2009). Christie's (1986) ideal victim considers the contemporary narratives where some victims are viewed as 'ideal' victims, who hold no responsibility for their assault and are deemed worthy of protection, whilst others are subjected more harshly to blame. Holstein and Miller (1990) noted that emphasis is often placed upon a victim's injury and their innocence within processes of victimisation; in cases where victimisation is disputed, it can create 'victim contests' (Holstein and Miller, 1990:113). In these contests, "losers lose because they deviate somehow from the 'ideal victim' stereotypes" (Dunn, 2010: 163). Culturally, Latinx and Black women in particular can be positioned as risk-takers in particular, exemplifying their exclusion from ideal victim narratives (Slakoff and Brennan, 2019). Interestingly enough, when specifically asked, Jasmine did not feel her identity as a black woman automatically resulted in victim-blaming; instead, she believed that women were more likely to receive judgment as a result of their sexual behaviour. This is a crucial dimension of the ideal victim trope, where women can be viewed as blaming other women under the rape myth conceptualisation that women's own sexualised behaviour can precipitate their victimisation (Long, 2021). Jasmine's choice of imagery fits firmly with the idea of 'morally pure women' (Dunn, 2005: 3), women who are positioned as victims of sexual violence through no personal fault (Loseke, 1999), where 'true victims' do not play any part in their victimisation (Clarke, 1997).

Similarly, Vikki created an image of what she described as the idea most people would conjure up in their minds if they were to picture a victim of sexual assault. Her photograph can be best understood through the magnifying glass of objectification theory. Objectification theory centres on the psychological consequences women experience, stemming from existing in a culture where women are more likely to be treated as 'objects' rather than people (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification happens when a "woman's sexual parts or functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her" (Bartky, 1990: 35). Whilst both men and women can experience sexual objectification, women self-report feeling this in increased levels in comparison to their male counterparts (Davidson and Gervais, 2015; Hill and Fischer, 2008).

Vikki specifically wanted to focus on what she imagined people thought victims wore at the time of their assault:

Figure 27 - Going to the festival to get raped by Vikki, 18-20, heterosexual, white, woman

The clothing was chosen entirely by Vikki and was purchased for the photograph; she specifically did not want it to be her clothes to avoid confusion in this being mistaken for her outfit. It is:

Vikki: Something you see quite a lot at festivals, Reading, Leeds, that thing. Jean shorts from Urban Outfitters, so short you can see a bit of arse. And a bralette from Pretty Little Thing, something that is basically underwear that you couldn't wear a bra under even if you wanted to.

Vikki's image touches on the idea of self-objectification, where women internalise messages from an outside or third-person perspective and consequently begin to consider their physical appearance and sexual role as the aspects of themselves with primary import (McKinley, 2006). A manifestation of self-objectification can be recurrent surveillance of the body (Moradi and Huang, 2008), the "habitual monitoring of the body's outward appearance" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997: 180). Sexual objectification, through the mechanism of self-objectification and body surveillance, can result in body shame (Davidson and Gervais, 2015), particularly shame linked to sexual violence (Rhatigan, Shorey and Nathanson, 2011; Spangaro, Zwi and Poulous, 2011). Research has found a clear link between the traumatic experiences of sexual violence and shame as self-emotion (Wilson, Drozdek and Turkovic, 2006). Shame within sexual violence has been positioned as striking at the "core dimensions of the self, identity, ego processes and personality" (Peetz and Wilson, 2006: 123), where the victim-survivor comes to view themselves as inadequate (Davidson and Gervais, 2015).

But Vikki also wanted to add a sense of 'realness' to the photograph, so she 'was not just a girl in the crowd:'

Vikki: Her jeans don't quite fit as she gained a bit of weight in her first year of university, but she can't afford to replace them. So she does the button-up with a hair bobble. I don't really know exactly why that detail mattered that much, maybe because it's just something I've seen girls do, but I wanted it in there. I wanted her to feel real like it could have happened to her, was not just a girl in the crowd. She could have been one of my friends, my sister."

She also talked about how she wanted the girl to fall victim to some of the stereotypes surrounding victims of sexual assault and myths that clothing could precipitate rape as she

felt that these were still incredibly culturally resonant ideas embedded in societal consensus on rape victims.

Dana also used clothing to create a piece of participant-made art. She felt that over the past couple of years, due to the popularisation of the television adaptation, the Handmaids from The Handmaid's Tale were often widely recognised images of female sexual exploitation, but also resilience and empowerment in 'fighting back:'

Figure 28 – Don't let the bastards grind you down by Dana, early 20s, white European, heterosexual, woman

Dana found a second-hand vintage dress that she felt was eerily similar to the conservative, long-sleeved red dresses that the Handmaids wore in The Handmaid's Tale. Thus, she took the dress and sketched a design for an embroidery patch, which I then created for her to her specifications. The patch reads a famous quote from the novel and show: *'nolite te bastades carborundorum,'* which translated from Latin means 'don't let the bastards grind you down.' Dana explained quite clearly why she felt victimhood was identified with this:

Dana: Don't let the bastards grind you down. Yeah it really struck a chord with me and was in my head several days later. People tend to think of victims as really fragile; I always felt like people were looking at me like they expected me to break, but I just didn't. I don't think that's being a survivor though. I don't feel like I've 'survived' everything, I'm just trying to get through each day as it comes. And not let the bastards drag me down so to speak (laughs).

When asked to clarify who the *'bastards'* she was referring to were, she identified them as the perpetrators of sexual violence, particularly people who showed no remorse and *'got away with it.'* She also described how even though she did not believe that resistance was often afforded to victims, she thought that just by someone claiming a victim identity and acknowledging they had been a victim of a crime, they had automatically shown resistance, which she felt was not recognised:

Dana: Just by thinking 'you are a victim' shows you resisting, you're standing up for yourself. No matter how small.

Dana felt that victims were rarely viewed as showcasing resistance against their experiences and were often perceived as struggling to navigate their own experiences. Thus, she wanted to create an image that specifically stressed how victims did show signs of resistance. Dana's image is highly contrasted with the typical conventional constructions of victimhood associated with passivity (Best, 1997; Thompson, 2000; Dunn, 2005; Leisenring, 2006; Papendick and Bohner, 2017). Barry (1979: 39) described, quite famously, that "surviving is the other side of being a victim," wherein victims were constructed as passively navigating their victimisation experience (Dunn, 2005; Hunter, 2010). Yet Dana precisely positioned victims as engaging in resistance and taking active steps in their recovery, clearly rejecting that this is merely subscribed to survivors. This parallels van Dijk's (2009:13) examination

of victimology, where victim resilience is apparent. However, it usually evokes a negative response as it does not fit with cultural scripts surrounding the 'good victim' and breaches role expectations.

Whilst Dana focused on resistance, Charles chose instead to focus on the self-affirmations he felt that *'all victims needed to hear'* to try and combat the powerful self-blame and guilt they often experienced. He asked for a handwritten piece of paper, almost to appear like a historical form of punishment where a child would be asked to write 'lines' repeatedly, with the message *'I am to blame.'* He believed that this would best represent the strong sense of internal self-blame that he believed victims suffered from, particularly in cases where a female was the perpetrator. The victim was a male, as he felt this countered the traditional pattern of male violence against women. For example, male victim-survivors find themselves subjected to rape myths concerning the idea that "a man can enjoy sex even if it is being forced upon him," thus can lead to exacerbated guilt levels whenever their feelings violate this (Kassing and Prieto, 2003: 169). However, he felt that a crucial part of victim identity was consciously fighting against this self-internalisation of blame; he positioned this transformation of thinking as a hallmark of a victim identity:

Charles: I don't see how letting go of self-guilt and blame is just a 'survivor' quality. In fact I don't think it is. Survivors have 'survived' after all, whereas victims are trying to get there... Releasing yourself from blame is an important step of being a victim.

To capture this, he finished off the picture by writing himself in a much more prominent pen and larger text, 'I am not to blame,' to emphasise the truth of his message over the negative self-thoughts:
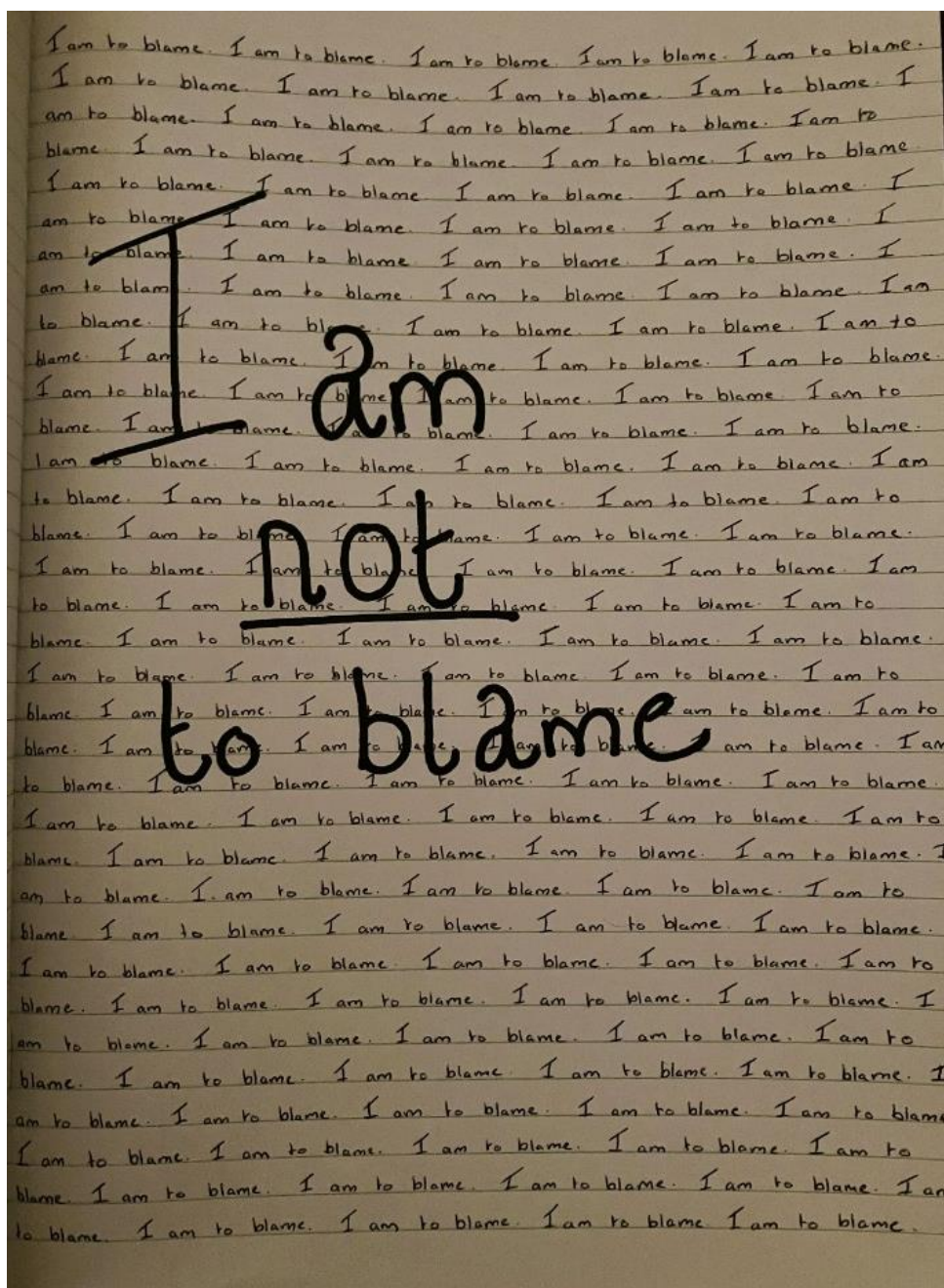
Figure 29 - I am not to blame by Charles, 18-20, heterosexual, white, male

Whilst Charles focused on how victims combatted internal thoughts, Kay turned her attention to why those thoughts existed in the first place. She also, quite strongly, believed that victims often experienced guilt or self-blame, shifting responsibility away from the perpetrator and focusing instead on their actions. She gave examples such as victims usually being encouraged by schools, educational institutions and the police to be careful when travelling alone at night, believing that this set the slippery slope that victims of sexual assault could have potentially avoided being victimised, which she said 'screamed of victim-

blaming.' Her understanding deeply matches with Williamson and Serna's (2018) articulation of how victims can be subjected to rape myths that result in women being the recipients of blame for their actions should an assault occur. Kay described how she worked part-time at a bar in her early twenties and often had no choice but to take late-night forms of transportation:

Kay: I broke all the rules you get – don't go out at night, and if you do don't go out alone. Don't wear make-up, don't wear headphones. For a year, nearly every night I did that, and I didn't get assaulted.

Instead, she described how she felt that 'toxic masculinity' was one of the main reasons why victims were assaulted; it was significantly contributing to increasing numbers of victims getting hurt and, most crucially, feeling as if they are unable to speak out about what had happened to them due to institutional misogyny and concerns of not being taken seriously by the police or their place of work, if men are in a position of power. Here she is clearly alluding to the 'unspeakability of rape' (Loney-Howes, 2018: 26). Kay noted that victims are hurt in two different ways:

Kay: First you're actually assaulted. Then you have to deal with the consequences afterwards and none of it is your fault.

This is a clear reflection of the secondary victimisation victims may experience (van Dijk, 2009). Kay wanted to use a shirt she found online for her photograph. As we could not locate the original shirt to purchase, a custom shirt in the same design was created, with the words *'end toxic masculinity'* in highlighter pink. Kay chose pink because it is often associated with women and femininity, so she thought the contrast added to the message. However, the photograph was deliberately blurry, so the message can barely be read. This was to showcase that Kay was not optimistic about the message in the picture; in fact, she felt that there was *'a long way to go for things to change.'*

Figure 30 - Blame the perpetrator by Kay, early 40s, white, bisexual, woman

In stark contrast, Georgina wanted to emphasise the helplessness of victims in addressing the victim-blaming she felt they were often subjected to after their victimisation, in line with the common cultural construction of victimhood being associated with helplessness (Ben-David, 2020; Larson, 2018; van Dijk, 2018; Convery, 2006). Although Georgina's photograph is rooted in her own experience, it was agreed that she did not want to appear in what would be a identifiable image, so a model was specifically recruited:

Figure 31 - I didn't need to say no, it was fucking obvious by Georgina, an 18-20, heterosexual, white, woman

Georgina described how she wanted to create an image of a young woman in her early twenties who had thrown a house party and was intoxicated to the level that she had passed out on her bed. A clear sign on the bed indicated, *'If I can't say no, I can't say yes.'* Whilst an individual would be deemed incapable of giving consent if intoxicated (Bechhofer and Parrot, 1991), she curated this image to focus on the questioning that she felt victims were often subjected to after their assault by both the police and other people who found out about the incident:

Georgina: It's like some people think that if you don't scream 'no' at them and physically push them off, there's some possible way he doubted that you didn't want it. That it wasn't obvious. But sometimes it doesn't play out like that.

Georgina's photograph links quite strongly with the sexual double standard that victim-identity is subjected to, particularly miscommunications surrounding sexual assault (Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh, 1988). The double-standard rhetoric has spread the idea that women sometimes have a token resistance to sexual intercourse or contact (Muehlenhard and Rodgers, 1998); in other words, "they reject sexual advances with an

intention to engage in them" (Setia, Marks and An, 2020: 1564). This sexual double standard has not only significantly diminished the value of consent to sex for women, but it has also had a significant knock-on effect of increasing the prominence of rape myths (Lee et al., 2010). Under this conceptualisation, the sexual double standard suggests that rape and sexual assault can result from uncontrollable sexual impulses of men (Hansen, 2020; Lee et al., 2010; Cowan and Quinton, 1997). It also postulates the idea that women can be constructed as almost 'deserving' of a sexual assault if they are not seen as actively resisting (Young and Maguire, 2003). As a result, rape and sexual violence can be both trivialised and even justified, as women become positioned as more submissive than men (Warner, 2000).

She later went on to explain how she associated being a victim with a potent sense of betrayal, and she found that to be the most challenging part of dealing with her assault, a factor that she found to be very unexpected. For clarity, Georgina disclosed that an ex-partner had raped her, but nine of his friends witnessed and masturbated to the incident:

Georgina: The worst part for me was how many people were involved. Not a single fucking person did anything to help me. There were ten guys in that room, and not one thought that it wasn't okay…I felt so betrayed and I really wanted to capture that, because every victim essentially is betrayed; they're hurt by somebody, somebody chose to hurt them.

Normal and normality

Three artists centred their images around victims being normal, ordinary people. Both Emily and Gemma created images with similar compositions but which differed starkly in their underlying meanings. Gemma still owned the dress that she wore when she was sexually assaulted and initially wished for this to be the focal point of her image. However, due to the potential complexities that this could raise if Gemma ever did want to report her assault, it was agreed instead that the researcher would source a dress as similar as possible to Gemma's approval. The foremost vital criteria are that the dress featured a bold, heart-shaped print and appeared suitable for workwear:

Figure 32 - Anyone by Gemma, late 20s, heterosexual, white, woman

Gemma requested some slight specific requirements for how the dress was presented, opting for a mannequin rather than a model to stress the impersonal nature of the

photograph to show how 'anyone can be a victim.' She also specifically requested that the mannequin be lowered to make it appear more clearly like one you might see in a clothing store window, further emphasising the impersonal nature. This was because:

Gemma: Anyone can be a victim. Nothing separates them. They're just normal people. Unless you knew what had happened to me, you wouldn't know.

She quite adamantly rejected that there were specific characteristics or hallmarks of victims of sexual assault; rather, she just felt that they were *'ordinary people.'* This is reminiscent of what Convery (2006) suggested: there were no intrinsic qualities separating victims from survivors, or else we would see much starker contrasts in outcomes between the two groups. Similarly, Emily also wished to create an outfit for someone who had been sexually assaulted. However, there are some hidden details in her choice:

Figure 33 – Blue skirt, white shirt by Emily, mid-20s, bisexual, white, woman

Emily chose clothes that were perhaps ambiguous in respectability or contained some element of pushing against the acceptable limits of a workplace dress code. She selected a knee-length skirt in a skater style design that *'is just short enough tights need to be worn with it'* and a white blouse *'that is just see-through enough to make you self-conscious.'* These choices were made to showcase the regular thought patterns of victims of sexual assault and how their clothing choices may exacerbate their feelings of self-blaming, even if they have acted entirely as usual. She described how:

Emily: I wore a shirt I always wore but I started thinking, should I have worn this? Did I give him the wrong idea? It wasn't like I was in stripper heels and a crop top. I acted completely normally, nothing out of the ordinary. It just happened.

Here Emily is eluding to the victim-blaming discourses and rape myths. Williamson and Serna (2018) described women being subjected to, specifically, the idea that provocative clothing can lead to rape. Survivors can internalise these rape myths and lead to blame (Moor, 2007), although Emily seems to reject this. She noted how she felt nothing had changed since her assault, which she wanted to encapsulate in her victim image: *"I still wear that top, you know. Nothing's really changed. I don't feel any different."* She particularly stressed how she did not feel like 'victim' had become a core part of her identity, even though it was the term she most identified with. Instead, she described it as an unpleasant event that happened to her, but she did not feel like her personality or sense of identity had changed much.

Finally, John also echoed similar sentiments about how he did not feel he had changed his identity at all despite having been sexually assaulted. John's photo-producing session was somewhat different from that of some other artists. I met him, and we visited a charity shop, where John chose the clothes for both of his photographs. For his victim image precisely, he chose a *shirt you could imagine anyone wearing. Nothing out of the ordinary* as he felt it best represented the image he wished to convey. He took the shirt home, washed it and then wore it on a night out to the same nightclub where he had been sexually assaulted three years previously, a place he stressed he had been multiple times since and did not feel triggered by. Then, the shirt was captured on a mannequin in a deliberately casual, unconsidered way:

Figure 34 – Just me by John, early 20s, heterosexual, white, male

Both John and Emily's understandings of identity deviate from the contemporary understanding that 'survivor' helps victim-survivors "no longer see abuse or the survival experiences as part of their existence" (Wuest and Merrit-Gray, 2001: 91). Rather, both of them actively reject the notion that 'victim' has taken over their primary existence, even though both expressed a preference for 'victim' over 'survivor.'

John later explained how he felt that sometimes people expected him to be more ashamed of being a sexual assault victim because he identified as male. For example, previous research explored how victimisation of sexual assault can be viewed as emasculating for male victim-survivors and can even result in a variation of an 'identity crisis' (Javaid, 2015; Clark, 2014). However, he emphasised that it was something he barely thought about, and he believed that this construction of victims as being affected by their assault was entirely misconstrued and damaging:

John: It literally does not affect me in one bit. I don't even think about it. My girlfriend reacted worse than I did at the time and it doesn't matter to

me…just because you're a victim of a crime doesn't mean your whole life is over. I actually wish that people would stop acting like it is always such a big deal. Don't get me wrong people go through far worse things than me, it wasn't like I was raped or anything. But it almost makes me feel weird for not caring.

Here John is showcasing his grievance with a rape myth surrounding male sexual assault. A critical central rape myth suggests that men are not as affected by their victimisation as their female counterparts (Kassing and Prieto, 2003; Kerr Melanson, 1999). Boyle and Rodgers (2020) found that men who self-reported greater salience with the victim identity showcased elevated sadness and overall more substantial distress, particularly as the concept can be viewed as disempowering to men (Dunn, 2012). Yet John found this incredibly frustrating and not representative of his own experience; it made him feel like his own reaction was not acceptable and out of the realm of a normative response to sexual violence. As John acknowledges, this is perhaps as he experienced what Pain (1991: 421) described as 'low-level sexual violence', and due to its 'common occurrence,' it is sometimes minimised.

Misconceptions surrounding victimhood

Three artists opted to focus on the various misconceptions and misconstructions that they felt were held around victims of sexual violence. Evee created a simple optical illusion designed to confuse onlookers:

Figure 35 - Perception by Evee, mid 20s, non-binary, queer, white

Evee's image is actually in two parts, one being her victim image and one her survivor photograph, which will be discussed later. On a canvas, the words of seven colours are painted on a canvas, but they are deliberately painted in a different coloured paint. For example, 'green' is painted in red. This was to clearly capture the confusion that Evee described that victim identity was subjected to:

Evee: No one really knows what to make of victims or how they should react. Victims are either portrayed as if the worst thing in the world has happened to them or it's treated like they should just move on, that it's no big deal.

Evee's conceptualisation of the polarisation of victims fits within Convery's (2006) understanding of how the victim-survivor binary is often overly simplified in this vein and how this is highly limiting in terms of representing the varied victim experience. Evee also

described how they had personally encountered another person incorrectly linking their own gender identity and sexuality to their past experiences of sexual assault:

Evee: Years ago back when I was seventeen I ended up going on this adventure camp in the Lakes and so I basically went camping with these four other girls I didn't know – as they didn't have non-binary dorms they asked who I wanted to room with, but it was all quite relaxed. It wasn't like school, all the tents were mix-gendered if we wanted them to be…I shared a tent with one of my roommates and we were just talking about things, as you do. And my sexuality came up, I identify as asexual by the way. And, just out of the blue, she asked if I thought it had anything to do with what happened to me. I was really confused and sort of just looked at her, it took me a second to realise I'd told two of them the day before in the dorm that I'd been assaulted in my school changing room once. It took me a second to realise what she was asking me. I couldn't even get my head around it. I don't want to judge her as we were quite young and she was pretty sheltered, but like I don't know how someone can genuinely think that my entire sexual identity changed because of one, small incident. It's crackers to me. But then I started getting quite self-conscious about it and wondering if everyone thought I'd just had some really bad experience and would grow out of it.

Evee later went on to explain that whilst she believed the girl did not mean to upset them, the pattern of thinking, of believing or connecting a person's sexual identity to a sexual assault, was incredibly offensive. However, they did believe that there were a lot of misconceptions surrounding how unwanted sexual experiences could influence a person's sexual identity and their attitudes towards consensual sex, citing how they had often heard victims of sexual assault being seen as 'afraid of sex' after their assault. This is commonly seen in the literature examining the change in victim-survivors' understandings and conceptualisations of self-identity, intimacy and their relationships (D'Amore et al., 2021), where re-examination is actually considered a vital part (Ulloa et al., 2016).

In a similar vein, Rose believed that there was a lot of confusion surrounding sexual assault and how it had shaped her identity as a victim. Her picture depicts a t-shirt with hieroglyphics that she owned, where she actually *'has no idea'* what the embroidered

symbols mean, and this represents how she believes that victims can feel in the aftermath of their assault:

Figure 36 – Code by Rose, mid 20s, bisexual, white, woman

Rose expressed how she felt unsure of what she was supposed to do after being assaulted, what actions she should take and what decisions were hers to make; she felt like she needed an 'instruction manual' of how to act as 'no one tells you what to do:'

Rose: All I remember is just not knowing what to do. It was all the practical stuff really – should I be preserving my clothes for evidence? Should I go to the police? Do I want to go to the police? What happens if I do? What happens if my mum finds out or my boyfriend, would he even believe me?

Why did this happen to me? I just remember feeling at a complete loss and really overwhelmed with it all.

When describing why she chose to use the particular t-shirt as the image's focal point, she explained how she purchased it several years ago from a charity shop and had no idea what the symbols meant. She felt that the shirt perfectly captured the sense of confusion that she said she experienced and that she thought was a cornerstone of being a victim, being forced to navigate through a traumatic experience where you feel a strong sense of confusion about how to act. Here, Rose's understanding has parallels with Boyle's (2017) exploration of how sexual assault can often result in identity confusion and alteration with victims of sexual assault. However, identity confusion, in general, is not commonly associated with victimhood, except for in the dimension of actually coming to identify one's self as a victim and recognising experiences as constituting sexual assault (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020).

'Survivor' images

Realisations centred around challenging victim-blaming

The most overarching central messages in ten photographs specifically examined realisations that the artists had come to personally or that they believed that other survivors of sexual assault reached. Specifically, these realisations concentrated on aspects of their experiences and directly challenged predominant cultural narratives and victim-blaming discourses.

Sexualisations

Georgina chose to centre her photograph on a discovery that she did not feel represented her experience directly, but she believed that other survivors of sexual violence came to:

Figure 37 – Shoulders by Georgina 18-20, heterosexual, white, woman

Her image features a mannequin dressed in a 'pretty off-shoulder dress,' the critical aspect is the exposed shoulders specifically, as Georgina highlights the shoulders as a key symbol of the over-sexualisation of women's bodies and how this seeps into victim-blaming. Instead, on the shoulders of the mannequin, Georgina pinned two embroidery patches she had chosen with two distinctive messages: 1) An image of a knife and a laurel leaf beside the **message 'don't touch me without my permission'** and 2) the words, **'my body, my choice.'** She decided to pin the patches on the shoulders to launch an **'attack'** on the unfair victim-blaming she felt survivors were subjected to, as she believed being a survivor involved realising they were subjected to this.

Specifically, the *'my body, my choice' represented the realisation that survivors' rights had been violated,* and they understood that what had happened to them was *'wrong.'* In addition, the *'don't touch me without my permission'* represented survivors' future assertions of their resistance to being blamed for their sexual assaults. Whilst Georgina did not believe that only those who claimed survivor identity came to this realisation, she felt that survivors were more commonly associated with resistance to victim-blaming than victims due to their ability to voice their disapproval. Georgina's understanding of this parallels Alcoff and Gray's (1993) articulation of the metaphor 'breaking the silence.' It, of course, must be acknowledged that similar echoes surrounding voice and disclosure within sexual violence discourses in general have long been established (Loney-Howes, 2018); it is "virtually ubiquitous" throughout the survivor movement (Alcoff and Gray, 1993: 261) and 'survivor' identity has frequently been tied to victim-survivors finding their voice (Dunn, 2006).

In a similar vein, Lili also created an image using clothing, but in her case, she specifically chose a top from a popular high-street chain with a message that she felt depicted the realisation survivors came to; that victim-blaming discourses and rape myths surrounding the idea that clothes precipitate sexual assault were discourses survivors try to resist. The top she selected reads, *'a woman does not have to be modest in order to be respected'* with a heart on either side of the caption. Lili explained that she believes she misinterpreted the top's message initially during photo-creation; she later realised *'modest'* was used in terms of pride or arrogance rather than a dress, but she felt it still portrayed the message she wanted to showcase; survivors realise and come to accept *"that a woman's outfit choice does not influence her likelihood of rape"* and survivors can internalise them:"
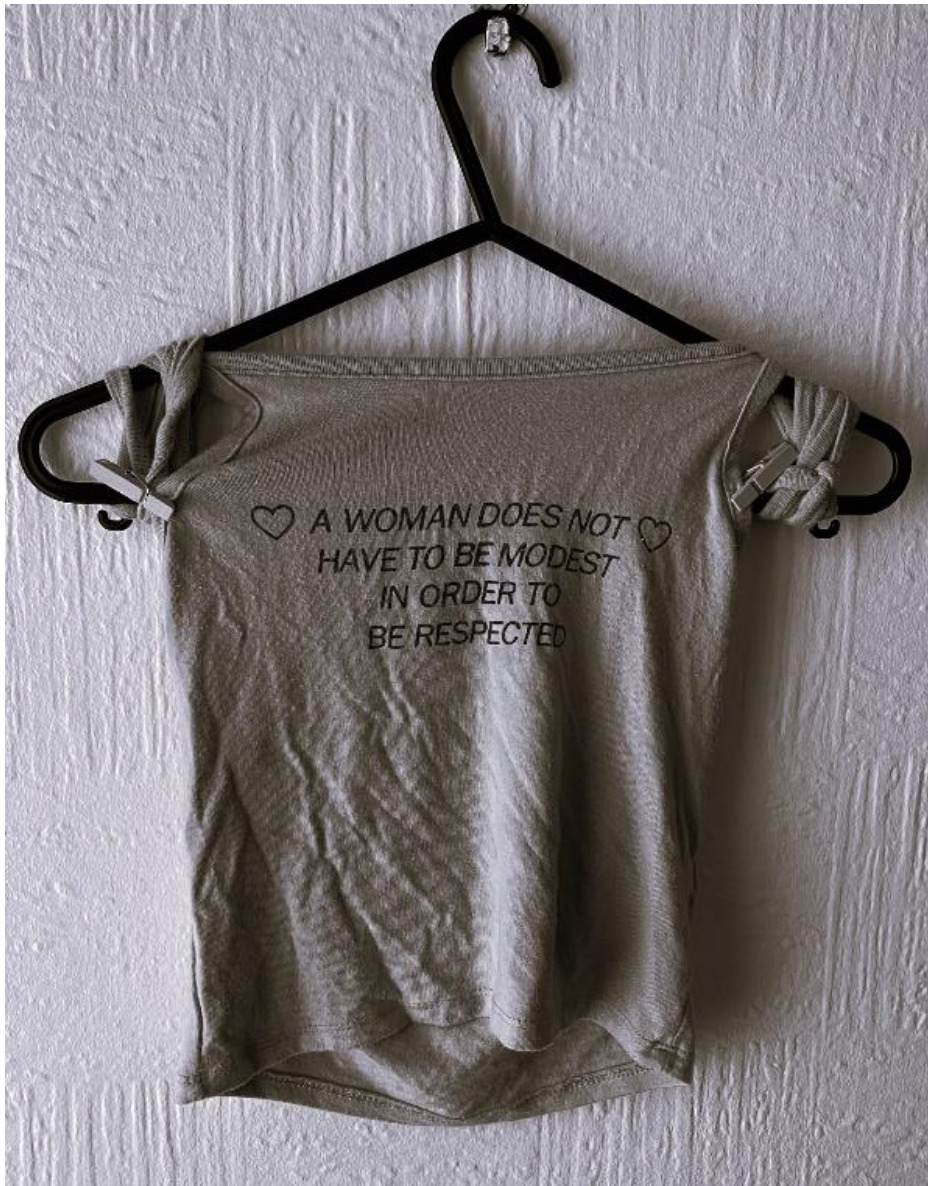
Figure 38 - Respect is deserved by Lili, mid 20s, heterosexual, black, woman

Veronica also created her image to challenge victim-blaming that she felt people who experienced sexual violence were subjected to, which she thought she had come to realise as she moved through her recovery. She described how survivors were subjected to a rarely clear-cut dilemma where she felt **'survivors often lost.'**

Figure 39 – The Survivor Dilemma by Veronica, early 20s, Latinx, heterosexual, woman

Veronica described how Plato's philosophical problem inspired her, ' Euthyphro's dilemma,' where Euthyphro was presented with a supposedly irreconcilable ethical dilemma. Similarly, though a completely different topic, Veronica believed that survivors of sexual violence were subjected to scrutinisation of their behaviour during the victimisation event and post-assault. However, she specifically felt that, unlike victims, survivors were often positioned as actively challenging this, such as vocalising their disapproval or resisting being subjected to victim-blaming discourses. This is reminiscent of the association with survivorship and resistance within the survivor discourse (Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2005; McLeer, 1998).

She requested that the quote from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure be embroidered on the chest: "The ***tempter or the tempted, who sins the most?"*** This was explicit as she felt 'tempted' was an interesting verb to describe how she believed survivors were often treated

like their clothes or actions had acted as a *'tempting force,'* diminishing the culpability of the perpetrators, as they are almost positioned as people *'who just couldn't say no,'* rather than rapists. Again this shows quite clear parallels with the idea that rape and sexual assault can result from uncontrollable sexual impulses of men (Hansen, 2020; Lee et al., 2010; Cowan and Quinton, 1997), as discussed earlier, particularly with the temptation imagery.

As with Veronica's artwork, Kay also requested that the researcher create an embroidered piece of clothing. Although Veronica's t-shirt was explicitly purchased for her artwork, Kay asked for one of her t-shirts. Kay's shirt was not tied to her sexual assault strictly, but she felt it essential that it was an item of her clothing as it was her message: *'a message I've tried to tell myself over and over again.'* Kay's t-shirt was also specifically chosen due to the long sleeves and modest, high neckline, as she felt this held great importance in conveying a specific message regarding survivor identity:

Figure 40 – Falling back in love with sex by Kay, early 40s, white, bisexual, woman

Pink was chosen as it is the colour Kay believed was primarily associated with femininity, as she wanted her photograph to describe how a vital part of a survivor mentality, in her mind, involved a post-assault re-examination of feelings around sexual intimacy. She explained how she identified as a survivor of sexual violence herself, and one of her biggest *'battles'* to become a survivor was re-shifting her internal thoughts around sexual intimacy to no longer associate her victimisation experiences with her perceptions of sexual intercourse:

Kay: When I was raped, it did change how I felt about sex, at least a little bit. I wouldn't say it put me off completely or made me terrified, like everyone seems to believe. But I really struggled staying fully 'present' sometimes, like my mind would drift a lot…and my partner at the time didn't know how to handle it, we broke up pretty shortly after. It was only when I started with my new girlfriend who was much more sympathetic, I started really realising I'd gone off sex a bit and that wasn't okay. My love language has always been sex and kind of physical touch, I needed to really get that back to feel connected to someone….I needed to learn to love sex again, if I was going to survive this.

Kay here is eluding to the idea that unwanted sexual contact and nonconsensual experiences "transform routine and/ or pleasurable activities…into unpleasant, upsetting, disturbing and often threatening experiences" (Kelly, 1988: 97), where sexual assault is depicted as changing female perceptions of sexual intercourse and intimacy post-assault. She also later went on to describe how she did feel like she received a harsher judgement from others due to her identification as an openly bi-sexual woman, as she thought others viewed her as more 'sexually liberated' and 'more in touch with my sexual side:'

Kay: bisexual people, women in particular, have always been victim to this idea that we sleep around far more cause we can have more sexual partners. It's simplistic and it's dumb, but it's always made me cognizant of coming across as a sexually-open woman. I like sex, sure, who doesn't? But I'm not attracted to everyone just because I'm bisexual. It's more about an energy and a vibe for me.

The 'hate sexism' part of Kay's photograph was her specific challenge to the judgement and internal thoughts she felt she suffered when navigating her own sexual identity. This is evocative of some apparent stereotypes and historical-cultural assumptions bisexual women have been subjected to, mainly centred around promiscuity (Klesse, 2005), stereotypes they are more vulnerable to than other female members of the gay community (Kless, 2011). Kay felt her own sexual identity meant that she was openly subjected to harsher critique, and this made it difficult for her, in general, to come to terms with her attitudes towards sex. Still, as she had to re-navigate her relationship with sexual intimacy after her assault, this was a core component in her becoming a survivor, a term she identified with.

Masculinity

Unlike in Veronica's and Kay's photographs, where the embroidery was completed by the researcher, in Charles' photograph, he created a piece of art that involved the customisation of a t-shirt, which he hand embroidered himself:

Figure 41 - Not all men, but too many, by Charles, 18-20, heterosexual, white, male

Charles emphasised several times during his interview that he felt annoyance that casual observers would likely view his image and assume it was made by a female survivor, believing it ***"almost impossible people would think a man would create that. But I did…After all, most people who are sexually assaulted are women, and they're normally assaulted by men."*** This perhaps stems from the fact that "the sexual victimisation of men is often downplayed or ignored," it is not the normative assumption that the victim-survivor of an assault is a male (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020: 339). He also described how he felt that some men sometimes felt resentful or offended during discussions of male-perpetrated sexual violence, but Charles felt that as the majority of sexual assault survivors were female, it was an essential central message he wished to stress; ***that "too many men are abusing women."*** Thus, despite being a male survivor of sexual violence, he

felt the traditional construction was female, and rightly so, in his opinion, due to the overwhelming statistics.

Not all artists identified with a survivor identity; Gemma expressed a hatred for the term as she felt it placed unreasonable expectations on women to *'get over what happened to you.'* Gemma instead centred her survivor image on the practice of 'man-spreading,' an act that she found men commonly used. Still, when they did so, men showcased a complete lack of awareness of how uncomfortable they made women feel by invading their personal space. Gemma's understanding of manspreading is incredibly similar to Jane's (2016:460), who described it as a "neologism used to refer to men who sit with their legs in a wide V-shape filling two or three single seats on public transport."

Gemma had watched a video a few years ago produced by the 'Riot Girls,' where they openly challenged and made a mockery of men who engaged in the practice of public transport in London, and Gemma felt that this was a prime example of what a survivor was generally thought of as to be*: 'women openly challenging toxic masculinity.'* Therefore, Gemma purchased a pair of *'normal'* jeans and painted the words *'toxic masculinity'* on the thighs to make the onlooker imagine a man engaging in man-spreading. She then asked a male flatmate to take a picture of the jeans on his bed, in the manner of someone laying out their clothes to wear that morning, as *'toxic masculinity is something that happens every day.'* Again, Gemma, quite clearly, is bounding the survivor identity with resistance, although here we see this taken one stage further, as challenging manspreading is a key component of feminist activism (Jane, 2016).

Figure 42 – Challenging toxic masculinity by Gemma, late 20s, heterosexual, white, woman

Perceptions

Two artists focused on challenging predominant perceptions that they felt survivors were subjected explicitly to over their victim counterparts. Evee's photograph is an extension of their victim image, but their survivor image has an added component:

Figure 43 - Perception is reality by Evee, mid-20s, non-binary, queer, white

Following their victim image centred around distortion and confusion, Evee had a transparent plastic cover placed over the top of the canvas used in their victim image. On the plastic cover, the words 'perception is reality' were painted over the top as:

Evee: **I actually don't think it matters at all what I think a survivor of sexual violence is or how they identify. Survivor is such a buzzword now, you see it almost everywhere. It's how people express that they're forward thinking or trying to be 'empowering to women,' or whatever but don't seem to care what being a 'survivor' actually means. To me, surviving literally means you survived, you lived through something, but that would mean everyone is a survivor and they clearly aren't.**

When asked what they meant by this distinction, Evee went on to explore how they felt 'survivor' was often discussed about sexual violence and good mental health, a distinction that they felt excluded a significant number of victim-survivors of sexual violence from that category. They also noted that they thought standard cultural constructions and

perceptions of survivors often centred around survivors being seen as 'doing things,' which they felt was entirely excluding of disabled victim-survivors like themselves:

Evee: I don't know if you've ever seen tampon adverts, but it's like that or the 'that girl' trend on TikTok. Survivors are always out and about, doing things, seeing things, going places; not just living their life, but living their 'best life.' And this creates a jump barrier that most of us just can't live up to. I've got fibromyalgia and I literally can barely walk, you can see my walking stick – I call it Herman, (laughs)…I feel like I've survived my sexual assault, but I don't fit the 'survivor' image.

Evee's perceptions and central message align strongly with the criticisms Larson (2018) levied at survivor identity. Larson (2018: 680) noted that the adoption of 'survivor' encouraged a climate of 'compulsory survivorship' that asked "people to adopt a public persona driven by a social need to overcome, to appear normal. In other words, those who face sexual violence can speak and be listened to only if they have disavowed the consequences of pain or sexual trauma." Consequently, it denies status and legitimacy to anyone who falls short of being 'already healed and resumed normalcy' (Larson, 2018: 680). This creates an expectation that some victim-survivors with certain disabilities may not be able to meet, particularly given historical precedence in the use of 'overcoming' language being explicitly bound to quests for 'normalcy' and 'normal' functioning, resulting in the stigmatisation of disabled bodies (Carter, 2019; Mitchell and Synder, 2000). Building upon McRuer's (2006) understanding of 'compulsory able-bodiedness', compulsory survivorship positions survivors as people able to maintain normal mental functioning, whereas the victim, a person who has any symptoms of trauma, falls short and is thus socially beneath 'survivor' counterparts (Larson, 2018). Therefore, Evee felt they could not match this expectation and construction, making them struggle to claim a survivor's identity.

Vikki's image also centred around cultural constructions of survivors, particularly as she described how she felt survivors were often criticised more frequently due to their refusal to let their assault affect them, whilst victims who seem like they are still suffering the after-effects of their assault are afforded more sympathy. This is quite similar to Dunn's (2005) discussion of the repercussions of claiming a survivor identity in terms of diminishing sympathy afforded to victim status. Vikki created what she called *'The Spiked Test'* to encourage the onlooker to consider how easy it is not to notice if their drink had been

spiked; Vikki felt that a lot of the official messaging and recommendations from the police and governmental advice often involved women needing to take precautions to reduce their likelihood of being spiked:
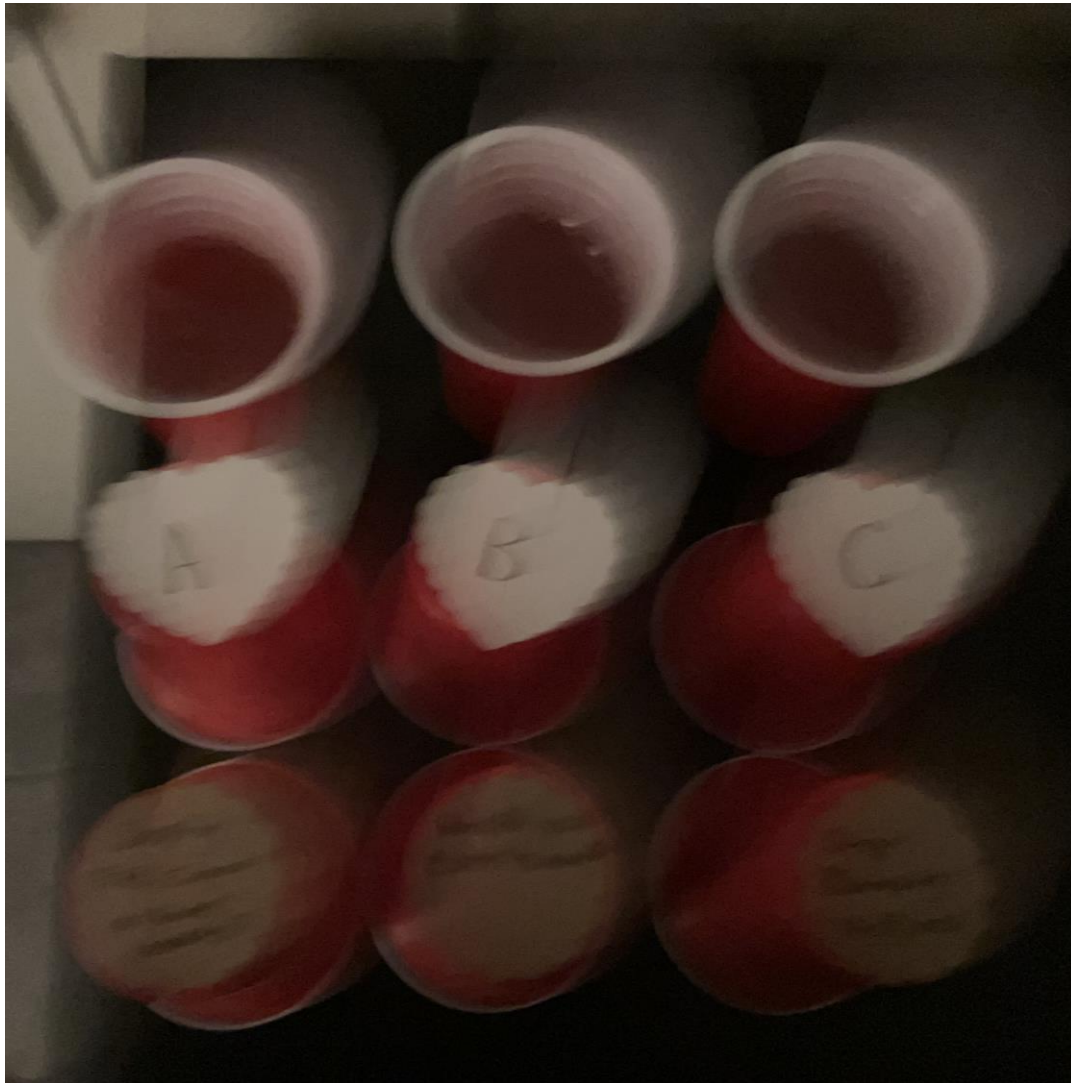
Figure 44 – The spiked test. Spoiler alert, you wouldn't pass! by Vikki, 18-20, heterosexual, white, woman

The image contains three red solo cups filled with an alcoholic cocktail, Vikki's favourite. Each has been 'spiked' with a different substance: some sugar cubes, love heart sweets, and an over-the-counter sleeping medication that could be used as a date-rape drug (with a high enough dosage in the cup to impair a person). However, to represent the environment that a woman could be spiked in with low lighting, where they may have already consumed some alcohol, such as in a nightclub or bar, the picture is deliberately blurred. Vikki described this as **'an impossible task',** and she hoped it would illuminate the ridiculousness of the

expectation that a survivor can reduce their likelihood of being spiked, especially as she gave her drink to a trusted friend who ended up being the perpetrator.

She found it highly offensive and upsetting that survivors were portrayed as playing a role in their victimisation, and she wanted to challenge this head-on. Vikki stresses the central idea that intoxicated survivors should be considered rape survivors. She is drawing upon scenarios where a woman's ability to give consent is temporarily impaired through a drug being slipped into her drink (Abbey et al., 2004). This is particularly resonant given that research has found links between intoxicated sexual assaults and higher levels of survivors experiencing a degree of responsibility for what had happened to them (Abbey et al. 2002).

Healing

Three artists' photographs examined or positioned survivors as having dealt with difficult things, and by doing so, they had begun to heal from their sexual assault. Jynx felt that he deserved internal validation for coming to terms with his sexual assault and the treatment that he had engaged with during his recovery:
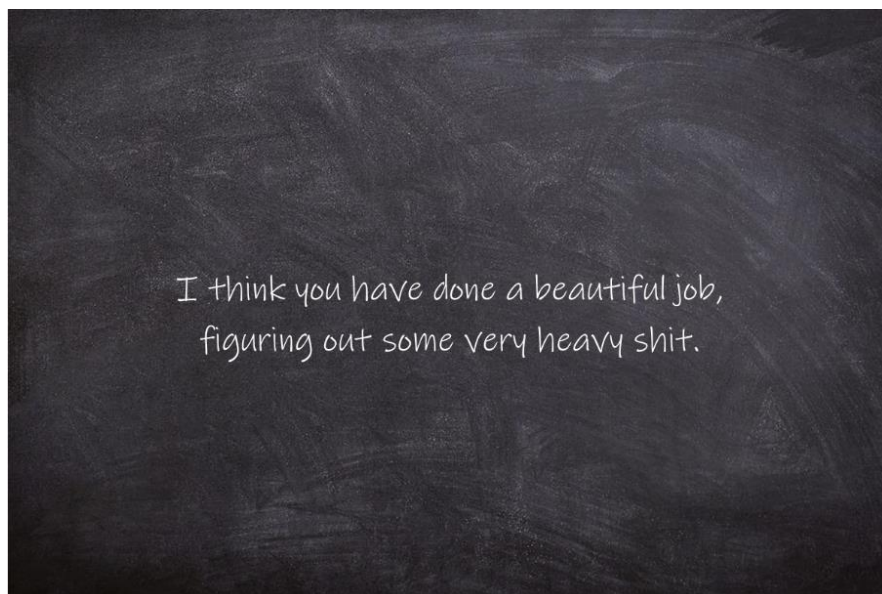
Figure 45 – Slack by Jynx, mid 20s, heterosexual, white, male

He decided to write an affirmation on a chalkboard as a little reminder to himself of a personal message. The title of his photograph, *'Slack',* was from the popular idiom 'to cut yourself some slack,' meaning not to be too harsh on yourself, which he felt he should do even though he was a perfectionist and often did meet his high standards. Jynx felt that

being a survivor wasn't necessarily defined by being healed. Still, he thought that to move into a survivor category, *"you had to have at least started some form of recovery."* This has a certain degree of similarities with the portrayal of survivor identity with coping. 'Survivor' is often connoted with positive coping (Ben-David, 2020; Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Jordan, 2013), but there is somewhat of a lack of consensus regarding at what stage a survivor is in terms of recovery. Jynx's positioning that survivors have started recovery is quite similar to Salazar and Casto's (2008) construction, where survivors are simply in the healing stage through recognising their victimisation. Similarly, Jenny felt that all survivors had to acknowledge, at least to some degree, that they had begun the healing process.

In her photograph, she wanted to stress the solidarity in claiming a survivor identity:

Figure 46 – Issues by Jenny, late 20s, heterosexual, white, woman

Jenny's piece of art involved hand embroidery on a pink t-shirt, for which Jenny drew the template, and the researcher copied this. She chose the phrase *'pass the tissues, we all got*

issues,' which she first saw in a popular meme. Jenny found that this message encapsulated how she felt about survivor identity; she did not believe survivors were necessarily healed, similar to Jynx. She felt that being a survivor involved acknowledging and sharing with others about their struggles, finding common ground and empathy and offering support. She described how:

Jenny: I'm fine 95% of the time, but the other 5% doesn't take away from that.

Again, Jenny's understanding of survivorship parallels Roddick's (2015) notion that survivors have not only begun to integrate trauma into their lives (as Jordan (2013) suggested) but have also begun to realise their strengths in helping others and are determined to continue to move forward despite setbacks.

Self-love and positive self-esteem

Three artists specifically emphasised the associations between survivorhood and having self-love or positive self-esteem. Self-esteem is usually considered emblematic of a person's worth evaluation (Rosenberg, Rosenberg and McCord, 1978). A critical dimension of overall self-esteem is body esteem (Osman and Merwin, 2020); this refers to a person's opinion of an aspect of their body, which can be surrounding their physical appearance or tied to their capability (Franzoi and Shields, 1984). Libby found a child's jumper with the message 'more self-love' emblazoned across the chest, which was then evolved into a piece of art, with the addition of a hand-embroidered heart on the sleeve and a child's lollipop also added:

Figure 47 – Tell all the little girls by Libby, early 20s, Asian, heterosexual, woman

Libby described how when victims are sexually assaulted, they may become more guarded due to being hurt, and it can also significantly affect their self-esteem. She believed that victims had to return to some of the skills and attributes usually associated with children: having positive self-images, being more trusting of others (wearing their hearts on their sleeve) and being innocent once more in their view of the world (lollipop). She specifically chose a lollipop as she felt the associations surrounding lollipops differed amongst adults and children; where children just viewed them for what they were, lollipops were often metaphorical for sexual body parts or sexual acts, and she felt this represented a loss of innocence. There is some overlap between Libby's understanding of survivorship and survivors being portrayed as having self-compassion. Self-compassion is typically framed as a person expressing love, kindness or a sense of awareness of their self. It is usually represented and drawn upon within scenarios or experiences customarily associated with harsh self-judgements (Neff and Vonk, 2009; Neff, 2003). When showing self-compassion, a person is viewed as resisting imposing harmful or critical self-attitudes following an adverse circumstance (Neff, 2003). Williamson and Serna (2018) noted that survivors were more

likely to have a sense of compassion for themselves rather than impose harsh self-evaluation, and this was one of the reasons why internalising the concept of a survivor over a victim was tied to better mental health outcomes.

Similarly, Reece's image focuses on a positive attribute that he felt distinguished survivors from victims, this being the ability to absolve oneself from past mistakes:
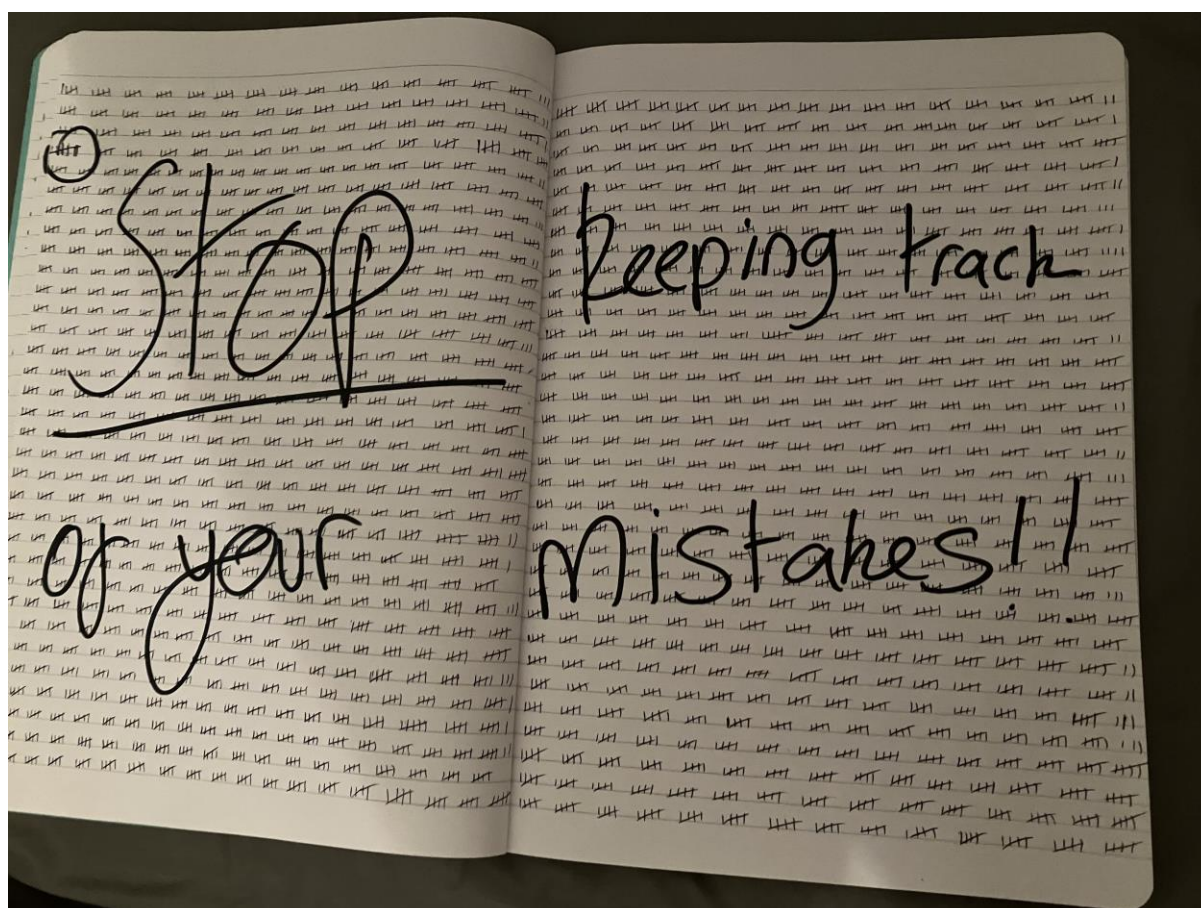
Figure 48 – Stop by Reece, mid 20s, transgender male, demisexual, white

In a notebook, Reece completed a tally chart to showcase how victims often can be caught in the trap of over-thinking and feeling disappointed in themselves over previous mistakes. In contrast, survivors can concentrate on the occasional mistake made (hence the circling of a few), but do not dwell on this and can move past this:

Reece: I used to replay everything I'd done over and over in my head, normally when I couldn't get off to sleep or when I'd been woken up and couldn't fall back asleep; it was the worst. But I've tried to let that go now.

Again, there are similar parallels between survivor identity and compassion for oneself. In line with Neff's (2003) consideration of self-compassion, Reece acknowledges his own negative emotions and previous patterns of behaviour; he shows self-compassion, thus suggesting it is a trait indicative of survivorhood. A key dimension of the survivor being tied to self-compassion is the idea that survivors come to view themselves in more positive terms, showing self-compassion, and is seen as beneficial to recovery (Williamson, 2023). In a similar dimension, Sarah also centred her photograph around survivors 'letting go' of the negative. Still, in her case, she believed survivors were able to free themselves from the anger surrounding their assault:

The bastard that hurt me needs to be punished for what he did to me...

What I THOUGHT would help me heal

What ACTUALLY helped me move on

I can accept that who he chose to be was out of my control. He didn't love me, but I do...

Figure 49 – Let go by Sarah, mid-20s, mixed race, heterosexual, woman

She described how she initially felt furious about her experiences and felt the only way she could achieve 'closure' was through her abuser being formally punished by the criminal justice system. However, even though her case did go to trial, and the perpetrator was found guilty, she saw some of the positive self-internalisations she learned through therapy to be more beneficial to her healing process. One of the self-internalisations is a line from the song 'I am not nothing' by Beth Crowley, which is on a playlist Sarah made with her therapist, that serves as a reminder to place responsibility with the offender, a former partner, rather than herself. The second line reminds her to appreciate and hold herself in suitable regard. Thus, similar echoes of self-compassion.

Changing and growing

Four artists concentrated on ideas of changing and growing associated with a survivor's identity. Rose created a wordplay that had two central messages:
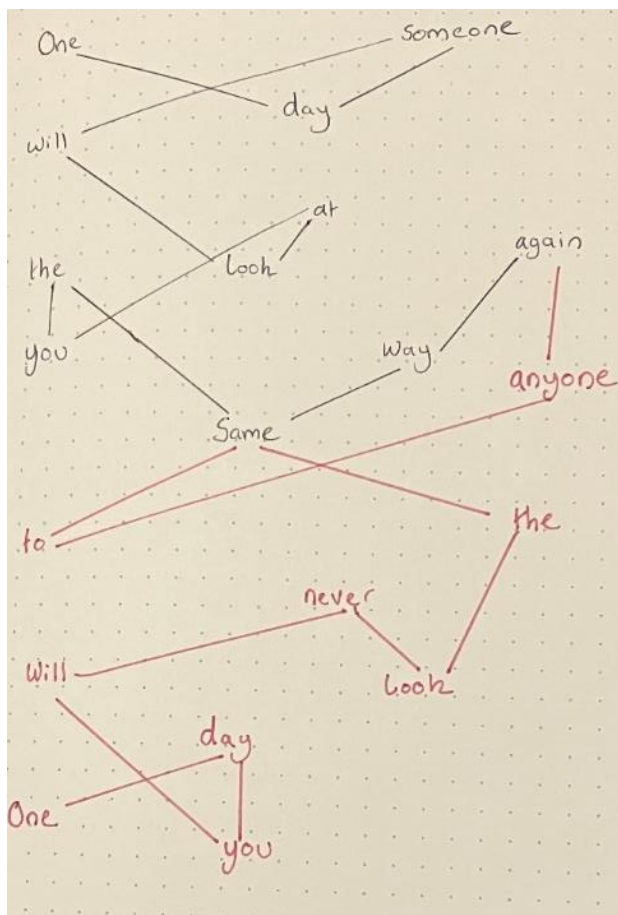

Figure 50 – One day by Rose, mid 20s, bisexual, white woman

There are two central messages in Rose's photograph that the onlooker must untangle:

1) *One day someone will look at you the same way again*

2) *One day you will never look the same to anyone again*

Rose felt that both messages encapsulated how being recognised as a survivor. The first message referred to what she felt was *the normal view of a survivor*, that survivors would no longer be viewed as *'fragile'* or *'harmed'* as victims are. The second message was a little deeper, as she initially felt it might seem negative, framing survivors as changed by their experience. Still, she felt this change was for the better, as survivors *"usually appeared more resilient and tougher, so had more respect than before."* Resilience and change were also the central components of Angelyka's photograph, taken in her garden:

Figure 51 – Growing strong by Angelyka, late 20s, heterosexual, Asian, woman.

Angelyka chose to capture some daisies growing in a relatively infertile patch of her garden at a much earlier time of the year than other flowers. She felt that this precisely captured the resilience that she thought was a hallmark of a survivor, not a victim:

Angelyka: I don't really like the term victim personally as it's quite negative…survivors are resilient, they're able to keep going and get better

despite everything that's happened to them. That's why I prefer to be called a survivor.

Both Angelyka and Rose's images echo cultural constructions of survivors, which have a long-established tie with resilience (Ben-David, 2020; Papendick and Bohner, 2017; Muldoon, Taylor and Norma, 2016; Van Dijk, 2009). Emily's image takes this one stage further; she also felt that survivors had gone through some form of change, unlike their victim counterparts, fitting with the familiar metaphor of a transition (Thompson, 2000) or journey (Jordan, 2013). She believed that the 'change' was setting more appropriate boundaries and refusing to put up with lousy treatment in other relationships. Emily described how she was sexually assaulted at the beginning of her twenties. Whilst she wouldn't go as far as to say her assault led to a positive transformation overall, she did feel that one of the takeaways for her was that she now thought she was *"much better at saying no to people and I don't let people walk all over me anymore. I'm more confident now and that came with time, I guess that's a part of being a survivor."* Her photograph was a replica of a pyjama top that she owned, a new one being purchased for the research. Here we see echoes within the survivor discourses placing a better emphasis on women's responses to sexual violence, further acknowledging not just their victimisation but also their strength (Walklate, 2011).

Figure 52 - Boundaries by Emily, mid-20s, bisexual, white, woman

Echoing similar themes of change, Louise took her photograph whilst jogging by a river close to where she lived:

Figure 53 – Always flowing by Louise, 18-20, white European, heterosexual woman

She chose a river as she felt that the water inside a river was constantly changing due to the current, and she thought that this represented what being a survivor entailed in terms of recovery; **"every day gets better."** However, she did want to stress that it wasn't a simple or easy process, so she chose a spot in the river with some quite substantial rocks that were affecting the direction of the current. Thus, whilst this fits somewhat with Jordan's (2013) understanding of from 'victim' to 'survivor' as a linear journey, Louise challenges the linear aspect in the sense that it is not solely linear. Instead, her understanding matches the understanding of Murray et al. (2015) regarding recovery from sexual violence as being both "interweaving and circular," not linear (Flasch, Fall and Stice, 2020:30).

In a similar outside setting, Kirsten captured her survivor photograph whilst walking her dog, in the same manner as her victim image, and she also stressed the association between survivorhood and changing:

Figure 54 – Two paths by Kirsten, mid 50s, heterosexual, white, woman

Kirsten captured the image of a fallen tree blocking one of two possible paths. She described how she believed 'survivorhood' was associated with changing; although she did not think that it was changing from a 'victim' to a 'survivor,' she believed that you could be both at the same time:

Kirsten: I think you can be both. Just because you have survived something does not mean you weren't a victim in the first place…to me, survivor is an add on, rather than replacing victim.

This is quite similar to Leistering's (2006) suggestion that victim-survivor identities are multi-dimensional and occasionally can even be conflicting. However, Kirsten went on to explain that she felt survivors were associated with having changed in some way, hence why she believed that victims also may describe themselves as such. The **'change'** she thought was wanting to move past what had happened to you. She emphasised that this wasn't something simple or one singular event; rather, she believed change was finding different paths when obstacles came in the way, again echoing Flash, Fall and Stice (2020).

Choice and identity

Catherine wanted to create a piece of art centred around the motif of a semi-colon, which she felt was a symbol that was commonly associated with survivors of sexual assault; it was even a symbol she had tattooed several years prior due to the association. To illustrate her message, Catherine painted a large rock with a graffiti-style heart and the inscription *'semicolon: where the author could have ended the sentence but chose not to; The author is you and the sentence is your life:'*
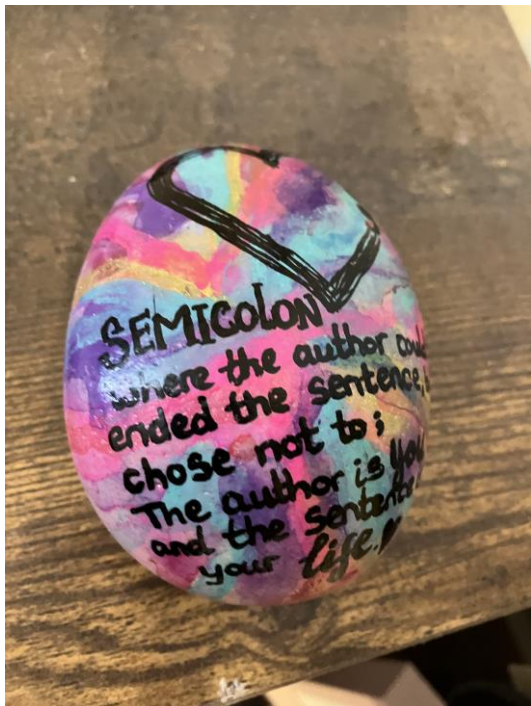
Figure 55 – Semicolon by Catherine, mid-30s, heterosexual, white, woman

Crucially, Catherine wanted to stress that in her use of the word *'ended,'* she did not want to imply that victims automatically consider taking their own life. Still, rather, she meant ended in a metaphorical sense. Here, she was referring to how she believed those who chose to survive their sexual assault actively decided:

Catherine: to be a survivor means that you don't let what happened to you become who you are. I'm more than just a survivor of sexual assault; I'm a mother, a sister, an aunt, a friend, I like to cook, I have a great job, an amazing cat, I ran a marathon last year… I'm a person who was sexually assaulted, not a victim of sexual assault."

Thus, she believed very strongly that whilst no one can control a sexual assault, they can decide whether they let this become a part of their identity or not, and she believed that this was a core component of a survivor's attitude. This is a tough one to disentangle, particularly as Flasch, Murray and Crowe (2017: 3378) criticised a survivor identity for still defining "the person about the abuse they experienced." But Catherine's understanding fits firmly with Murray and Graves' (2012: 16) positioning, where the designation 'survivor' denotes "individuals who have permanently separated from their experiences;" it is very reminiscent of overcoming language rather than considering how people may claim and reclaim identities (such as Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018).

Also considering survivor identity, Jasmine described how she did not actively identify as a 'victim' of sexual violence, not because of an issue with the term, but that she did not think about her assault often, nor did she want to form a core part of her identity. She talked extensively about how she would instead be defined as a mother and a Christian, mainly as her job centred around her faith. She did, however, feel that 'survivor' allowed her to more freely express that her sexual assault did not define her, as a survivor has literally 'survived' something, it is in the past tense:
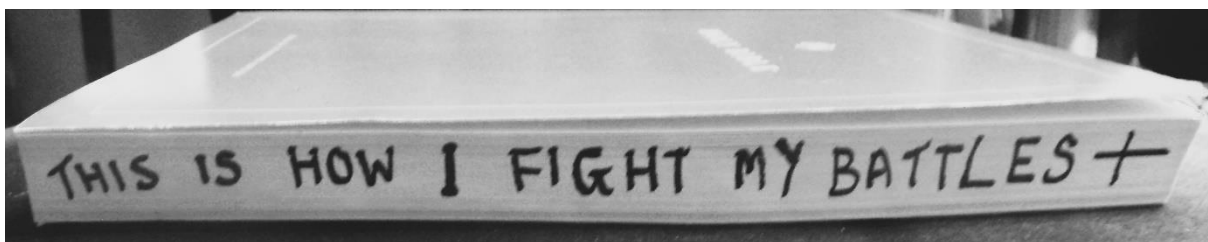
Figure 56 – Battle Armour by Jasmine, late 30s, heterosexual, black, woman

Jasmine's image features a bible, not her copy, as she did not wish to write on her own, with the message *'this is how I fight my battles'* written on the pages. Jasmine chose this to stress that she preferred to create an image centred around her experiences that mattered more to her rather than her associations with sexual violence. Thus, Jasmine is adopting 'survivor' in the way Kelly (1988) originally intended, that it was a survivable crime that does not define her entire identity.

Unlike Jasmine and Catherine, John did not feel any difference between victim and survivor. He thought it was highly problematic to suggest otherwise as:

John: If we try and distinguish between the two, aren't we saying one is better than the other? That's clearly not the case. There's nothing special about a survivor and nothing bad about a victim…they're one in the same.

To stress this, John created a victim and survivor image that were remarkably similar, both depicting *'ordinary clothes'* to stress the normality of both victims and survivors:

Figure 57 - Ordinary by John, early 20s, heterosexual, white, male

John's understanding has elements of what Convery (2006) deemed to be the danger of the survivor discourse, suggesting that survivors possessed some intrinsic quality that victims did not. Whilst John believed the threat of creating a problem of linguistics was unnecessary and diverted attention from supporting survivors, Convery (2006) considered the social Darwinist division between victims and survivors it made, but there is some degree of overlap.

Survived

Tania identified herself as a survivor, and she described how her abuse took place a long time ago in her teenage years. She believed that by leaving home aged only seventeen, the place where she had been victimised, she had taken the first step in becoming a survivor, as she had escaped the abuse she suffered and began to live independently:

Figure 58 – Find your own home by Tania, late 50s, heterosexual, white, woman

For her photograph, the researcher created a piece of art to Tania's exact brief, to make a replica of the iconic 'ruby slippers' in The Wizard of Oz:

Figure 59 - Creating Tania's photograph

Then, once this was created, the customised high heels were staged on the front steps of a doorway, although not Tania's, to protect her identity, with a bright yellow fabric to show her yellow-brick road led away from her house. In The Wizard of Oz, the main character Dorothy Gale is desperately seeking to return home to Kansas, and Tania felt that the image of the ruby slippers represents home to most people. Yet she described how a crucial part of her becoming a survivor was leaving her abusive childhood home and forging her own with her husband and two sons. She felt she had actually *'gone past being just a survivor; 'I'm living my life now. It's far behind me and it doesn't define me.'* Here, Tania has moved beyond the survivor stage, as defined by Ben-David (2020: 21-27), towards the 'Overcomer,' someone who has reached full recovery, is thriving, and is no longer 'fighting.'

Similarly to Tania, Dana also felt that time had played a significant role in her becoming a survivor, *as 'so much had happened since her assault.'* For her image, she created a customised denim jacket with embroidered patches. The researcher did the final stitching as embroidery patches are tricky and painful to secure. However, Dana did everything else; she selected the jacket, hand-picked all the patches, and pinned them herself. Beneath the jacket,

she leant a t-shirt that she regularly wore with the word 'feminist' on it, that she'd purchased from a high-street store:

Figure 60 - The Survivor's Jacket by Dana, early 20s, white European, heterosexual, woman

There were ten feminist patches sewn onto the jacket, all patches that Dana felt represented how survivors were and should be viewed by society. She thought that a key part of her identity was being an activist and engaging in activist work campaigning against sexual violence, where she had immensely grown in confidence and felt a real sense of accomplishment in getting involved in this:

Dana: I've had some of the best experiences come out of one of the worst. I think that's what being a survivor is all about, turning something horrible into something meaningful.

Dana's survivor identity is explicitly tied with the challenging prevalent cultural discourse surrounding the unspeakability of sexual violence, where survivorship is bound with taking action, and this is incorporated into the identity itself (Chhabra, Fiore and Perez-Villanueva, 2020). Here, she has taken the resistance and healing stages, incorporating activist engagement into a core part of her identity. Swanson and Szymanski (2020) noted that activist engagement can be linked to positive mental health outcomes post-sexual assault, even having the potential for post-traumatic growth (Ullman, 2014). Through an identity, meaning-making process, survivors might decide to re-incorporate traumatic experiences into transformed views of their sense of self and others (Harvey, 1996), engaging in adaptive coping (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020).

Pulling it together

Literature examining constructions of victims and survivors tends to position both of these as labels, considering how labels are constructed, adopted, used and rejected by victim-survivors themselves and members of broader society. Specifically, victim and survivor are both conceptualised as identities that are interactionally constituted and inhabited by people with lived experience of sexual violence (Dunn, 2005; Leisenring, 2006; Williamson, 2023). However, across all the interviews and within their photographs, victim-survivors considered 'victim' and 'survivor' more as conceptual ideas, creating photographs based upon their perceptions rather than viewing them as labels they either adopted or rejected. This has quite significant implications on victim-survivor language usage as if concepts are conflated with labels; they may not hold as much symbolic power for victim-survivors as previously conceptualised in literature, particularly in terms of whether the connotations underpinning a label specifically deters or encourages a person to refer to themselves as

such. For example, in therapeutic research, choosing to label oneself as a 'survivor' is seen as an active choice with significant benefits associated with greater post-traumatic recovery symptoms and positive mental functioning (Boyle, 2015). However, if 'victim' and 'survivor' are not viewed as internalised labels but rather cultural conceptual constructions, this could have implications on whether 'survivor' is a desirable choice as it has been positioned within violence and abuse research due to its associations with recovery.

'Victim' and 'survivor' have been framed as polar opposite binary terms within the victim-survivor binary (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020), leading to the assessment in the literature of the victim identity being almost exclusively negative (Thompson, 2000) and survivor being almost exclusively positive (Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2006). Yet the interviews suggest that this framework is overly simplified and adds to the growing body of literature attempting to crack open the victim-survivor binary and move away from binary theorisations. Instead, it should be considered that victim-survivor identities are multifaceted and, in some cases, contradictory, even paradoxical at times. For example, artists consider coping as a key element or association with victims and directly challenge binary negative constructions of victimhood.

In terms of the victims, the most widespread central message amongst victim-survivors was 'hurt,' but this does fit with common associations of victimhood within the literature. Therefore, returning to the building blocks of the concept of a victim, we do see quite a clear consensus of the victim being associated with hurt, which would be in line with 'harm,' as proposed by the building blocks and victim-blaming, that would be encapsulated by the building blocks' idea of 'disempowerment.' With 'hurt' being the central motif associated with the concept of a victim, this can have significant implications on victim-survivors wishing to refer to themselves as victims. Even in discussions of a victim as a conceptual idea, rather than the traditional notion of identity or labels, the construction of a victim was still rooted in the concept of harm, being hurt or injured. Thus, we do still see a repeat of the historical construction of victimhood being associated with injury (Holstein and Miller, 1990), which may elicit victims more sympathy (Dunn, 2006) but also devalue the steps towards agency and recovery victims may have already taken (Larson, 2018).

We hit quite a considerable bump in the road when we come to agency, as agency, or in the case of victim, a lack of agency, did not come up at all as a central consideration in terms of identity in photo-taking or photo-elicitation interviews across victim-survivors. This

suggests that unlike within violence and abuse literature (for example, Alcoff and Gray, 1993), victimhood was not perceived by victim-survivors as being reflective of the passivity of victims. Similar patterns were also seen across 'survivor,' where agency was not a central message in any artists' images, taking a deviation from violence and abuse literature where agency is a central motif in constructions of survivors (Orgad, 2009). Although 'healing' was a central idea among victim-survivor artists, it aligned with the building blocks of 'recovery.' Amongst healing considerations, victim-survivors also considered how 'healing' could involve setbacks. They were not the same as 'healed,' positioning survivor identity as moving towards recovery but depicting survivors as navigating recovery now would fit with the pillar of safety. But we see a complete absence of discussions of agency, at least in the manner emphasised by the victim-survivor binary, suggesting that the victim-survivor binary could be overly simplistic.

Under the victim-survivor binary, the victim typically implies a person who has been subjected to "harmful or unfair treatment" (Holstein and Miller, 1997: 27). Thus, harm and injury underpin all victim definitions (Leisenring, 2006). This is in line with the findings from Chapter 5, where victim-survivor artists constructed the concept of a victim as indicative of being hurt or harmed in some manner, through broken trust both during the actual assault itself and the aftermath, or judgements upon their behaviour imposed by others. Thus, we see clear parallels to some degree of the first half of the victim-survivor binary, where sexual violence is viewed as damaging a victim's intrinsic sense of self (Sasson and Paul, 2014), a victim can be indicative of negative emotions (Williamson and Serna, 2018). Subsequently, 'victim' begins to reflect a personality marked by 'incomplete personhood' (Thorosby, 2004: 141), reflected in images centred around 'coping' presented in Chapter 5, where victim-survivors depicted their perceptions of victims of sexual violence struggling or being expected to struggle to deal with the negative emotions associated with sexual violence.

From the first advocation for 'survivor' becoming an alternative to the term 'victim,' suggestions have always been centred around 'survivor' reflecting and emphasising the agency victim-survivors show post-assault (for example, Barry, 1979). This was most clearly seen in Kelly's (1988: 163) famous construction of 'active survivors' rather than 'passive victims,' where survival is inextricably bound with agency (Schwark and Bohner, 2019). "Survivor labels paint a picture of agentic individuals who do not passively experience abuse" (Williamson and Serna, 2018: 670). Agency within the survivor discourse

is almost exclusively tied to recovery, yet this was not a central message of survivor identity at all in any of the photographs. Agency within the survivor discourse is typically framed alongside recovery, as survivors are positioned as showcasing agency in taking active steps to move towards recovery (Dunn, 2005). Recovery was certainly captured as a core part of the survivor's identity. It was one of the most prevailing discourses within victim-survivor artists' photographs that centred around survivors indicating some form of healing after the assault had taken place, with survivors showcasing more self-love, positive self-internalisations and survivor being more reflective of the resilience shown by people with lived experiences of sexual assault. Without any discussion of survivors showing agency in making recovery decisions, we see a stark deviation from agency being explicitly tied to survivor, in terms of recovery, suggesting that the victim-survivor binary's assertion is somewhat simplistic.

We do hit a slight bump in the road in suggesting that agency was not demonstrated in any of the photographs, as it was, just not in the mechanism usually articulated within the traditional victim-survivor binary. Instead, agency was bound with survivorship, but in the sense that survivors were positioned as recognising and challenging culturally dominant victim-blaming narratives that they were subjected to. For example, challenging the hyper sexualisation of survivor's bodies, judgements surrounding the idea that survivors somehow precipitated their assault, the neglect of male victimisation, patriarchal societal structures condoning sexual violence within victim-survivor artist images, to the again parallels of rape myths amidst professionals artists' images. We do see echoes of the survivor label with the agency, but they are very much framed under challenging victim-blaming discourses rather than therapeutic ones.

The victim-survivor binary could also be viewed as overly simplistic, for it typically frames victims as 'passive' and rarely considers 'victim resistance,' which came up in constructing images of victim identity. Dana gave the most explicit articulation of victim resistance, rejecting it as a trait exclusively associated with the survivor label:

Dana: People tend to think of victims as really fragile; I always felt like people were looking at me like they expected me to break, but I just didn't. I don't think that's being a survivor though. I don't feel like I've 'survived' everything, I'm just trying to get through each day as it comes.

Charles and Georgina's images also acted as images of resistance to victim-blaming themselves. Charles' centred around the self-internalisations of challenging blame that victims needed to make, and Georgiana's focused on actively resisting debates surrounding consent. Thus, the binary making no acknowledgement of victim resistance presents an overly simplified binary.

Moreover, given that the victim-survivor binary fails to consider that language usage does not exist in isolation of modes of oppression that condone and exacerbate patriarchal violence, it is also overly simplistic. The binary fails to consider that victim-survivor labelling can be impacted from a disability standpoint, as previously mentioned and was directly challenged by Evee, who felt false constructions depicting survivors as thriving placed extremely unrealistic expectations upon disabled victim-survivors:

Evee: Survivors are always out and about, doing things, seeing things, going places; not just living their life, but living their 'best life.' And this creates a jump barrier that most of us just can't live up to.

The binary also ignores ethnic tensions, for instance, Tiffany's emphasis on black women being particularly affected by dominant cultural narratives surrounding their sexuality or Jasmine's contestation of victims engaged in any form of sex work and how this can affect external perceptions of victims. In culturally dominant narratives surrounding sexual violence, we know that Latinx and Black women, in particular, are subjected to much more significant sanctions upon their behaviour within victim-blaming discourses (Spohn, Beichner, and Davis-Frenzel, 2001). For instance, black women's bodies have been hypersexualised amidst historic discourses stemming from slavery (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020), Latinx women have been constructed as engaging in risky sexual behaviour and substance misuse (Slakoff and Brennan, 2019), and Asian women subjected to extreme fetishisation (Woan, 2007). This element is often neglected in the victim-survivor binary (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). The binary also ignores the hyper-sexualisation of bisexual women, as Kay identified, particularly given the overarching chronic hyper-sexualisation of bisexual women (Johnson and Grove, 2017). In addition, the binary neglects the added burden upon male victim-survivors due to a lack of representation in hegemonic constructions of sexual violence victim-survivors, as Jynx, John, and Reece highlighted, particularly when considering hegemonic discourses that constrain male victim-survivor's ability to show vulnerability after being assaulted (Touquet and Schulz, 2020). Finally,

framings of sexual violence, where the victim is constructed as giving sexual violence primacy within a person's identity, can have unintentional consequences for how a victim's sexuality is perceived as potentially affected by trauma. This can undermine LGBTQ+ victim-survivors in particular, as Reece and Evee directly challenged.

Chapter 5: Summary

This chapter delved into the photographs created by people who have experienced sexual violence, considering how they interpret victim-survivor concepts and their subsequent associations (Research aims two and five). Overwhelmingly, the victim images were more damaging in terms of their central message, with critical echoes of hurt and victim-blaming, addressing fundamental misconceptions surrounding victimhood but also emphasising normality and coping within victim-identity, thus suggesting the victim-survivor binary may be overly simplistic in solely conceptualising victimhood as a negative identity. Survivor images focused on two key aspects: the realisations of challenging victim-blaming and healing. Such findings support a symbolic interactionist understanding that victim-survivor identity is multi-dimensional, sometimes contradictory and paradoxical (Leisenring, 2006). They also support an FST construction of identity, where unique standpoints of experience and individual modes of oppression can be considered, particularly surrounding the complexities of victim-survivor language choice at a personal level. The analysis also centred around the particular messages that artists wished to convey, showcasing how photographs can often be deliberately created and offer a window into the photographer's social world, namely here, their experiences as victim-survivors of sexual violence.

Chapter 6: Photographs and art pieces created by professionals.

This chapter presents the findings generated from the photo-taking and photo-elicitation interviews with professionals who work on a day-to-day basis with people with lived experience of sexual violence. I begin once again by outlining some critical contextual information about the production of the photographs themselves, but also untangling some of the vital challenges with identification with professionals who also have lived experience of sexual violence themselves. Then, I go on to offer an insight into the discourses surrounding the victim images, considering essential echoes of victim-blaming, recovery and negative emotions. Finally, I unpack the discourses embedded within the survivor images, focusing on the unfairness of victim-blaming, the presence of hope, and the consequences of ties of survivorship to hope and resilience.

Content Warning

Please note that this chapter contains images centred around sexual violence and mental health.

Overview of images

As anticipated and partially addressed in the methodology chapter, it became clear that it was pretty tricky to fully untangle the classification of 'victim-survivor' from 'professional' working with victim-survivors, as a few artists did disclose that they also identified as a person with lived experience of sexual assault. As data collection was simultaneous due to the methodological braiding technique employed, this allowed flexibility where artists could choose how they wished to identify and which category they preferred their photographs to be included under. To allow for these nuances in characterisation, photo-elicitation interviews were kept extremely broad to enable the artists to explain their photos about their own professional experience and/ or personal experience (the latter of which was only explored if the artist specifically chose for it to be).

The definition of 'professionals' working with victim-survivors was deliberately kept extremely broad, and this did result in a wide variety of backgrounds being included. However, for anonymity reasons, details about the specific organisations a participant works for have either been redacted or modified. The bubbles represent the number of artists who identified with that job description: police officers (n=3) and counsellors for a sexual violence third-sector organisation (n=2); the rest of the categories only featured one person:

Figure 61 - Professions of artists

Some umbrella terms were used here, such as 'support group coordinators' and 'theatre writer and workshop leader.' These were used to describe two artists; one of whom identified as an activist and coordinator for a support group for victim-survivors of sexual violence (Esme), whilst the other ran drama-theatre-based workshops in a support group for victim-survivors of sexual assault (Sharada). Moreover, 'case worker' was used by a participant who worked for a third-sector organisation working in sexual violence, which offered short-term support primarily over the telephone, signposting survivors, and offering advice and information (Mia).

In the same manner as the victim-survivors, all the professionals chose to complete one 'victim' image and one 'survivor' image. Therefore, there were eleven victim images and eleven survivor photos. As with the victim-survivor images, all artists chose a pseudonym and agreed on a title for their image and a brief job title that described their professional background.

'Victim' images

Victim-blaming

The most widely discussed central motif for the victim images was exploring the perceptions surrounding victim identity, particularly the blaming that victims are subjected to. Four of the victim images specifically explored or significantly mentioned blame concerning victims of sexual violence. Bradley, a police officer, wished to make it explicitly clear that this was not her own opinion of victims of sexual violence. Still, she felt that fear of victim-blaming and potential mistrust of the police and other criminal justice agencies presented an obstacle to victims reporting sexual violence.

She wished to tackle two core misconceptions surrounding victims of sexual violence in her image. Firstly, she felt that victims often worried about injuries, or more often, their lack of physical injury from their assault. This is a commonly identified factor in reducing a victim's likelihood to report to the police, with those not suffering physical injuries being at higher risk for non-reporting (Ceelen, Dorn, van Huis and Reijnders (2019). In addition, she believed that victims often overthought their own behavioural choices in the run-up to their sexual assault, and this, in turn, could negatively impact their likelihood of reporting their

assault to the police for fear of judgement. To encapsulate this, Bradley decided to stage an image on a mannequin featuring painted underwear and a custom-made apron:

Figure 62 - Misconception by Bradley, mid-20s, white, heterosexual, woman, police officer

Bradley deliberately made several artistic choices in this image. She initially chose white underwear that she wanted to feel 'normal rather than sexy' that could have been worn on any day, so it was not a focal point. Bradley also really specifically wanted to depict a sexual assault, the forced groping of a woman's breasts in her image; she decided to do this by physically groping an under-wear-clad mannequin herself to create the symbol. She also then further painted marks along the knickers and across other places of the bralette to again visibly depict a victim being touched against their consent. Finally, she created a

custom-designed apron in a 1950s style, which she hand-embroidered with patches containing the words 'slut' and 'overthinker.'

In terms of her image, Bradley's central message centred around the idea of a victim being violated and feeling as if they had been 'marked' due to their sexual assault, a perception that Bradley felt negatively impacted a victim's likelihood to report their sexual assault:

Bradley: I feel like there is this idea that victims are seen or defined by what actually happened to them…I always remember that scene in Eastenders from years ago, where Kat Slater said she felt like people could see 'muck' all over her.

The scene Bradley is referencing here is when Kat Slater, a fictional Eastenders character, is recounting her experiences of being raped by her uncle as a child (Boyle, 2019: 93). Kat used the analogy of 'muck' to represent a physical mark or stain that she felt her identification as a victim of child-sexual assault impressed upon outsiders.

Bradley: So I wanted something really visual, like to show marks all over a body. It's like society believes that's what we think, but it's not true at all.

Bradley was not solely focused on victims of child sex abuse, but as she used an example as inspiration, it was discussed quite extensively in her photograph. Victims of child sexual abuse can be subjected to stigmatisation processes stemming from existing taboos grounded in the sexual act itself but also the added element of disbelief of the accusation (Tomlin, 1991). In tandem with this, victims of child sexual abuse can also often be deemed guilty of their victimisation. Thus, they are frequently judged negatively (Bottoms and Goodman, 1994). As a result of this perceived culpability, the metaphor of being 'tainted' is often used for victims of child sexual abuse, where "victims of child sexual abuse may be viewed as permanently tainted, and thereby elicit concerns about the possibility that they may victimise others" (Warner, Branscombe, Garczynski and Solomon, 2011: 207). In the worst cases, they may be perceived as 'damaged goods' or 'permanently damaged' (ibid: 208). Here, victims of child sexual abuse can be viewed as permanently changed and past the point of no return in terms of intervention (Stevenson, Bottoms and Diamond, 2010), as being the victim of child sexual abuse is often discussed as a risk factor for becoming a future sex offender (Beling, Hudson and Ward, 2002).

Bradley's photo can also perhaps be best understood through the conceptualisation of 'mental pollution' or 'internal dirtiness.' Fairbrother and Rachman (2004) described how victims of sexual assault can experience feelings of mental pollution. Borrowing from the historical, theological construction of moral pollution, which was described as "the soul and body of all mankind are stained by the pollution of sin" (Leighton, 1963: 114), Rachman (1994) observed how undesirable, intrusive, penetrative thoughts could be considered as a pollution of the mind. Fairbrother and Rachman (2004) constructed mental pollution to help articulate and offer a framework for understanding feelings of internal dirtiness that victims of sexual assault experienced when they did not make contact with observable dirt. The critical distinction between physical pollution involves being defiled by observable, physical dirt, whereas "mental pollution can be produced by mental events such as images, words, or memories, in the absence of contact with a contaminant" (Fairbrother and Rachman, 2004: 174). Crucially, as well "in addition to feelings of disgust or revulsion, mental pollution has a moral or emotional quality" such as guilt, shame or stigma (ibid). Fairbrother and Rachman (2004) give the illustrative example of Lady Macbeth attempting to wash the blood off her hands out of feelings of guilt for her murderous deeds, but this also echoes the 'muck' Kat Slater felt, which was a source for Bradley's photo. Sexual behaviour itself is often tied to morality. Still, we frequently see considerations of sexual assault being falsely linked to immorality, such as victim-blaming discourses or rape myths centred on victim-precipitation. Moral pollution offers a unique analysis that captures this moral/ immoral dimension, which the emotion 'disgust' does not always encapsulate, as disgust is very surface-level.

The apron added a second layer and was deliberately selected to be almost translucent, as Bradley wanted to emphasise how thinly veiled or concealed societal attitudes of victims were. An apron was picked as Bradley felt it was symbolic of the 1950s housewife ideal, which she felt was representative of traditional gender expectations that victims were subjected to. She wanted the patches to be almost like connotations she felt victims were subjected to; 'slut' to portray sanctions on their sexual behaviour and 'overthinker' to stress how this may affect victims; they may 'overthink' reporting what happened to the police due to concerns about how they may be viewed. Bradley felt this was very common amongst victims, that they thought underconfident and feared judgement. Female victims' reluctance to report sexual assaults to the police has been well-documented in the literature, mainly concerns that the police embody a 'culture of scepticism' surrounding complainants, wherein

aims centre around detecting deception (Johnson, 2017: 38). In addition, non-reporting victim-survivors often gave reasons centring around a lack of apparent physical injury, as this was considered demonstrative of bodily harm and also concerns around victim-blaming by law enforcement (Lathan et al., 2022). Victim blaming is a common deterrent cited by victim-survivors as a barrier to reporting (Johnson and Lewis, 2023), particularly considering their concerns about adverse treatment (Celeen et al., 2019).

Taking a slight deviation, Matthew also focused on the hyper-sexualisation of victims of sexual assault and victim-blaming he felt they were subjected to. He decided to use the metaphor of a fictional character at St Trinian's to describe how he felt young women, particularly girls still at school, were given suggestions of ways to prevent or reduce their likelihood of sexual assault, which he believed crossed the line into victim-blaming territory:

Figure 63 - St Trinian's student by Matthew, late 20s, gay, white, male, police officer

He believed that the school girls of the fictional St. Trinians were widely seen as cultural symbols for sexually risky behaviour. He wished to capture that by re-creating some aspects of their uniform and other commonly highlighted things that school girls did, which often resulted in policing their attire, such as 'rolling their skirts,' deliberately making a skirt visibly shorter. Matthew described how his sister was usually picked up on this at school by teachers, as it was considered to 'make girls vulnerable.' He believed subtle surveillance of young girls in cultural messaging contributed to victim-blaming that was evident in crime prevention messaging, such as discouraging young women from walking home at night. This is firmly in line with the feminist anti-rape critique of rape prevention literature, where the focus deviated from aiming to reduce sexual violence, to suggest that women instead should take daily precautionary measures to 'avoid' rape (Marcus, 1993). This has led to a

regulation of femininity, where women who deviate from these precautionary measures, such as dressing too provocatively, are susceptible to blame discourses (Campbell, 2005). This perhaps also may be what sexual violence itself is fundamentally all about, particularly when considering the societal response towards it.

Whilst Matthew focused on the broader hypersexualisation and objectification of young women, Mia described her struggles with this and her desire to highlight hypocrisies. Whilst Mia worked as a Case Worker for a sexual violence third-sector organisation, she was a victim-survivor of sexual violence herself. She felt it was impossible to disentangle the two when considering identity, as she felt her entry into working in sexual violence was triggered. Her own victimisation experiences greatly heightened her skill in her work. For her image, she picked a dress she owned previously. She had several times questioned whether it was considered 'appropriate,' precisely because she worried about its suitability for certain social situations. The dress was a sleeveless, knee-length red satin gown with a plunging neckline and a brocade pattern. She sent the dress, and we took a simple photograph of the dress on a mannequin:

Figure 64 - Mia's dress

Mia took the above image and sent it to *'a massive group of people'* asking them what their initial impression of the dress was. She received twenty-three responses from family

and friends, which we then collated and wrote on post-it notes, using tally marks to indicate any duplicate responses:
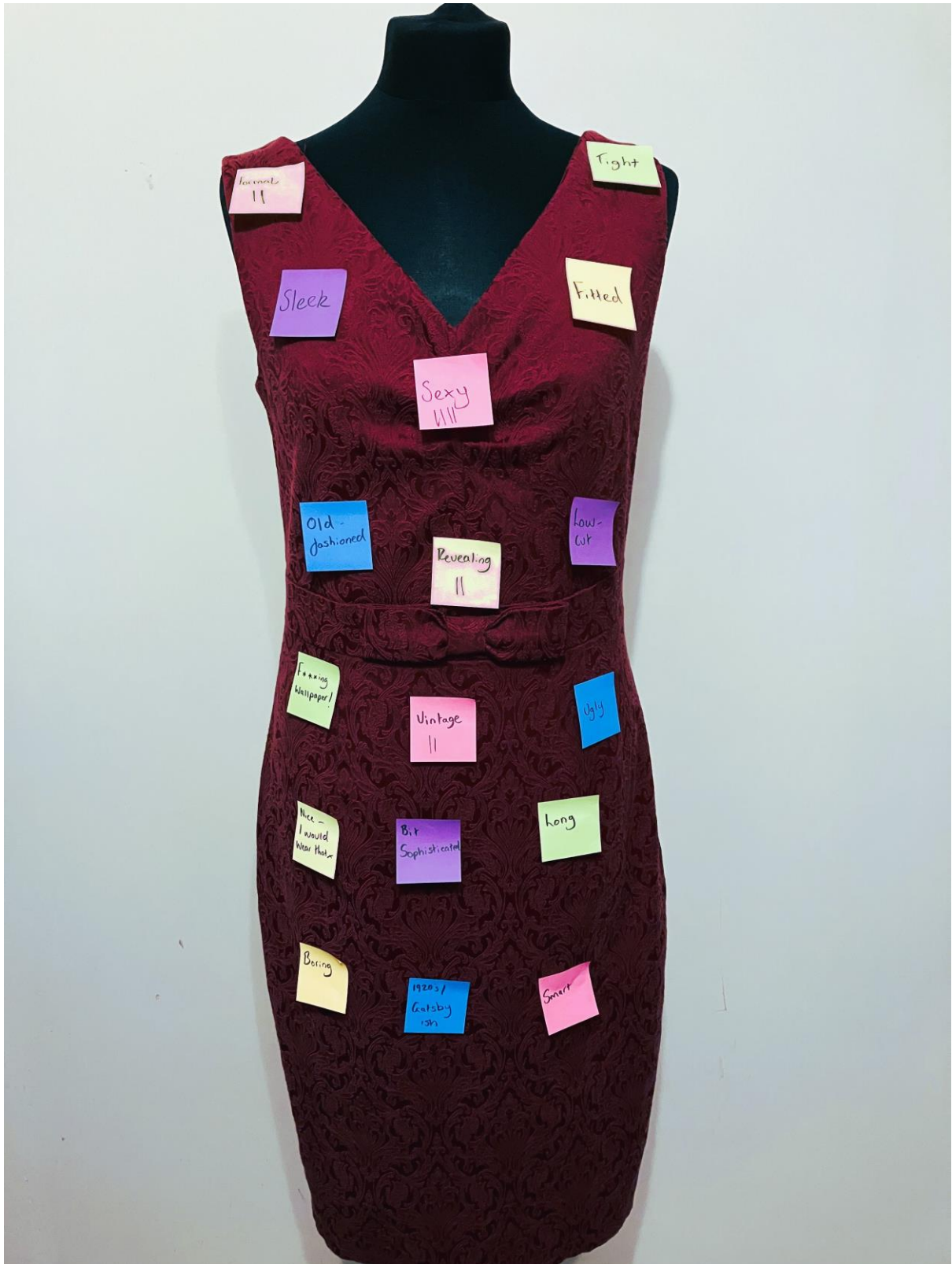
Figure 65 – If 23 people can't agree that this is too sexy, how can you blame victims? By Mia, early 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, case worker

Mia believed that the activity pointed out the unrealistic expectations and *'misogynistic'* and *'hypocritical'* treatment that victims were subjected to, particularly surrounding victim-blaming discourses that centred on the idea that revealing clothing precipitated or contributed to sexual assault. She noted that four people described the dress as *'sexy,'* two described it as *'revealing'* and one as *'low-cut,'* all adjectives associated with the dress being considered provocative; yet in sharp contrast, others described it *as 'smart,' 'old-fashioned,' 'frumpy,'* and even *'boring,'* suggesting the exact opposite. Thus, Mia wanted to 'call out' how problematic victim-blaming discourses were that she felt victims were often subjected to:

Mia: We seem to blame victims for what they're wearing, but I think the dress kinda demonstrated how ridiculous victim-blaming can be.

The victim-blaming Mia is specifically challenging is the belief that women who choose to dress in either fitted or revealing clothing are actively inviting sexual attention by wearing sexually provocative clothing (Wolfendale, 2016). Here, a woman's clothing choice is mistakenly perceived as a form of sexual signalling, signalling a sexual interest that can elicit unwelcome sexual attention and can have a severe day-to-day effect on women (Wolfendale, 2016; Guy and Banim, 2000). Yet Mia's image is centred around challenging this, a sharp distinction from the traditional victim-survivor binary, where 'survivor' is bound with resistance. This is perhaps because Mia did not believe a proper distinction existed between 'victim' and 'survivor' identities. Thus, her images feed into each other closely and represent very similar stages:

Mia: I don't think there's a real difference that separates the two…to be honest, I don't love either term. But I don't see how they're different so I wanted to keep my pictures on the same thing…I felt angry as a 'victim' but I'm still angry now even though I'm supposed to be a 'survivor.'

Similarly, Erika focused on what she believed were societal images or constructions of victims. She felt that people often believed victims to be stereotypical 'victims;' young women whilst engaging in nighttime leisure activities. She opted to create a very 'faceless' image, playing on the idea of women taking off their high heels after a night out and walking home without wearing shoes, a behaviour she felt was often associated with intoxication:

Erika: I just had this image in my head of a woman walking down the street, holding her heels.

Figure 66 - Black high heels by Erika, mid-20s, black African, heterosexual, woman, police officer

When asked why she specifically associated this with victimhood, she wanted to stress how many women found themselves victims of sexual assault, including herself. Yet, whilst there

was a standard *'story'* that people imagined when they thought of a victim of sexual assault, she felt there was almost a sense of camaraderie amongst victims, particularly since the #MeToo movement:

Erika: I don't know but ever since Me Too, it's like we've suddenly realised so many women will be assaulted. It's more common than not.

Erika's use of 'story' here is quite similar to the concept of rape scripts. Rape scripts refer to views or beliefs that people hold regarding a stereotypical rape (Peterson and Muehlenhard, 2004), where often an 'ideal victim' image is presented, casting the victim as respectable (Hockett, Saucier and Badke, 2016). Given that Erika chose to depict a victim as someone who is taking part in nighttime activities and has been drinking, this is a fascinating choice given that alcohol consumption is considered a critical factor in denying a person the status of a victim of crime (Corbin et al., 2001; Boyle and Walker, 2016; Littleton et al., 2009). Yet Erika also stressed the solidarity that #MeToo afforded women, particularly given the original intentions behind mobilising the phrase in 2006 (Wanzo, 2019). Although specifically asked, Erika did not believe there was a 'victim-mentality' created by #MeToo. Victim mentality is often considered to be a highly pessimistic attitude where victims are constructed as lacking complete agency and wallowing in self-pity rather than striving for recovery (Ullman and Townsend, 2007), similar to Loseke's (1997) victim-personality. Instead, she believed the term 'victim' gave women who had been sexually assaulted solidarity or a shared identity, like #MeToo.

Negative emotions

Taking a departure from victim-blaming, three professionals centred their images around what they believed to be typical constructions of victims and victim identity, with a particular emphasis on victims being perceived as dwelling on negative emotions. Although there was some variation in what actual 'negative' emotion they concentrated on, there were similar echoing motifs about the stigmatised and devalued nature of victim identity. As a result, all three expressed a reluctance or hesitancy to use the term 'victim' professionally.

Sharada believed that being a victim of sexual assault was normatively viewed as an undesirable identity to possess as she felt it was characterised as not being conducive to a positive mental outlook or moving towards recovery. She chose to use the imagery of

barbed wire as a metaphor to convey how victims were often confined by the negative emotions that they experienced in the immediate aftermath of their assault. This somewhat echoes Dunn's examinations of victimhood, where she suggested victims were often presented as trapped (Dunn, 2005) as a result of mind-body changes after sexual assault, such as experiencing dissociation or recurrent memories, changes where their bodies are affected by their emotional state (Larson, 2018).

Sharada also really wanted to approach her image from how she believed victims were portrayed in the arts and the media, primarily as she worked professionally for a theatre company that worked with victim-survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence to produce shows depicting their experiences. To represent this, she created a character which she dubbed 'The Prisoner,' that was then drawn by an artist to her specification:

Figure 67 - The Prisoner by Sharada, mid-20s, white, queer, woman, theatre director, writer and activist

Sharada: Victims of sexual assault are always shown as hiding in their bedroom, unable to go out and face the world. They can never cope…they're always in their own head, barely able to function.

Thus, she believed a girl looking **'depressed'** and wrapped in barbed wire would help to convey this message that victims were often depicted as in the grips of negative emotions following their sexual assault, to the extent that it was debilitating and affecting their everyday lives. The victim identity has not just been associated with being in a vulnerable emotional state in discussions of language (Thompson, 2000) but also in terms of photographic representations as well (Schwark and Bohner, 2019). This so-called 'victim-image' within the media considers the objectification of victims, where positive traits like strength were all but ignored, with only negative images of passivity and stigmatisation being emphasised (Barry, 1979). Thus, the victim image has become increasingly infiltrated within the media, of victims being unable to overcome their circumstances or victimisation (Papendick and Bohner, 2017).

Similarly, Esme, who ran a support group for victim-survivors of sexual violence, also expressed her frustration at how she felt victims were always displayed as overwhelmingly unable to cope and **'broken.'** She specifically attributed her reluctance to call victim-survivors of sexual assault in her group as 'victims,' especially as her support group strongly wished to emphasise **'self-help,'** and **'positive mental well-being,'** that she did not believe was encapsulated as well with the term 'victim.' Thus, as a professional, she did not want to give her support group attendees that label as she did not believe it was viewed as healthy. Although she strongly identified as a professional working with victim-survivors of sexual assault, she also revealed she was a 'survivor' of sexual abuse herself. Esme described how, after her assault, she found exercise extremely helpful in her outlook and recovery, something she strongly utilised in her support group. Therefore, she decided to take her image whilst she was out for a run by a river:

Figure 68 - The Broken Tree by Esme, late 40s, mixed race, heterosexual, woman, support group co-ordinator and activist

She captured a **'broken tree'** as she felt this encapsulated how others viewed victims:

Esme: I try and steer away from 'victim' and get my group to realise that they are survivors because they have survived. They've made it through and are rockin' the other side…a victim is so broken. I saw that tree and I was like 'That's it.' That's how people saw me when it first happened, people looked at me like I would break down in puddles of tears in an instant…it was so insulting. So I don't like 'victim' no.

Esme here holds reservations with the term victim due to the apparent loss of status and control, in tandem with feelings of vulnerability that the term connotes (Leisenring, 2006),

and connoting someone who is damaged, who has been and still is affected by their assault (Dunn, 2005; Best, 1997). Traditionally, victim identity is conceptualised as someone who "feels as though he or she is still in the trauma, no matter how long ago the actual traumatic incident(s) occurred" (Ben-David, 2020: 22). Thus, they are characterised by incomplete personhood (Throsby, 2004; Gilmore, 2003). Instead, when Esme elaborated on what she meant by *‘rockin’,’* she described someone who was not only physically surviving but had moved beyond the recovery and fitted quite firmly with Ben-David’s (2020) ‘thriver’ stage. Ben-David (2020) outlined a four-stage process in terms of identity and associations with recovery: 1) victim, 2) survivor, 3) thriver and 4) overcomer.

For Ben-David (2020:25), thriving involves progression from someone within the healing stage who has developed a sense of hopefulness; moving past this, thriving is the last stage before full recovery, where thrive "implies that people are beginning to take control of their own lives." This distinction between ‘thriving’ and ‘survivor’ is rarely made, making this somewhat problematic. However, Esme’s association with survivor identity and stressing the idea of survivors going on to lead active, fulfilled, joyous lives, despite some still minor setbacks and need for growth, fits quite firmly with Ben-David’s distinction. As ‘rockin’ for her was someone having positive mental health, self-esteem and a healthy outlook, she described it as someone who looks after themselves physically and mentally. But Esme stressed she did not believe that survivors had overcome the effects of their assault; she felt they still faced setbacks. Thus, it is important not to suggest she believed the ‘survivor’ identity fit with Ben-David’s (2020) ‘overcomer.’

In a similar dimension, Kimblery’s image also stressed how she felt victims were often perceived as ‘breaking down’, and she tried to avoid the term in her role as a sexual violence counsellor for a third-sector organisation supporting survivors of sexual violence. Again, we see similar echoing concerns of victimhood being bound with emotional weakness and vulnerability (Hockett and Saucier, 2015). She created an image of a balloon that had been inflated, with the inscription *‘yeah I’m fine,’* to show words victims often said to mask their internal struggles. The balloon was connected to a pump, described with *‘Are you sure?’* to showcase the questioning victims were often subjected to, how family, friends and outsiders frequently saw through their pretence, but also constantly monitored victims, expecting them not to be okay. She finally stuck pins on the balloon to show how easily *‘the bubble could burst:’*

Figure 69 – Pretending to be fine by Kimberly, mid-40s, Middle Eastern, homosexual, woman, sexual violence counsellor

Kimberly: I added the pins to show visually how breakable people think victims are…it's like the bubble can burst so easily, people always think victims of sexual violence can be shattered by one little thing, one small trigger.

Here again, we see parallels of something between how victimhood is often associated with victims being in a constant state of vulnerability (Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Thompson, 2000). This is particularly evident in Kimberly's use of the word trigger; she is suggesting that the common cultural construction and understanding of victims of sexual assault is experiencing a common symptom of trauma-related mental disorders, such as PTSD. Parallels were found by Boyle (2014), who found that the victim label was often intimately associated with both post-traumatic stress disorder and mental illness. However, it must be noted that Kimberly did not use either 'victim' or 'survivor' within her organisation or herself personally. Instead, she used the neutral term 'clients.' She elaborated on similar

concerns within her survivor image, rejecting both concepts entirely due to the underlying connotations.

Unlike Kimberly, Athena, who also works as a counsellor at a sexual violence charity, had a strong preference for the term 'survivor' over 'victim.' Athena described how her organisation exclusively used the term 'survivor' when referring to victim-survivors of sexual assault, unless requested by the victim-survivor, due to the negative perceptions surrounding victim identity. Athena's multi-layered image strongly feeds into her survivor image, showing distinct contrasts between the two identities. For both her images, Athena created a lantern using sea glass; she chose sea glass as it was initially *'dumped into the ocean as rubbish,'* but is now commonly used to create jewellery and sold all around the town she lives in, reflecting how something previously devalued can be repurposed for something *'beautiful.'* She placed the lantern on the beach in her hometown and wrote the word *'lost'* in the sand in a manner akin to an SOS signal used when people are in distress and need help:

Figure 70 – Lost by Athena, early 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, sexual violence counsellor

Athena strongly believed that the victims did seek support from external agencies, including the charity she volunteered for. However, victims were at the very early stages of recovery, **'before proper healing had begun'** and needed considerable support. Thus, she felt that victims were *'lost'*. They needed external guidance and support in a much more evident manner than survivors, whom she believed were in much later stages of recovery. Athena's understanding is quite evocative of Holstein and Miller's (1997) understanding and conceptualisation of victim identity, where a sexual assault is positioned as disabling a person's identity to the extent that it can appropriate and infiltrate a person's identity, leading to a lack of clear sense of personhood.

Similarly to Athena, Megan also believed that victims were in the process of seeking support from sexual assault. This is perhaps in contrast to where survivors were viewed as expressing agency and taking steps in their recovery (such as Thompson, 2000). Megan works as a Child and Young Person's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, so she explicitly supports victim-survivors of sexual assault under the age of eighteen in liaising with the police, court and other external support agencies. She firmly believed that victims sought support as it was an **'everyday occurrence'** for her, and she did not believe in a distinction between victims and survivors in this vein in seeking external support. However, she did feel that there was a subtle distinction between young people in the immediate aftermath of sexual assault and those in much later stages of recovery. Megan emphasised she did not believe there was a script to describe how people responded to sexual violence: **"There is no right way to be a victim, everyone's completely different."** However, she did feel that victims sometimes felt solidarity in knowing others went through similar experiences; she cited examples like #MeToo, where victims could share everyday experiences. By contrast, she felt survivors did not find this comforting. Megan felt hesitant to say that it was necessarily a victim trait, as she thought that this bordered on victim-blaming, but rather victims found it comforting knowing 'there were others like them.'

Figure 71 - The Victim Club by Megan, late 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, independent sexual violence advisor

Megan created what she titled the **'victim club,'** each envelope represents a young person she had supported recently and their 'invitation' to the 'victim club,' a club that represented the collective identity of victims of sexual assault. Each envelope is even sealed with a wax seal, like a 'fancy invitation.' All the names listed on the envelope are pseudonyms, but she described how victims of sexual assault, unfortunately, became part of a club due to their victimisation; they are described as victims. Here, sexual violence was understood to almost always affect victims' sense of self (Draucker et al., 2009). However, she wanted to stress

how sometimes 'victim' could help allow victims to recognise their own experiences and see them as non-consensual. Additionally, they could find solidarity in knowing others had encountered similar experiences, even sharing their experiences to help others.

Moving on

Two images focused on victims being perceived as 'moving on.' However, the extent to which a victim was conceptualised as moving on was slightly distinctive between the two. Anjuli works as a doctor at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, and she described how she often saw victims within 72 hours of their assault, although not exclusively. She felt that victims were frequently misrepresented within the media of how they were viewed during this period:

Anjuli: I feel like in every film I've seen or TV show, victims are portrayed as this quivering mess. Don't get me wrong, sexual assault can be extremely emotional. But it is such a broad term and we see such a range of experiences; some victims come in and have processed what has happened quite quickly, particularly when it is a 'normal' thing that happens quite regularly, unfortunately.

Here, Anjuli's perceptions of the range of sexual violence and its chronic nature are very reminiscent of Kelly's (1988) urge to understand how sexual violence was experienced along a continuum for women. To represent this, Anjuli staged what she described as a standard breakfast of a victim of sexual assault waking up and going to work the next day, able to function despite what had happened. It contains a cup of a hot drink, cereal, both parts of a standard breakfast routine, and a motivational sign you might find on a desk. But there is one thing slightly off:

Figure 72 - Is this what you think of victims? by Anjuli, late-20s, mixed race, heterosexual, woman, doctor at sexual assault referral centre

In the bowl of cereal, Anjuli positioned nearly twenty pills to represent the misconception she believed that people held of victims, that they could barely mentally function and needed substantial assistance to get through. She felt that, in her experience, this was a mischaracterisation of victim identity and unrepresentative of her professional experience, mainly as she saw a wide range of victims of sexual assault. Similarly, Draucker et al. (2009) found that their participants rejected the idea that they had been damaged by sexual violence and subsequently did not feel like they needed help; here, help-seeking was indicative of being damaged. Quite in line with how Anjuli felt, she believed several victims were able to *'move on easily,'* as sexual assault was very broad.

In contrast, Beth, a barrister who specialised in rape and serious sexual offences, felt that the term 'victim' should be used exclusively but reclaimed to emphasise the resilience of victims. She thought that the term 'survivor' was redundant as it created a hierarchy over how victim-survivors of assault should react, and in her experience, all victims who had

reported their sexual assault whom she encountered in her professional practice experienced a great deal of resilience; they showcased *'an inherent ability to move on.'* Beth's understanding here is somewhat reminiscent of Convery's (2006) concerns surrounding how making a distinction between victim and survivor created almost a social Darwinist survival of the fittest, where victim identity was discredited.

Beth photographed an image of a flower; although what flower it was, she was unsure; she felt it represented victims' resilience as it was the only one growing in the winter in a particularly *'barren field'.* This was because she thought that the legal system was a very hostile environment for victims of sexual assault, as they had the burden to prove what had happened. Thus, all victims who attempted to navigate it should be afforded the moniker of resilience. Beth's view here contrasts sharply with traditional positioning, where 'survivor' is afforded the connotations of resilience exclusively (for instance, see Jordan, 2013; Walklate, 2011; Lamb, 1999).

Figure 73 - Growing by Beth, mid-20s, white, heterosexual, woman, barrister

'Survivor' images

Unfair victim blaming

Three artists specifically wanted their 'survivor' images to act as either an extension or a continuation of their victim images; as these victim images highlighted the blame victims are often subjected to, their survivor images also emphasised challenging victim-blaming. For instance, Mia's survivor image was focused on challenging victim-blaming discourses. Still, she did not believe this was solely associated with survivorhood and survivor identity, hence why it was an echo of her victim image:

Figure 74 - WTF? By Mia, early 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, case worker

Mia strongly disagreed with distinctions that were commonly made between the two identities; however, when the researcher invited her to submit the same image in two categories, she decided to create a *'parallel'* image. She specifically wanted both her images to be considered on the same level; her survivor image was almost a *'summary'* of her victim image. Mia's survivor image showcases the same red dress used in her victim image, where she has written a clear message on several post-it notes across the bodice: *'If 23 people all think differently, WTF am I supposed to do?'* Again, she felt that survivors were equally subjected to victim-blaming, which she saw victim-blaming as being deeply hypocritical; she did not believe that the term contributed to any separation or reduction:

Mia: I know we're supposed to use 'survivor' as it is considered to be more empowering for the service user, but I just think it is super tokenistic sometimes. We can call them 'victims,' we can call them 'survivors,' heck we can call them 'advocates,' but they're still extremely stigmatised identities…I would be hesitant to say that 'survivor' is a positive label, both for me personally and the women I work with.

As Dunn (2005) acknowledged, whilst a survivor's identity is usually considered less stigmatised than a victim's, there are still apparent drawbacks and limitations to the term survivor. Dunn (2005:23) felt that 'survivors' shifted "responsibility and attention back to them as individuals, and away from the social structures and forces they must overcome." Convery (2006) heeded similar caution as Mia did to glorify agency or view survivorhood in isolation; after all, survivor discourses do not entirely escape the trap of placing women as responsible for the violence they experience (Leisenring, 2006). Thus, Mia's reluctance aligns with Dunn's (2001: 309) labelling of survivorhood as a 'hollow' victory.

Unlike Mia, Erika believed there was a distinction between the two terms, and she strongly preferred the term 'survivor' in a professional capacity. Erika also believed that there was actually a misconception in how police officers are viewed in terms of empowerment language, a mistake that she felt she also made before joining the police force whilst studying for a degree in criminology and criminal justice. Erika felt that often it was assumed that police and prison officers exclusively believed in using legalistic terms like 'victim' or 'claimant', but she had witnessed several officers showing a strong preference for 'survivor,' including herself. She summarised this as: *"We get stereotyped a lot or pigeonholed, but I can think for myself. I studied criminology before I joined."*

Erika's survivor image features a piece of art she made herself. Erika wrote the words 'it's not a crime to wear a smile,' on a white tank top that she purchased:

Figure 75 - Erika's t-shirt

Here, Erika is attempting to challenge a critical dimension of victim-blaming. She did not want to go into details. Still, she remembered a case at work where a victim-survivor of sexual assault was challenged with the possibility that they may have given the perpetrator the impression that they consented to their sexual assault due to the victim-survivor treating them with kindness in the build-up: ***"it was picked on that the survivor hugged the perpetrator right beforehand, and she smiled at him."*** Erika believed that this was a prime example of the victim-blaming that victims were subjected to. Still, she felt that integral to a survivor's identity was the confidence to challenge this, as she witnessed the victim do in this case, asserting that this commonly blamed behaviour had nothing to do with her lack of consent to a sexual act. Therefore, Erika's t-shirt was intended to act as almost a shield, to represent how survivors challenge victim-blaming that they are

subjected to, mainly when reporting to the police and within court settings. Erika described **how "it's written on a t-shirt like a visible message they're sending."**

She wanted to capture the scrutiny survivors were subjected to, so she included a magnifying glass to represent how a tiny 'discretion' can be magnified by the criminal justice system far beyond reality:

Figure 76 - It's not a crime to wear a smile by Erika, mid-20s, black African, heterosexual, woman, police officer

This is quite firmly in line with literature exploring rape scripts, specifically seduction scripts. Along this vein, behaviours that contain a certain degree of consensual activity, such as flirtatious behaviour or smiling, even consensual kissing, can be misconstrued when occurring before forced sex and mislabelled as forms of seduction, wherein the victim's actions are deemed as precipitating their assault (Littleton, Axsom and Yoder, 2006).

Compared to Mia and Erika, Beth strongly preferred the term 'victim' to be used in her professional practice. Beth worked in the legal profession. Thus, she believed it inappropriate to use any other terminology when referring to her clients; however, she did have a perception of what she felt a 'survivor' and a 'survivor identity' to be. Instead, she associated it more strongly with activism. However, she was critical of using the term 'survivor' in other contexts; she felt it was sometimes tokenistic and performative. She thought it was sometimes misconstrued in attempts to empower 'victims' and offer them freedom from victim-blaming, yet in turn, Beth believed that this merely contributed to the problem of victim-blaming as it further devalued a victim's identity. To encapsulate this, Beth selected two pieces of clothing she felt might be worn by someone who preferred the term 'survivor.' The clothes are also deliberately slightly haphazard to represent a slight lack of conscious thought in choosing to wear them:

Figure 77 – Performative by Beth, mid-20s, white, heterosexual, woman, barrister

The first item features a black t-shirt with the wording **'on Wednesdays we smash the patriarchy,'** which is a feminist play on a line from the famous film 'Mean Girls,' which is an **'entirely un-feminist film'** according to Beth. This highlights the hypocrisy of people who use Survivor. The second piece is a skirt with writings of the abuse of women all over the skirt, but Beth felt that if anyone wore it, it would be so small that no one could see or read it, in a similar way that she did not feel the survivor identity had clear benefits. Therefore, she felt the use of 'survivor' was somewhat tokenistic, **'it almost doesn't matter.'** Here, Beth is touching on the arguments presented by Covery (2006), who believed there was no distinction between victims and survivors; rather, it would be paradoxical to suggest there were distinctive characteristics between individuals. Similarly, Beth felt that

'survivor' was simply a performative label rather than an actual, different identity, and she felt the attempts to separate the two were hypocritical; her thinking aligned firmly with this idea of a paradox.

Hope

Hope was most clearly and commonly featured as the central focus of the survivor images; four images specifically tied 'survivor' with hope. Beyond that, five images also discussed hope and resilience, although the images focused on how survivors afforded false hope or limited hope and suggested forced resilience. Here, the ties between 'survivor' and hope were challenged and questioned. First, though, the four hope images. All of these images utilised or picked on natural imagery or metaphors to illustrate or depict hope.

Bradley strongly felt that 'survivor' was the continuation of the victim; a survivor had begun to move on from their experiences and started to experience feelings of recovery. However, she was hesitant to consider a survivor as someone who had recovered in the past tense; instead, she felt that 'survivor' could also represent the earliest stages of recovery. Thus, she thought the term connoted hope for recovery and optimism for the future. This linkage between survivorship and recovery, explicitly depicting survivors as still being in recovery rather than fully recovered, was also evidenced by Salzar and Casto (2008), who bound survivorship with people with lived experiences of sexual violence, developing a sense of hopefulness within their recovery.

Bradley's image depicts one of her favourite spots in the place she lives:

Figure 78 - Hope by Bradley, mid-20s, white, heterosexual, woman, police officer

Although the weather was not the best when Bradley took the photograph, the image was edited to appear sunny. The inspiration behind her image and the sea metaphor came from a line in a poem by Sarah Kay that she had heard in school. Bradley slightly misremembered the exact line; Bradley described it as **'there's nothing more beautiful than how the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline, even when it is sent away.'** She explained how she always associated the sea with returning; the tide always came in, reminding her of how life moves on. She felt she could picture a survivor coming to this exact spot, finding peace with what had happened, and beginning to look to the future. Although hope is less commonly discussed in relabout survivor identity, optimism is a common motif with clear

parallels and overlapping undercurrents; for instance, Setia, Marks and Sieun (2020) noted survivors were often considered optimistic.

Athena also used similar imagery, concentrating on a beach. Athena had previously made a lantern for her victim image, but she nestled that same lantern on a rocky, sandy beach to emphasise the difference between survivors and victims. In Athena's victim image, victimhood was associated with feelings of being lost. By contrast, she felt that victims who had begun to believe or view themselves as survivors had started to look beyond the events that had happened to them and begun to concentrate on the future. Athena thus drew on the metaphor of light to depict this, almost like a *'lighthouse.'* The metaphor of a lighthouse illustrating hope draws upon the symbolic idea of a person beginning to find direction in their optimism; as a lighthouse guides the way for boats in choppy waters, it functions as a symbol of them having a direction to the future (Lohne, 2021).
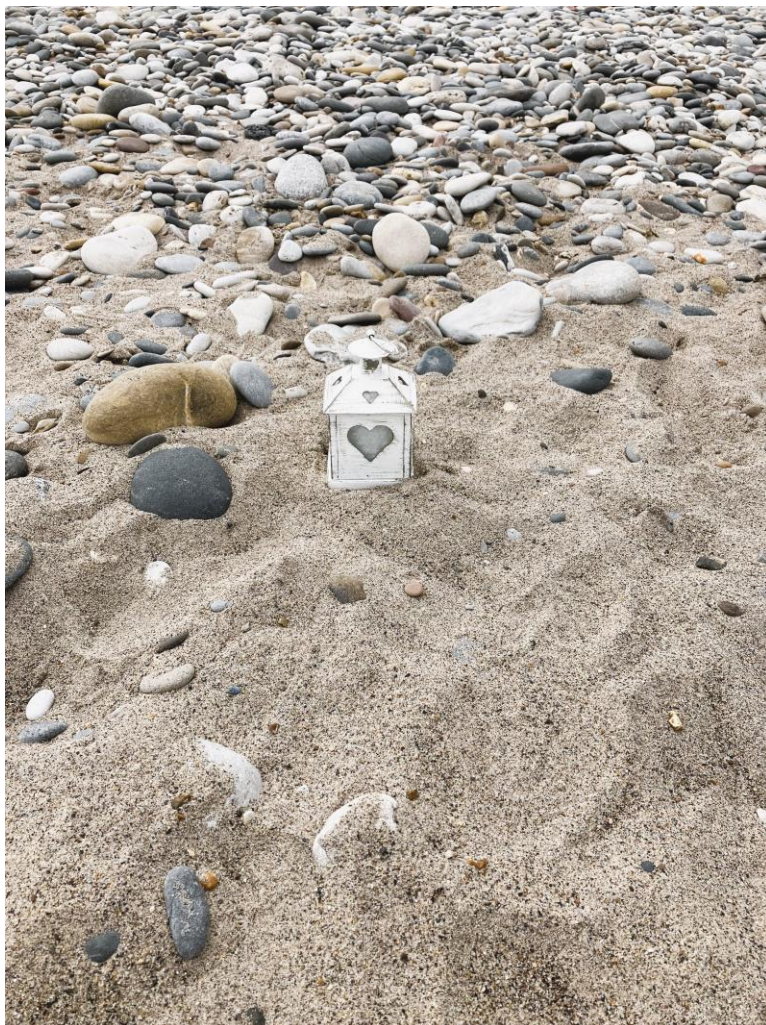
Figure 79 – Searching by Athena, early 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, sexual violence counsellor

Athena felt that survivors were more forward-thinking and optimistic than those who still identified as victims, but she did not believe that there was much distinction beyond this. Here, she did not feel there was a massive separation of survivors and victims, but rather, survivors had begun to have hope that their life would return to *'normality'* and that they would move past their victimisation experience. Therefore, she deliberately did not switch the lantern on, as she felt that would suggest survivors led the way for others, which she did not feel was a hallmark of a survivor's identity. Instead, she wanted the lantern to represent a survivor themselves looking into the ocean, a survivor looking to the future and having hope for recovery. Here, Athena is touching on the idea that survivors have begun integrating trauma into their lives (Jordan, 2013). With the imagery of giving hope and a sense of direction, especially for recovery, survivors have begun to realise the direction they can take to move forward (Roddick, 2015).

Sharada also used light as a metaphor in her image to encapsulate her thoughts on survivor identity. Sharada's starting point was the common saying *'a light at the end of the tunnel,'* where a person is conceptualised as having hope and optimism when emerging from some challenging experience. Sharada felt that survivors are often understood as having this outlook, unlike their victim counterparts. She specifically thought that this was the contrast between how survivors were depicted in the arts and how victims were showcased:

Figure 80 - Light at the End by Sharada, mid-20s, white, queer, woman, theatre director, writer and activist

Sharada did not believe that a **'tunnel'** was the most reflective metaphor, as she felt the association with being underground suggested mental illness, so she chose to capture a picture near her place of work. She described how recovery was a core part of being a survivor, and survivors needed to have hope that **'things would get better;'** thus, she took

a picture of a pathway with clear sunlight at the end. The path was not completely dark, as she did not feel the recovery journey always necessarily meant victims journeying from places **'of complete darkness'** where sexual abuse had taken over their entire identities. Sharada also really strongly felt that the journey only started when a victim wished to begin recovery. Here, she is pretty clearly distancing survivors from the idea that they are simply reacting to their trauma; instead, they are starting to show what Wozniak and Allen (2012: 89) described as 'hope-based thinking.' Under hope-based thinking, survivors no longer view themselves or their identity through their victimisation experiences. Still, their self-constructs shift to focus on their strengths and thoughts about the future.

Esme had the most overt natural imagery in her image, which was taken in the same forest she took her victim image:

Figure 81 - Hope to change by Esme, late 40s, mixed race, heterosexual, woman, support group co-ordinator and activist

Esme captured a natural waterfall that reminded her of the water features often seen at wellness spas. Esme described how the sight made her stop and reflect on her own identity as a survivor and her work as an activist in campaigning for the treatment of other survivors:

Esme: I just saw it and I took a picture of it

When diving a little deeper, Esme described how, as water often flows, it changes; it rarely stays the same. Thus, natural waterfalls reminded her of her desire to move forward to a

positive outlook and begin to have hope for the future, as well as having a desire to help others; all things she believed were integral to being a survivor:

Esme: You have to want to survive to be a survivor. If you have no hope, you're shot.

Esme felt that an integral part of the survivor identity was involvement in activism, which she felt was highly beneficial to her recovery. However, activism involvement for victim-survivors has often been framed in negative terms, such as it can be triggering or leading to emotional burnout (Chen and Gorski, 2015), which Esme herself described as being initially fearful of. However, survivors' involvement in activism has also been described as helpful to their healing (such as Stidham et al., 2012). The improvement in self-esteem was specifically emphasised by Esme and was similar to what was suggested in Stidham et al.'s (2012) study. Esme described how she gained a sense of satisfaction and found it extremely rewarding to help other survivors, and this, in turn, helped her own healing. Thus, healing is viewed as an individual journey and a collective process (Swanson and Szymanski, 2020). As Esme felt, survivors would never be able to foray into activism in the first place without hope for recovery.

Hope and resilience have dangerous consequences

All the remaining images expressed concerns about the unrealistic expectations the concept of a survivor placed on labelled individuals, or the artists felt the survivor label was often falsely tied to hope and resilience. Matthew, for example, felt that survival was usually associated with hope and resilience, separating the concept from victim identity. However, he did not believe that this automatically made a survivor identity beneficial to claim, as he thought this placed unrealistic expectations on survivors:

Figure 82 – But at what cost? Matthew, late 20s, gay, white, male police officer

Matthew's image features a top with a lightning motif, with the inscription**, 'Stay strong, live long.'** He believed this encapsulated the heart of the survivor identity, this expectation that survivors should display resilience and thus have better mental health outcomes than their victim counterparts. We see pretty clear parallels here with Lamb's (1999) emphasis on the survivor discourse recognising the strength and resilience of survivors.

However, Matthew felt that could have potentially serious consequences, particularly for male survivors of sexual violence. He believed that male survivors were less likely than women to identify as victims of sexual abuse and even less likely to disclose abuse to the police, as he felt there was still a deeply entrenched sense of shame they were subjected to.

In tandem, Matthew also described how men were not as freely able to show weakness or emotional vulnerability, at least not to the extent that women could. These two factors, in combination, meant that Matthew had some reservations about the term 'survivor,' particularly for males:

Matthew: I'm just slightly reluctant to use the term if it is supposed to be so clearly seen with resilience as what if men don't feel like survivors? What happens then?... It is almost like they're not allowed to be weak or that they can't be victims.

Research has addressed some of the gender-specific barriers to disclosure that male victim-survivors of sexual violence experience (Hine et al., 2022). A vital dimension of this revolves around the expectations placed on men to adopt traditional masculine norms of invulnerability (Mahalik et al., 2003), and this can be heightened when male survivors experience a feeling of failure for not adhering to masculine norms of physicality during victimisation (Javaid, 2015). This taps in quite clearly to some of the concerns Matthew held and some of the key processes he felt male victim-survivors were subjected to, which he did not want to exacerbate further.

Kimberly was also hesitant to use the term 'survivor' in all circumstances, even though it was the preferred term in the organisation she worked in as a counsellor. However, it must be re-emphasised that Kimberly did not hold 'victim' in any higher regard either; she preferred neutral terms, such as 'client' or 'service-user,' or a complete lack of labelling entirely. Kimberly's reservations with victimhood were then extended in her 'survivor' image, which was inspired by how bandages are used to cover injuries:

Figure 83 – Patches by Kimberley, mid-40s, Middle Eastern, homosexual, woman, sexual violence counsellor

Kimberly's image features a balloon with the words **'yeah, I'm fine,'** written in black ink to indicate a response a 'survivor' may give if asked if they are okay. However, covering these words are stickers with central motivational messages or positive thoughts, such as 'everything will be okay,' 'no pain, **no gain, good vibes only, smile.'** Kimberly stuck these all over to show how she felt survivors were bombarded with expectations that recovery from sexual assault is explicitly tied with self-love, good self-esteem, and stereotypical notions of having an optimistic outlook. Yet Kimberly felt that the conception of a survivor is **"an impossible goal"** to reach and places unrealistic expectations on survivors in terms of recovery. Kimberly believed that recovery was far from a linear process; instead, it could take several years with numerous setbacks; **"recovery can sometimes be two steps forward and five steps back,"** she felt it was an extreme disservice to place linear recovery expectations on survivors. Kimberly here directly challenges Jordan's (2013)

conceptualisation of moving from a victim to survivor identity as a linear journey. Thus, she wrote the word *'cracks'* on 'band-aids' and stuck them to the balloon. She described how:

Kimberly: When you cut yourself, you put a band-aid on it to stop it getting damaged more or infected…It made me think of a survivor, how sometimes they try and use it to protect themselves, like 'I'm a survivor, I've survived and gotten through this.' But sometimes band-aids can stop the cut from healing."

When delving into this more deeply, Kimberly felt that whilst identifying as a survivor could have some benefits, she also believed it could hinder recovery, as it gave the false sense of security that everything was all right *'whilst sweeping setbacks under the rug.'* This parallels Orgad's (2009) consideration of the survivor label as marking an individual's success in emerging from suffering but neglecting society's failure in terms of the more extensive institutional failures in producing suffering or failing in prevention and reduction. Kimberly felt quite strongly that this focus on a person's recovery neglected the multi-dimensional aspect of victimisation, instead masking this by focusing on the survivor's efforts for recovery. She felt that this could be pretty dangerous for organisations offering help to survivors, as they would have to focus considerably on individual efforts due to an apparent deflection of responsibility.

In a very similar vein, Megan also felt that 'survivor' had the key drawback of masking the lack of recovery a young person had made or concealing how much *'they were really struggling under the surface.'* Whilst Kimberly believed that survivors used the concept of a survivor as a protective defence. Organisations also used it to deflect responsibility. Megan felt that young people did not always understand the distinction between 'victim' and 'survivor,' which for her was the association with recovery, but they were just expected to use 'survivor,' as she felt that was more widely used, especially on social media:
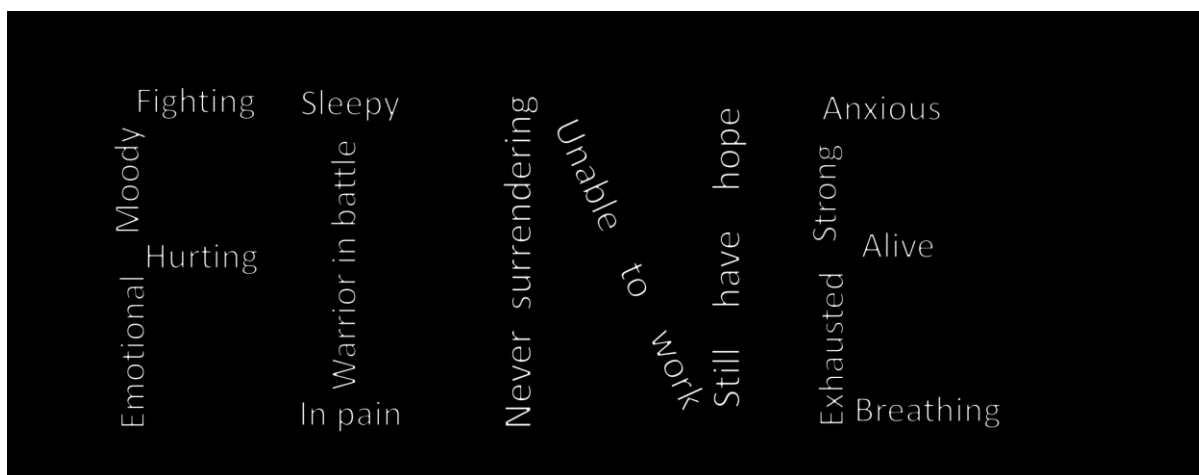
Figure 84 – Fine by Megan, late 30s, white, heterosexual, woman, independent sexual violence advisor

Megan's image is a wordplay; the word 'fine' is created from other words and phrases, some of which are positive, such as **'warrior in battle, never surrendering, still have hope, fighting, strong, alive and breathing'** whilst the remainder is negative: **'emotional, moody, hurting, sleepy, in pain, unable to work, anxious, and exhausted."** She did this to stress that she did not believe that 'recovery' was not and should not be understood as a solely positive thing, even when bound to survivorship;

Megan: "Surviving isn't the same as 'living your best life,' it's not recovered. It's recovery. Sometimes things go wrong in recovery."

Therefore, Megan wanted to create a multi-dimensional understanding of how recovery should be viewed. Still, she felt this was often misunderstood where the survivor was used within broader society, impacting young people's knowledge of the term. She felt 'survivor' could be a positive concept if this mischaracterisation was addressed. Megan's understanding of recovery fits closely with Lewis, Henriksen and Watts' (2015) suggestion that survivors saw recovery as taking one step at a time rather than a straightforward, linear journey with linear progression. Here, she's challenging the idea that survivors must be bound with being in full recovery.

Unlike Megan, Anjuli openly disliked the term 'survivor' more than any other professional. She described 'survivor' as making her **'skin crawl,'** and made her feel extremely uncomfortable as she felt all victims had survived. The distinction between the two terms was entirely redundant. She thought that the term survivor lulled professionals into a false sense of security that they were empowering victims when, in fact, survivors could be

struggling to come to terms with their experiences and mental health. She described the story of a woman, who she referred to as Heather, though this was not her real name, who was one of the key motivators for her choosing to work at a SARC:

Anjuli: I went to uni with a girl called Heather. She was raped in her room and I went with her to get a forensic medical exam the next morning. After that we kind of drifted apart, I didn't see her as much, but I kept seeing her at loads of on-campus events about tackling sexual violence and harassment, she even seemed to organise some of them. She was really into using 'survivor,' and tweeted a lot about it…she overdosed on sleeping pills less than a year later. And I just kept thinking, if she's a 'survivor,' how come she didn't make it?
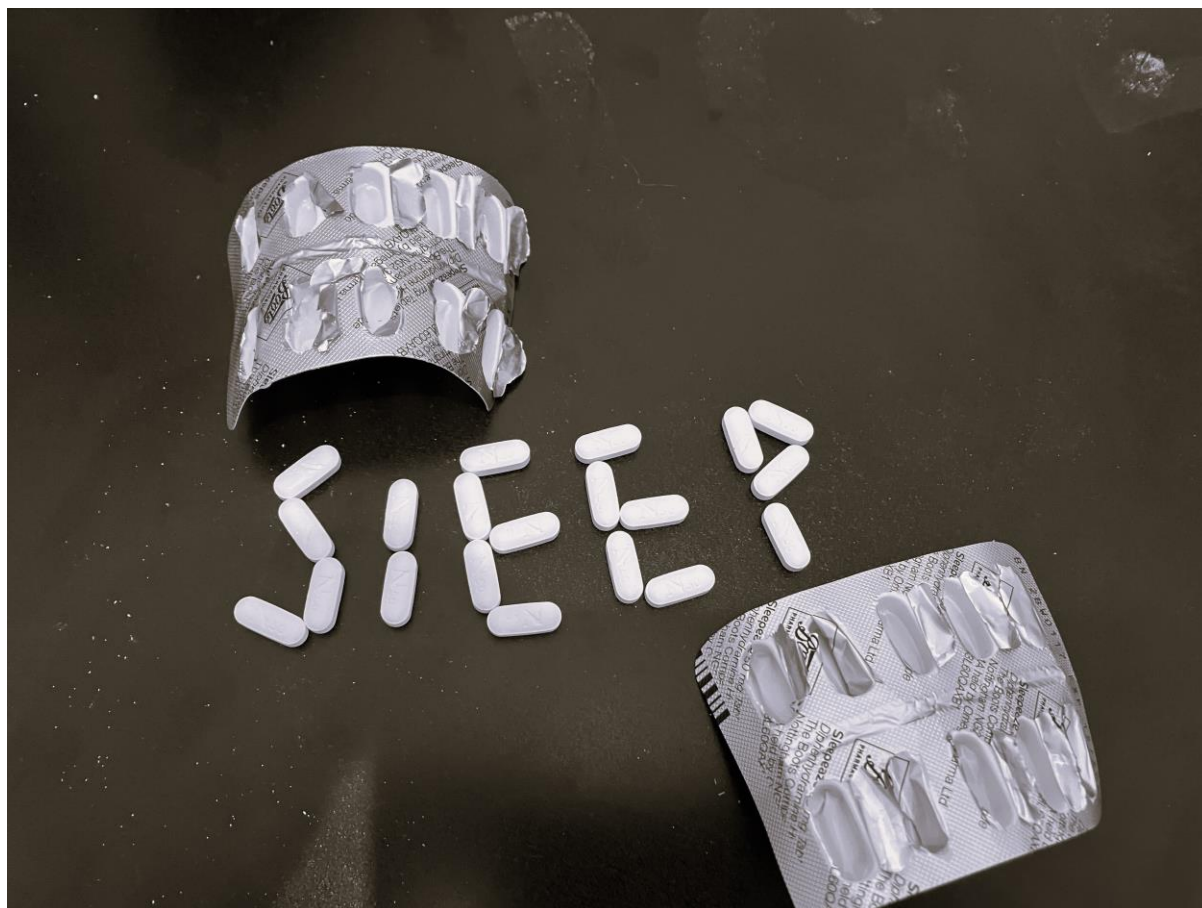
Figure 85 - Nightmares by Anjuli, late-20s, mixed, heterosexual, woman, doctor at sexual assault referral centre

Thus, Anjuli created an image with the word 'sleep' spelt out with over-the-counter sleeping medication to indicate how survivors can have struggles, too. Anjuli clearly expresses frustration at the view that survivors struggle through adversity and continue

living. After all, 'survivor' itself in English is "defined as a person who continues to live despite an invasive experience," thus creating an expectation of a survivor to survive and continue to survive (Papendick and Bohner, 2017: 3). Anjuli felt that unlike other traumatic experiences, such as eating disorders, drug addicts or alcoholics, there was a lack of consideration of how victim-survivors of sexual violence may experience significant setbacks in their recovery. In other experiences, there was this idea of a relapse, and it was commonly expected. Thus, she felt that empowerment and strength underpin the survivor, suggesting that survivors have resilience (Cazeau, 2015), which impacts how victim-survivors may feel when things go wrong. Instead, the concept of a survivor created a stage where, once reached, if survivors could not keep matching this, it could be perilous to set unrealistic expectations. She particularly noted this idea of survivors of sexual violence, 'transforming self' (Wing and Oertle, 1999), where survivorship becomes a core part of their identity. Subsequently, failure to continue with this can have significant consequences, explaining her hesitancy to use the term and, in turn, placing those expectations on the victim-survivors herself.

Bringing this together

In a similar fashion to Chapter 5, we see the professionals also considering 'victim' and 'survivor' as more like constructed conceptual ideas rather than identities or labels that are more frequently depicted within victim-survivor violence and abuse literature. None of the professionals felt that there was necessarily such thing as an intrinsic 'victim' or 'survivor' identity that a person could occupy, taking a radical departure from constructions of a 'victim personality' (Loseke, 1997) or survivor mentality (see Larson, 2018 for an outline). Only one focused on identity (Erika). Even so, her focus centred more on solidarity rather than an interactionally constituted identity, as proposed by literature examining the victim-survivor binary from a symbolic interactionist perspective. Instead, the professionals depicted attributes or perceptions more commonly associated with how victims and survivors were viewed.

Unlike the victim-survivor artists, where opinions were barely mentioned, the professional artists were much more vocal in expressing a preference for language choice and usage, with seven out of the eleven offering their view without being explicitly asked. Of these seven who expressed an opinion, only one felt no real distinction between the two concepts.

Given the historical tradition of viewing the two as distinctive conceptual ideas in violence and abusive literature, such as Barry's (1979) famous viewing of the two as opposites, this is very much in step with traditional constructions. This holds implications for victim-survivors in potentially reproducing the victim/survivor binary as if they are distinctive; it opens the door for a hierarchy to appear between the two.

Of course, it is essential to acknowledge that these opinions were not necessarily in isolation. These opinions must be occasionally contextualised with factors tied to the professionals' jobs. For instance, Kimberly expressed a different opinion about her organisation's primary language choice. Therefore, professionals do not just occupy a dual identity, as represented by Anderson and Overby (2020); they also may have to use terms professionally that do not always align with their personal preferences. In addition, some professionals emphasised that their photos were not based on their own personal or professional views but on how they felt victim-survivors were perceived by society, further showcasing that their understandings were more rooted in conceptual ideas of victim-survivors rather than specific identities. For example, Bradley stressed that her victim photo did not stem from her view. Similarly, Kimberly and Anjuli focused on misrepresenting victims in society and the media rather than their views on identity.

Athena and Erika vocalised a preference for survivor, where Athena's third-sector employer also preferred to refer to service users exclusively as survivors, whilst Erika actively expressed frustration that police officers were not often positioned as adopting empowering language like 'survivor,' which she felt was a misconception of her as a professional and the authority she worked for. Similarly, Esme expressed that as a support group coordinator, she preferred 'survivor' due to its emphasis on empowerment, in line with literature commonly positioning survivor as the preferred term in therapeutic settings (Draucker et al., 2009). However, Esme's construction of a survivor aligns more closely with Ben-David's (2020) conceptualisation of a thriver rather than a survivor. This suggests variations in perceptions of survivors (as indicated by Leisenring, 2006), so it is not a misalignment with victim-survivor literature.

However, not all professionals had a preference for the term survivor. Anjuli expressed a strong distaste for what she believed was the natural assumption that only survivors had overcome their trauma when she felt all victims had 'survived' their assault. Moreover, Megan felt that there was an expectation for professionals to adopt survivor, and she

thought that the conscious choice to use 'survivor' was often tokenistic. Although both of these views are a departure from the majority of victim-survivor literature that expresses a preference for the term survivor, they are in alignment with literature that challenges to reframe the victim-survivor binary. For instance, Megan's discussions of tokenism fit with Larson's (2018) critique of the survivor discourse as devaluing survivors with disabilities. Anjuli's views parallel Convery's (2006) questioning of a survivor's being reflective of the agency. So, we see a deviation from traditional framings of victimhood in literature but no attempts to challenge the survivor discourse.

Some of the professionals' images reproduced traditional constructions of the victim-survivor binary. Constructions of victims within literature tend to depict victims as experiencing negative emotions following their assault (Williamson and Serna, 2018), which was also a key motif within the professionals artists images'. For instance, Sharada is very much focused on views of victims' suffering negative emotions, and Esme expressed substantial frustration about this. Similarly, 'survivor' has often been associated with hope and recovery (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020), which was also echoed in some survivor images, again in Sharada's and Esme's, and also resistance (Dunn, 2005), that was reflected in Erika's and Mia's. Furthermore, Athena touched upon the journey metaphor, where victims are encouraged to move towards a more positive survivor identity commonly depicted in literature (see Thompson, 2000). However, the idea of the journey involving linear progression (Jordan, 2013) was not echoed; the images were quite contrasting here. Athena and Megan precisely positioned victims as seeking help from service provisions, contrasting the idea that this was a hallmark of survivors. Moreover, Kimberly felt that there was a perception that survivors embarked on a linear recovery but felt this was highly problematic and set impossible expectations, echoing Larson's (2018) concerns about compulsory survivorship. Furthermore, Bradley and Megan challenged the idea that 'survivors' were recovering, not recovered, as commonly suggested by the journey metaphor. Finally, whilst there were mentions of survivors and hope, as commonly postulated, this hope was seen as occasionally problematic or false, showing some deviation from dominant discourses. Therefore, this suggests that we see some deviations while there are clear parallels with identity literature when viewing victim-survivor language as concepts rather than labels. Thus, this is important for how victim-survivors and identity construction are positioned; if we move away from identity and labels, we see some clear changes.

Chapter 6: Summary

This chapter has explored the photographs created by professionals working daily with victim-survivors (Research aims four and five). Some professionals also identify as victim-survivors themselves, so they fit the definition of a 'dual-identity' (Anderson and Overby, 2020). In a somewhat similar way to the victim-survivors' photos, the professional artists tended to create more positive survivor images in comparison to their victim ones. Victim images centred on critical ideas of victim-blaming, negative emotions, and moving on, whilst survivor photographs emphasised the unfairness of victim-blaming, considered both hope and resilience, as well as the problematic consequences of these associations. Thus, again, we see a clear idea here that the victim-survivor binary may be overly simplistic, particularly about the automatic assertion that survival is indicative of agency and recovery. Artists, in particular, expressed concerns about the automatic bounding of resilience and hope with survivors, as this placed unrealistic expectations upon survivors in terms of recovery. Moreover, we did see quite similar echoes of victimhood also being somewhat associated with recovery in the dimension of moving on.

Chapter 7 will explore in much more depth the overarching conclusions of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and the entire thesis.

Chapter 7: On to the end

Previous literature has focused on understanding the self-labelling of victims and survivors (O'Shea et al., 2024), examining the discursive sites of victim-survivor labelling (Orgad, 2009) and unpacking the current discourses surrounding victim-survivor language (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). However, research tends to focus on the perspectives of victim-survivors themselves as its primary focus tends to be self-labelling; yet language choice and self-identity are not solely shaped by individual language choice; language does not exist within isolation. After all, language choice operates within significant discursive sites and, in terms of victim-survivor identity, is often subjected to dominant cultural discourses surrounding blame and responsibility. It may also be shaped by perspectives outside of personal views, particularly in the case of professionals. Language choice can also be shaped by standard cultural constructions of victim-survivors and the language used to describe them by individual society members and professionals working in the sector that victim-survivors may come across. Through tracing these key discursive sites and dominant cultural constructions of the concept of victims and survivors, this thesis traced the emergence of the concepts 'victim,' 'survivor,' and 'victim-survivor' through sexual violence literature and the emergence of the survivor discourse, positioning this within the victim-survivor binary (Research Aim 1).

Previous research has often neglected normative and non-normative framings of victim-survivor identity outside of self-labelling, as well as within examinations of policy and practice documents. Thus, there has been little exploration of victim-survivor language usage in written documentation that may affect self-labelling, a gap this thesis has sought to try and fill (Research Aim 3). Moreover, past literature has placed a substantial emphasis on language. However, victim-survivors can only utilise the language available (Hansen, 2020). Words can only scratch the surface of human understanding because they are constrained by linguistic measures, whereas art can transcend these barriers (Harper, 2002). Whilst art has been used to understand the experiences of people with lived experience of sexual violence, it has rarely been incorporated into victim-survivor language, particularly not with professionals working with victim-survivors. Thus, this doctoral research has sought to address these gaps and offer a contribution to our understanding of victim-survivor concepts and language choice amongst people with lived experience of sexual assault and service professionals who may or may not identify as victim-survivors themselves (Research

Aims 2 and 4). The thesis sought to examine how the concepts of 'victim' and 'survivor' were used across policy and practice documents and consider what associations they held for both victim-survivors themselves and professionals (Research Aim 3). It adopted a mixed-methods approach utilising documentary analysis and creative research methods. However, an innovative approach of methodological braiding was also employed to avoid one component taking prominence. To create an approach that empowered artists as much as possible, an ongoing consent procedure was maintained throughout, steps were taken to minimise the risk of artists' distress, a flexible approach was taken to reduce power imbalances, and photo-elicitation interviews were used to ensure authentic representation (Research Aim 5).

The research contributes to victim-survivor labelling, language choice, and sexual violence. In this concluding chapter, the critical main findings from all three empirical research methods are outlined and contextualised within the five main research aims of the thesis overall. Priorities for further research are also outlined, alongside implications for policy and practice. The chapter then concludes with a final summary.

Finding 1: There is not as much distinction between the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' as the literature, policy and practice documents suggest

Within violence and abuse literature, there is an ongoing sense of uncertainty surrounding the most appropriate vocabulary to refer to people with lived experience of sexual violence (Williamson, 2023; Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Muldoon, Taylor and Norma, 2016; Young and Maguire, 2003), particularly with the recent addition of the term victim-survivor (O'Shea et al., 2024) is. Traditionally, people with lived experience of sexual violence have been referred to as 'victim,' and/ or a 'survivor' (Setia, Marks and Sieun, 2020; Jordan, 2013).

A victim-survivor binary is presented within a large volume of literature that positions 'victim' and 'survivor' as polar opposite identities (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020; Dunn, 2005;

Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996). The binary suggests that victim and survivor are two mutually exclusive categories, where 'victim' is typically constructed as a more negative label, whilst a survivor is generally framed in a more favourable light (Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Dunn, 2005) due to associations with agency, recovery (Williamson and Serna, 2018) and better mental functioning (Boyle, 2015). As victimhood is commonly perceived as a more negative identity, victims of crime are also often constructed in literature as showing some hesitancy in occupying the victim label (Rock, 2004), as it undermines their strength and resilience (van Teesling, 2001). Survivor was initially suggested in feminist literature as an alternative term to describe victims, to emphasise the autonomy and agency victim-survivors possessed (Jordan, 2018; Atmore, 1999). For instance, Kelly (1988: 163) stressed the importance within feminist discourse of "shifting the emphasis from viewing women as passive victims of sexual violence to seeing them as active survivors." So, survivor emerged to combat the perpetuation of victim myths where representations of victimisation characterised women as "eternal victims of rape, rather than as individual subjects for whom sexual violence is one aspect of their identities" (Jean-Charles, 2014: 40). Subsequently, victim-survivors who chose to refer to themselves as survivors were seen as moving away from a negatively-constructed victim, towards a 'survivor' that was more focused upon recovery from the posttraumatic aftermath (Larson, 2018). The choice of claiming 'survivor' was conceptualised as an actual political statement when rejecting 'victim' that was enshrined in patriarchal thought (McKenzie-Mohr and LaFrance, 2011; Gavey, 2005). Through the adoption of the 'survivor' label, a person would no longer view their survival experiences as "the centre of their existence" but instead, they re-define themselves" (Wuest and Merrit-Gray, 2001: 91). Since survivor has been advocated for, it has been framed as an oppositional identity, creating a hierarchy between the two (for instance, Barry, 1979).

With 'victim' and 'survivor' framed as two binary categories, a VictimSurvivor Paradox was created, where victim-survivors were forced to choose between occupying two separate identities (Thompson, 2000). Before the VictimSurvivor Paradox, this division was previously conceptualised as the victim-survivor dichotomy (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020), where victims and survivors were positioned as opposite ends of the agency continuum (Dunn, 2005). Alcoff and Gray (1993: 261) expressed this dichotomy as the division between the 'passive victim' and 'active survivor.' As a result of this separation of victims and survivors within literature, victim-survivors were encouraged to embark on a transformative process where they should shift from calling themselves a 'victim' to a

'survivor.' The most famous metaphor used to describe the transformational process is a journey (Atkinson, 2008; Dunn, 2005; Kelly, Burton and Regan, 1996), which created a transformational narrative around survivors (Hunter, 2010). Yet this journey metaphor inadvertently created a hierarchy, which devalued and legitimised the victim.

Policy and practice documents also frequently reproduce this hierarchy; in particular, documents that exclusively used the term survivor expressed the journey between victim and survivor, framing the two as distinctive terms. Common metaphors were also used to symbolise the transformational process of victim to survivor, such as a life raft (Sue Lambert Trust, 2022), light following darkness (Rape and Sexual Violence Project, 2018) and traversing monkey bars (Women and Girls Network, 2020). Although policy and document practice documents did deviate from the notion that this journey was a linear process, the construction of the journey involving linear progression was a point of contention and debate in victim-survivor literature (Ben-David, 2020). Given that this challenge is frequently considered and there are diverging constructions in the literature of linear progression, policy and practice documents echo quite closely the distinction made between 'victim' and 'survivor' in literature. For example, out of the 116 documents, 93.1% either exclusively used one term (normative and non-normative framings) to refer to victim-survivors or expressed a preference for the two, suggesting that there was a distinction between the two. There was minimal usage of the terms interchangeably without a chosen term or rationale given for preferring a term (6.9%).

Studies examining self-labelling for victim-survivors have found quite distinctive differences among people with lived experience of sexual violence (Johnson and LaPlante, 2023). In terms of holding a preference, studies have examined whether victim-survivors prefer to be described as 'victim' or 'survivor.' However, no studies have specifically included 'victim-survivor' as a primary option. Recent studies found that female sexual assault victim-survivors vastly preferred survivor (Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018; Williamson and Serna, 2018), half preferred 'survivor' (Williamson, 2023), or a quarter expressed a preference for survivor (Johnson, 2023). Although some victim-survivors were seen as preferring being described as a victim, these women were often in the minority compared to support for survivors (Johnson, 2023; Williamson, 2023). The only exception was Graham et al. (2021), where more victim-survivors preferred to be described as a victim over those who preferred survivor, but even then, the difference between the two groups was only 5.6%, and more participants rejected both terms. So, we do see in studies examining preferences for victim

and survivor an absolute positioning of the two as distinctive terms and identities, as we saw in the policy and practice documents. All of these studies constructed 'victim' and 'survivor' as identity labels. In contrast, this thesis found that victim-survivors and professionals overwhelmingly spoke of 'victim' and 'survivor' as concepts, not labels and identities as they are conceptualised in literature. Labels are usually framed as societally salient notions that do not just exist merely as language but also conjure up mental representations of individuals or groups when used (O'Shea et al., 2024; Boyle and Rodgers, 2022; Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2005). Due to the societal salience of these ideas, people who have been assigned these labels may also internalise the representations embedded within them, wherein the label may become part of their identity (Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018; Williamson and Serna, 2018; Thoits, 2011).

Conceptual ideas are distinct from labels, as they are not as intimately linked to self-descriptions, namely how the victim-survivor describes themselves or how they believe others see them. Instead, they are focused more closely on how a group is defined within society that they may not identify with. After all, some people with experience of sexual assault completely reject all labels as they do not wish for their victimisation experiences to be included or given primacy within their identity (Williamson and Serna, 2017; Nissim-Sabat, 2009; Hunter, 2010). Here, they are actively resisting taking on a victim-survivor identity. Thus, they may hesitate to be labelled at all (Ovenden, 2012). This is perhaps why victim-survivors overwhelmingly did not consider them as two distinctive ideas or terms, finding fewer differences between the two than positions within the literature. Some professionals did feel that there was more of a difference than the victim-survivors; they were also mainly speaking of societal constructions rather than their own opinions, which would explain why they felt there was slightly more difference between the two ideas. Similarly to the victim-survivors, none of the professionals felt that there was necessarily such thing as an intrinsic 'victim' or 'survivor' identity that a person could occupy, taking a radical departure from constructions of a 'victim personality' (Loseke, 1997) or survivor mentality (see Larson, 2018 for an outline). Only one focused on identity (Erika), and even so, her focus centred more on solidarity rather than an interactionally-constituted identity, as proposed by literature examining the victim-survivor binary from a symbolic interactionist perspective.

Unlike the victim-survivor artists, where opinions were barely mentioned, the professional artists were much more vocal in expressing a preference for language choice and usage,

with seven out of the eleven offering their view without being explicitly asked. Of these seven who expressed an opinion, only one felt no real distinction between the two concepts. This holds implications for victim-survivors in potentially reproducing the victim/survivor binary as if they are distinctive; it opens the door for a hierarchy to appear between the two, as in literature. Of course, it is essential to acknowledge that these opinions were not necessarily in isolation. Occasionally, these opinions must be contextualised with factors tied to the professionals' jobs, with one professional expressing a disjuncture between their preferred term and their organisations'. Professionals do not just occupy a dual identity, as represented by Anderson and Overby (2020); they also may have to use terms professionally that do not always align with their personal preferences.

Athena and Erika vocalised a preference for survivor. Similarly, Esme expressed that as a support group coordinator, she preferred 'survivor' due to its emphasis on empowerment, in line with literature commonly positioning survivor as the preferred term in therapeutic settings (Draucker et al., 2009). However, Esme's construction of a survivor aligns more closely with Ben-David's (2020) conceptualisation of a thriver rather than a survivor. This suggests variations in perceptions of survivors (as indicated by Leisenring, 2006), so it is not a misalignment with victim-survivor literature. However, not all professionals had a preference for the term survivor. So, we see a deviation from traditional framings of victimhood in literature but no attempts to challenge the survivor discourse.

As a result, whilst there were some parallels, findings suggest that there is not as much distinction between 'victim' and 'survivor' as literature, policy and practice documents suggest, notably as victim-survivors considered their concepts rather than labels or identities.

Finding 2: 'Survivor' is viewed more critically than the literature, policy and practice documents suggest

Since the emergence of 'survivor' as an alternative to the victim, literature has positioned 'survivor' as a more favourable term than the victim (Mardorossian, 2002). A variety of attributes have been attached to the 'survivor,' such as coping, resistance (Kelly, 1988),

agency (Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Williamson and Serna, 2018; Jean-Charles, 2014; Naples, 2003; Profitt, 1996), resilience (Walklate, 2011; Reich, 2002; Lamb, 1999), and strength (Hockett and Saucier, 2015; Jordan, 2013; Leisenring, 2006; Reich, 2002). As a result, within the literature, survivors are almost exclusively constructed in more favourable terms, inadvertently reproducing a hierarchy where the survivor is praised, but the victim is devalued. As previously mentioned, this hierarchy is typically conceptualised as the victim-survivor binary.

Regarding policy and practice documents, the victim-survivor binary was somewhat reproduced, although constructions of 'survivor' were not as distinctive from victims as suggested in the literature. The three central pillars unlock understandings of survivor identity within policy and practice documents; whilst the two pillars, agency and recovery, showcase that the construction of the survivor is reproduced in policy and practice documents, the final pillar of safety is notably absent from the survivor discourse. As literature rarely constructs survivors in a negative fashion, policy and practice documents frequently portray survivors as navigating adverse post-traumatic circumstances. Discussions of safety in policy and practice documents were multi-dimensional, where survivors were depicted as navigating unwanted experiences of trauma in terms of both physical and emotional safety. Moreover, the agency of survivors is emphasised incredibly frequently in victim-survivor literature; although this was less extensive in policy and practice documents, it did arise in multiple instances. There were parallels between literature and policy and practice documents, where survivors were frequently described as in control of making decisions post-assault; however, unlike literature, documents rarely depicted survivors as feeling in control. Instead, there were multiple acknowledgements of survivors feeling overwhelmed, confused or disempowered, as well as self-reliance being positioned as unfavourable, through viewing it as a sign of lack of trust, a barrier to help-seeking or survivors carrying emotional caregiving burdens. This was another deviation from the literature, where self-reliance is viewed as a positive survivor trait (Orgad, 2009).

Unlike the policy and practice documents, the concept of a survivor was viewed much more critically by victim-survivors. Agency was not a central message in the artists' images and was rarely discussed in photo-elicitation interviews. When agency was briefly discussed, it was considered as survivors recognising and challenging culturally dominant victim-blaming narratives, the hypersexualisation of women's bodies, and the patriarchal social structures that condoned and facilitated sexual violence. So, agency was not a focal theme;

resistance was more strongly emphasised. Attitudes towards the resistance of survivors were also much more critical, with victim-survivors focusing on the disregard for the modes of oppression that survivors might experience based on their social locations and unique identities that they felt were ignored by the survivor discourse. For example, Tiffany considered the absence of black women, Jynx, John and Reece thought the neglect of the additional burden on male survivors who were subjected to notions of hegemonic masculinity, and Evee noted the responsibility neo-liberal constructions of the survivor placed on disabled survivors that may struggle to achieve. Similar themes were also echoed within photographs produced by professionals, where the linkage between 'survivor' and agency was considered tokenistic and dangerous for victim-survivors as it set unrealistic expectations of them. The survivor discourse has begun to receive critique for ignoring the hypersexualisation of black, Latinx and Asian women (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020) and the devaluing of disabled survivors (Larson, 2018). However, these social hierarchies are still particularly salient in literature, policy and practice documents linking survivors to agency and recovery.

The association with survivors and recovery showed extensive similarities between literature, policy and practice documents. Symbolic ideas of recovery were often drawn upon; there was also an automatic assumption that survivors would be able to embark on recovery, which was absent in victim documents, as well as a reframing of bodily responses usually seen as passive actions, such as tonic immobility, as a survival response. Healing was consistently tied to hope, resilience, and strength in policy and practice documents using the term 'survivor.' Whilst there was not always a clear separation between victim-survivor identity being made, the conscious language choice to use 'survivor' did reinforce this binary construction and create a climate of compulsory survivorship, where survivor is seen as preferential. Amidst compulsory survivorship, an expectation becomes placed upon victim-survivors that to be considered 'survivors,' they must be free from all disability, including trauma-related disabilities like post-traumatic stress disorder (Bower, 2023). In turn, this bounding of survivors to strength, resilience and recovery can create consequences for victim-survivors with trauma-related disabilities who may struggle to achieve 'survivor' status and feel devalued due to the accidental suggestion that they should overcome their disability.

Although healing was a central idea within victim-survivors' photographs, the victim-survivors were much more critical of this notion of healing than in literature, policy and

practice documents. Healing was constructed amongst the photographs as involving multiple setbacks and emphasising survivors 'healing' rather than being 'healed,' as sometimes suggested in literature. Similar echoes of survivors being seen as in recovery rather than recovered were also seen in the professional's photographs. Similarly, recovery was seen as a core part of the survivor concept within victim-survivors' photography; they constructed the idea of a survivor denoting or suggesting some form of healing, with some depictions centred on self-love and positive self-messaging. The professionals also unpacked the concept of hope being associated with survivors, where hope was positioned as occasionally problematic or even false hope due to the constraints and expectations placed on survivors. Thus, the victim-survivor binary is quite simplistic when considering how victim-survivors themselves and professionals conceptualise survivors, particularly when moving away from discussions of labels and identities, victim-survivors and professionals were more critical of 'survivor' than literature, policy and practice documents.

Finding 3: 'Victim' is viewed less critically than the literature, policy and practice documents suggest

Echoing the previous finding, 'victim' was also viewed less critically than the literature, policy and practice documents suggest. Ideas of a victim have a historical precedent with being connected to passivity and disempowerment within victim-survivor literature (Dunn, 2005). Policy and practice documents frequently evoked some of the main ways victims were often constructed as disempowered, such as experiencing secondary victimisation through negative reporting experiences, being encouraged to regain control of their emotions (thus suggesting their current inability to regulate emotionally), and feeling overwhelmed. Similarly, the idea that victims had been harmed was also emphasised in policy and practice documents, aligning with the literature (Holstein and Miller, 1990). There were differences in policy and practice documents regarding how long victims would experience said harm, though long-lasting damage was rarely mentioned. As a result, victims were often seen as experiencing negative emotions within policy and practice documents, particularly shame. Subsequently, policy and practice documents rarely framed victims in favourable terms, with little mention of agency, recovery or healing; thus, policy

and practice documents frequently mirrored literature regarding the construction of victims.

Victim-survivors and professionals were much less critical in their positioning of victims. For the victim-survivors, the central message was 'hurt,' and this certainly does fit with common associations of victimhood in literature, policy and practice documents. Victim-survivors emphasised broken trust, physical and emotional injury, as well as victim-blaming. However, there was an absolute absence of this notion of hurt and passivity being exclusive to victims and resistance being bound to survivors, as suggested mainly in literature but also in policy and practice documents. Dana explicitly dismissed the possibility of resistance being a survivor trait, believing it is better associated with victimhood. Charles and Georgiana created images centred on resistance to victim-blaming discourses for their victim images, as they felt victims expressed this.

Professionals also had slightly less critical views of victims. While some professionals, such as Sharada and Esme, focused on victims experiencing negative emotions, two also actively challenged the notion that only survivors sought help. Literature frequently positions active help-seeking as a survivor trait, yet Athena and Megan felt this was highly inaccurate. Moreover, Anjuli and Beth felt that victims were also embarking on recovery; it was not something that only a survivor engages with, as is sometimes portrayed in literature.

What was also notably absent in the photographs of victim-survivors and professionals was the idea that being a victim was stigmatising or devalued in comparison to a survivor. In literature, 'victim' is often depicted as a devalued category amidst anti-victim discourse that favours survivors (Ross, 2020). Whilst underlying notions of harm or injury were reproduced (Leisenring, 2006), victim-survivors and professionals were much less critical of victims, unlike literature, which views the victim as an identity where victims inhabit a victim personality (Alcoff and Gray, 1993), a cramped identity in-acted in a self-fulling manner where they are viewed as helpless and weak (Minow, 1993). There was also no actual framing of a victim as passive either by victim-survivors or professionals, which is one of the most commonly discussed attributes of victimhood in literature (Thompson, 2000; Lamb, 1999; Holstein and Miller, 1997; Best, 1997).

Implications and Recommendations

Research conducted with professionals working with victim-survivors on a day-to-day basis needs to consider this idea of 'dual identity' and assume that it is pretty likely that at least some professionals would also have lived experience of sexual violence themselves. Thus, researchers wishing to understand and embrace identity fully would not only expect this but plan accordingly by allowing professionals to self-identify in the category they felt was most appropriate. In this research, utilising the same method across both categories was considered well-tackled. Thus, future research considering dual identity may benefit from adopting the same method across both categories.

In addition, policy and academia should be cautious of framing the 'survivor' as being explicitly bound with agency, particularly if the critical rationale for adopting 'survivor' over 'victim' centres around survivor acknowledging agency. The victim-survivor binary, where victimhood is constructed as passive and survivorship is positioned as agentic, is somewhat overly simplified, but more importantly, the framing of the survivor within agentic terms can have unintentional consequences as it feeds into a problematic cultural narrative that ignores the social systems that contribute to, facilitate or condone victimisation. By framing 'survivor' as acknowledging agency in a manner that the victim label cannot encapsulate, we inadvertently enable the reproduction of rape culture (O'Shea et al., 2024) by suggesting the idea that a survivor has more cultural value than a victim. In particular, this overly simplified binary can fail to consider how victim-survivor labelling can create a climate of 'compulsory survivorship' (Larson, 2018: 689) amidst a broader society of 'compulsory abledbodiedness' (McRuer, 2006) that devalues disabled victim-survivors. Moreover, the overly simplified victim-survivor binary can neglect the other modes of oppression that contribute to victim-blaming discourses, such as ethnicity (Boyle and Rodgers, 2020). Particular caution needs to be heeded where the victim is constructed as giving sexual violence primacy within a person's identity, whilst 'survivor' allows for a greater degree of agency to move towards recovery and avoid this trap; this pattern of thinking, which is as old as some of the earliest suggestions of 'survivor' as an alternative to 'victim' can have unintentional consequences for LGBTQ+ survivors in terms of positioning their sexuality as affected by their lived experience of trauma.

Research Reflection and Areas of Future Research

Although this research has contributed to knowledge around victim-survivor identity, it would be not very careful not to offer some form of reflection, especially surrounding data collection. Although the methodological braiding technique worked well, on the whole, to make sure that all three research methods were well-integrated within data collection, by having two types of art-based research, it did feel like the balance was slightly skewed towards an arts-based design. In tandem, given the central focus of victim-survivor identity, the centring of victim-survivor voices did need to happen. However, this unintentionally de-centre the arts-based research with the professionals, particularly the policy analysis.

Concerning the arts-based research with professionals, given that some practitioners worked in either niche or specialised areas, specific job titles and organisations had to be anonymised and ethically redacted out of anonymity concerns. This was particularly true given that some artists created photographs with other potentially identifying information, such as depicting a location on their way to work. As a result, certain demographic information could not be collected, such as age and regional area; age was instead represented as categories such as 'early 20s' to keep it sufficiently unidentifiable. These were, of course, specific reasons for not collecting these forms of data; it did restrict questions that could be asked about specific professional examples or organisation-wide language choices.

Furthermore, in terms of participant age, whilst there was a reasonably good spread of participants aged between eighteen and forty-five, only two victim-survivors were above the age of fifty, with none at all above sixty years old. Given the criteria of working with victim-survivors on a day-to-day basis in a professional capacity, this was perhaps less of an issue amongst the professional artists as they were more in line with the average working age. However, due to the inability to recruit participants over the age of sixty, this research unfortunately misses the opportunity to shed some light on the historically neglected area of sexual violence experiences of older people (Bows, 2018). Particularly given that one participant, Tania, made some interesting comments about moving beyond 'surviving' given her age and the substantial amount of time that had passed since her victimisation

experience in childhood, now that she was in her late 50s. Thus, future potential research into victim-survivor language should consider the impact of concepts upon people with lived experience of sexual violence over the age of sixty.

Finally, this research did not examine the potential viable alternative to 'victim' and 'survivor', namely 'victim-survivor' (Jean-Charles, 2014). After all, without an alternative term, 'victim' and 'survivor' will continue to be used across academia, policy and practice. Yet, as of the present, studies examining the perceptions of 'victim' and 'survivor' in terms of identity have not reviewed the perceptions of 'victim-survivor' for people with lived experience or professionals supporting victim-survivors as well as whether it is perceived as an encompassing term, as it is intended (Gregory et al., 2021). Other alternatives have been proposed, such as 'overcomer' and 'thriver' (Ben-David, 2020), which would also be essential directions of focus for future research, particularly in terms of victim-survivor and professional perceptions.

Round-off
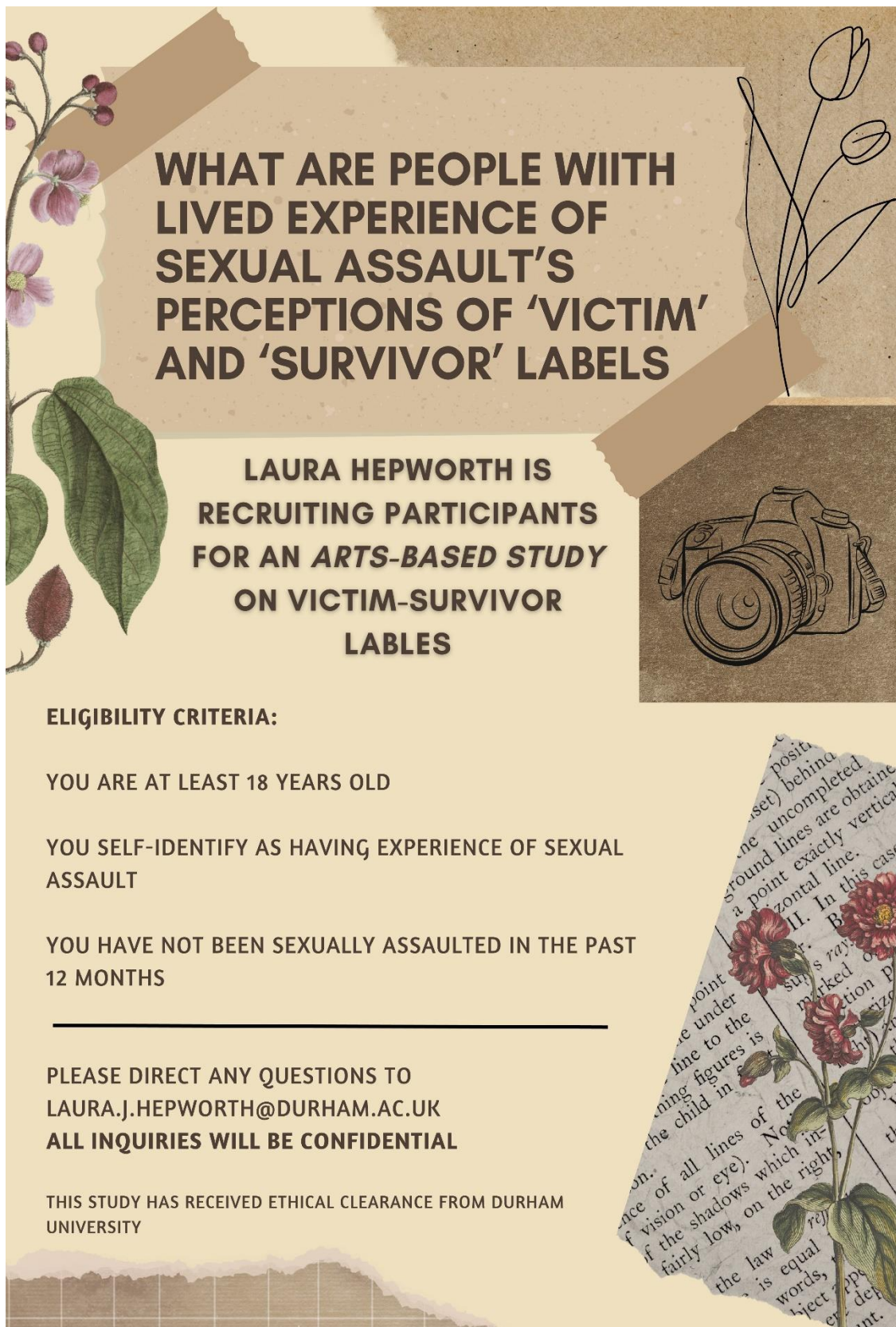
Language choice and victim-survivor concepts are extremely slippery territory, particularly given the ongoing, unresolved debate within violence and abuse literature surrounding the most appropriate vocabulary to refer to people with lived experience of sexual violence (O'Shea et al., 2024; Williamson, 2023; Schwark and Bohner, 2019; Muldoon, Taylor and Norma, 2016; Young and Maguire, 2003) is. Language is not simply word choices but has traceable underlying assumptions or connotations that conjure up mental representations of the individuals or groups they refer to (Boyle and Rodgers, 2022; Leisenring, 2006; Dunn, 2005). As these associations can have high degrees of social salience, those 'labelled' may also internalise these embedded representations, resulting in the concept forming a part of their identity (Boyle and Clay-Warner, 2018; Williamson and Serna, 2018; Thoits, 2011). Yet what also muddies the waters (Young and Maguire, 2003) is that 'victim' and 'survivor' concepts do not have universally accepted definitions (Schwark and Boher, 2019), and these definitions vary from culture to culture (Papendick and Bohner, 2017). This can manifest into extremely contradictory, even paradoxical, understandings of a victim and survivor (Leisenring, 2006). Thus, concepts can be highly individual (Williamson, 2023; Anderson and Gold, 1994), creating a significant problem in understanding the usage of normative and nonnormative framings of those with lived experience of sexual violence. To further

muddy the waters, language choice does not exist in isolation; victim-survivor concepts are not merely accepted or rejected by "facts of what happened" (Leisenring, 2006: 325) but are shaped by saliant cultural constructions of victims and survivors (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015; Holstein and Miller, 1990).

This research has identified that language usage within policy and practice documents produced for legislative and service provision purposes should be viewed through the building blocks of victim and survivor: safety, agency, recovery, disempowerment and harm. 'Survivor' conceptual usage is built upon the three pillars of survivorhood: safety, agency and recovery, whilst 'victim' should be examined through three key lenses: a lack of agency, disempowerment and harm. I have also addressed the complexity of investigating language choice in policy and practice documents, given that language choice is rarely explained, even when deliberate, and at times, terms are frequently employed in tandem despite being acknowledged as distinctive terms. Moreover, this research has documented how the victim-survivor binary commonly presented within literature is somewhat overly simplistic, mainly when agency to move towards recovery is exclusively positioned as a hallmark of the 'survivor,' and passivity is tied to the 'victim'.

Overall, this thesis has contributed to the constantly growing debate surrounding language to refer to people with lived experiences of sexual violence. Whilst the train will continue to journey on, I am hopeful that this stop to crack open the overly simplistic victim-survivor binary will help contribute to improving our understanding of the cultural constructions surrounding people with lived experience of sexual violence. Having finished this research, I feel an overwhelming sense of privilege to have not only been entrusted with the experiences and feelings of both victim-survivors and professionals but also to help create insightful art alongside them.

Appendix A – Recruitment posters

WHAT ARE PEOPLE WIITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT'S PERCEPTIONS OF 'VICTIM' AND 'SURVIVOR' LABELS

LAURA HEPWORTH IS RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR AN *ARTS-BASED STUDY* ON VICTIM-SURVIVOR LABLES

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

YOU ARE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD

YOU SELF-IDENTIFY AS HAVING EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

YOU HAVE NOT BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

PLEASE DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS TO
LAURA.J.HEPWORTH@DURHAM.AC.UK
ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

THIS STUDY HAS RECEIVED ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM DURHAM UNIVERSITY

WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURROUNDING 'VICTIM' AND 'SURVIVOR' LABELS

LAURA HEPWORTH IS RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR AN *ARTS-BASED STUDY* ON VICTIM-SURVIVOR LABLES

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

YOU ARE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD

YOU SELF-IDENTIFY AS WORKIG ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS IN A PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

YOU HAVE NOT BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

PLEASE DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS TO
LAURA.J.HEPWORTH@DURHAM.AC.UK
ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

THIS STUDY HAS RECEIVED ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM DURHAM UNIVERSITY

Appendix B – Participant Demographic Table

Pseudonym	Category	Gender and Sexuality	Age	Ethnicity	Class	Neurodiversity/ Disability
Victim-Survivors						
Tiffany	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 30s	Black African	Middle	None
Catherine	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 30s	White	Working	Fibromyalgia
Angelyka	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 20s	Asian	Middle	None
Jenny	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 20s	White	Working	None
Sarah	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	Mixed – White and Black African	Middle	None
Kirsten	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 50s	White	Working	Yes, not disclosed
Robyn	Lived Experience	Non-binary, Queer (they/them)	Late 20s	White	Working	Autistic and generalised anxiety disorder
Louise	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	18-19	White European	Upper-middle	None
Jynx	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Male, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	White	Working	None
Reece	Lived Experience	Transgender Male, Demisexual	Mid 20s	White	Working	Eating disorder
Lili	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	Black Caribbean	Middle	Partially blind
Jasmine	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 30s	Black African-American	Working	None
Vikki	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	18-19	White	Middle	None
Dana	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 20s	White European	Middle	None

Name	Role	Gender/Sexuality	Age	Ethnicity	Class	Disability
Charles	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Male, Heterosexual	18-19	White	Working	None
Kay	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Bisexual	Early 40s	White	Middle	None
Georgina	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	18-19	White	Working	None
Gemma	Lived Experience	Female, Heterosexual	Late 20s	White	Working	None
Emily	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Bisexual	Mid 20s	White	Middle	None
John	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Male, Heterosexual	Early 20s	White	Working	None
Evee	Lived Experience	Non-binary, Queer	Mid 20s	White	Working	Autistic, rheumatoid arthritis
Rose	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Bisexual	Mid 20s	White	Working	Bipolar
Veronica	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 20s	Latinx	Middle	Yes, not disclosed
Libby	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 20s	Asian	Working	None
Tania	Lived Experience	Female, Heterosexual	Late 50s	White	Working	Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
Natasha	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 20s	White	Working	None
Sybil	Lived Experience	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	White	Middle	None
Professionals						
Bradley	Police Officer	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	White	Working	None
Matthew	Police Officer	Cisgendered Male, Gay	Late 20s	White	Middle	None
Mia	Case Worker	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 30s	White	Working	Yes but redacted
Erika	Police Officer	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	Black African	Middle	None
Sharada	Theatre Director, Writer and Activist	Cisgendered Female, Queer	Mid 20s	White	Working	Trichotillomania and Anxiety

Esme	Support Group Co-Ordinator and Activist	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 40s	Mixed White and Asian	Working	None
Kimberly	Counsellor	Cisgendered Female, Gay	Mid 40s	Middle Eastern	Working	None
Athena	Counsellor	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Early 30s	White	Middle	None
Megan	Independent Sexual Violence Advisor	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 30s	White	Working	Anxiety
Anjuli	Doctor at Sexual Assault Referral Centre	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Late 20s	Mixed White and Asian	Middle	Yes but redacted
Beth	Barrister	Cisgendered Female, Heterosexual	Mid 20s	White	Working	None

Appendix C – Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant information sheet

1) Research Project Title (working)

Exploring victim-survivor identities of people with lived experience of sexual assault using arts based methods

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to do so, it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and ask if there is anything that is unclear, or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

2) What is the project's purpose?

This research project aims to investigate how people who have experienced sexual assault feel about the label's 'victim' and 'survivor' in relation to their own identity. Moreover, it is also trying to explore how professionals who encounter service users who have experienced sexual assault feel about the terms 'victim' and 'survivor.'

This research study is being carried out as part of a PhD thesis at Durham University.

3) Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you self-identify as a person who has experienced sexual assault and/ or you identify as a professional who has encountered service users who have lived experience of sexual assault.

4) Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement to via a given consent form. You will still be able to withdraw at any time and you do not have to give a reason for your withdrawal.

5) What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to complete a session with the researcher using arts-based methods. Arts-based methods are research methods where the participant creates an image, or series of images to capture their thoughts, feelings or opinions on a specific topic. The image can be a captured photograph, a staged photograph, or a photo of something you have created (such as a picture, painting, drawing, poem, story etc.). In collaboration with the researcher, you will be asked to create at least two images; with one to show your thoughts on the term 'victim,' and one to display your thoughts on the term 'survivor.' You can opt to create the images alongside the researcher, or the researcher can create them for you to your specifications.

 You will be able to choose the location where these images are created. They can capture a place, showcase a series of objects, display something of significance to you, show an item/s of clothing etc. The content of these images is entirely up to you and the researcher will help guide you through the process. You do not have to be featured in the image at all or have anything in the image that may identify you. After the image is taken, the researcher shall show you the images for your approval and then you can decide if you would like any filters or editing done to them.

 After the photographs are complete, you will be asked to complete a follow-up interview on how you found the process and your thoughts behind the images. The research anticipates that this interview will last approximately thirty minutes.

6) What do I have to do?

Meet with the researcher for an initial session to explain how the process works, discuss your photographs, and attend a follow-up photo-elicitation interview. There are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

If you would like to display specific items or objects in your photographs, please bring these with you to the initial session.

7) What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You do not have to disclose any details surrounding the sexual assault you experienced to the researcher at all. However, creating these images may be anxiety-provoking or uncomfortable for you. Please think carefully about whether you wish to continue to participate in the research.

8) What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will provide some insight into how people who have experienced sexual assault respond to the labels of 'victim' and 'survivor.'

9) What if something goes wrong?

If you have any complaints about this project in the first instance, you can contact either the researcher or the researcher's supervisor. If you feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can also contact the Director of Postgraduate Research for the Department of Sociology at the University of Durham.

 If you have been affected by the research in any way, please do not hesitate to get in contact with the researcher or the researcher's supervisor. If you feel you need to talk to someone outside of this research project, please also see the list of attached agencies that will be able to offer support to you as well.

10) Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information collected about you during the course of this research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Any data collected through your photographs will be stored in a password protected folder. Any data collected from your interview will be stored in a password protected document.

If you chose to appear in your photograph, or display something that may be identifiable, separate written permission shall be obtained from you.

11) Will I be recorded?

Your initial and photo sessions shall not be recorded.

Your follow up interview shall be recorded with your knowledge and consent.

12) What will happen to the results of the research project?

Results of the research project shall be used in the researcher's PhD thesis. It may also be published in a subsequent academic journal or at a research conference. You will not be identified in any report or publication, unless you consented separately to appearing in your photographs.

If you wish to be given a copy of any reports resulting from the research please do not hesitate to ask.

13) Who is organizing and funding this research?

This research is conduced for a PhD thesis in Sociology and Social Policy from Durham University, with funding from the ESRC.

14) Who has ethically reviewed this project?

This project has been ethically approved by the Department of Sociology at Durham University's ethics review procedure. Thus, it has been subsequently endorsed by the ethics procedure of Durham University.

15) Who may I contact for further information?

Researcher

Laura Jane Hepworth, Department of Sociology, 32 Old Elvet, Durham, County Durham, DH1 3JA.

Email: laura.j.hepworth@durham.ac.uk.

PhD Supervisors

Dr Kelly Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: k.m.johnson@durham.ac.uk

Dr Sui-Ting Kong, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: sui.t.kong@durham.ac.uk

Professor Nicole Westmarland, Department of Sociology, 32 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: Nicole.westmarland@durham.ac.uk

Director of Postgraduate Research

Dr Hannah King, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, Durham, County Durham, DH1 3JA. Email: Hannah.king@durham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this form.

Consent Form

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form or the participant information sheet, please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use any data from both my photo-taking sessions, created photographs and follow up photo-elicitation interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have received an information sheet regarding the nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I have had about the study.

I understand that participation involves the creation of at least two photographs with the researcher surrounding the labels 'victim,' and 'survivor' of sexual assault. I will then be invited to complete a follow up photo-elicitation interview regarding the process of creating these photos, as well as my thoughts and feelings about these labels.

I agree to my photo-elicitation interview being audio-recorded.

I agree for the researcher to keep any photographs created for this study.

I understand that I may ask the researcher to view any photographs created for this study at any time.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially, unless I specifically agree to be visible in my photographs. If I do so, I will sign a separate consent form where my permission shall be obtained.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. The researcher shall only refer to me using an agreed pseudonym, as well as modifying any details that may reveal my identity to protect my identity or the identity of the people I discuss.

I understand that disguised extracts from my photo-elicitation interview may be quoted in the researcher's thesis, as well as potentially presented in a conference presentation, an exhibit and published in academic papers.

I understand that my photographs may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, in an exhibit, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities, with or without my permission.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X_____

Signature of Research participant

Date of signature of research participant:

X
Laura Jane Hepworth
Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

Consent Form – existing photo owned by participant

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form or the participant information sheet, please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal.

I confirm that I am the original copyright holder and owner of an image I wish to submit as part of this research.

I give my permission to allow the researcher to use an existing photograph or image either in its entirety, or as a background to create a new photograph, with my permission. I understand that this means I will be giving all copyright usage to the researcher.

I understand that I can request to see the final image, and make modifications to my specification in line with fair copyright usage.

I understand that my photographs may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X _____

Signature of Research participant

Date of signature of research participant:

X _____

Laura Jane Hepworth

Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

Appendix D – Photo Release and External Artist Form

<div style="background-color:#4a5568; color:white; padding:10px;">

Photo release form

</div>

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form or the participant information sheet, please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time before thesis submission without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal.

I confirm that I have seen the final two images that will be submitted as part of the research. I give my permission to allow the research to include them as shown to me.

I agree that if any art pieces or artworks were created for the purpose of producing the photographs, these will become owned by the researcher.

I understand that my photographs may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X
_____

Signature of Research participant

Date of signature of research participant:

X
_____

Laura Jane Hepworth
Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

External artist confidentiality and copyright form,

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to be commissioned as an external artist for this project.

I understand that even if I agree to be commissioned in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal given the sensitive nature of the project. I understand that if I need to withdraw, I will be renumerated for the materials used and paid in accordance with the agreed hourly rate for the work completed up to withdrawal.

I confirm I have received a full brief of the desired art commission before giving my consent to participate, and have had the time to ask any questions needed.

I understand that any details given about the participant themselves that they have provided to help me create the art piece cannot be shared with others, and I agree to not share any details of my participation as an external artist in the project with others.

I understand that due to confidentiality and anonymity, my work in the project will not be credited and my details will be fully anonymised.

I agree to the all copyright and ownership of the final art piece being released to the researcher. I understand that once I have been renumerated, my work will be physically given to the researcher but I may keep any remaining art materials purchased for the project.

I understand that the art piece I create may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X _____
Signature of External Artist

Date of signature of external artist

X _____
Laura Jane Hepworth
Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

Appendix E: Consent form if participants wish to appear in their photographs

Consent Form

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form or the participant information sheet, please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal.

I give my permission to allow the researcher to take a photo in which I am either visible or something that may identify me is visible. I understand that this is my choice and not a requirement for participation in the study.

I understand that I am able to request the researcher to view any photos taken of me or of anything that I am identifiable in.

I understand that I am able to request that any photos that I am visible in or something that may identify me, to be deleted at any time, without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal of the photos.

I understand that my photographs may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X _____
Signature of Research participant

Date of signature of research participant:

X _____
Laura Jane Hepworth
Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

Appendix F – Resource Support Bank

Resource bank

Researcher

Laura Jane Hepworth, PhD Researcher, Department of Sociology, 32 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: laura.j.hepworth@durham.ac.uk

PhD Supervisors

Dr Kelly Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: k.m.johnson@durham.ac.uk

Dr Sui-Ting Kong, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: sui.t.kong@durham.ac.uk

Professor Nicole Westmarland, Department of Sociology, 32 Old Elvet, County Durham, DH1 3JA, email: Nicole.westmarland@durham.ac.uk

Director of Postgraduate Research

Dr Hannah King, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, 29 Old Elvet, Durham, County Durham, DH1 3JA. Email: Hannah.king@durham.ac.uk

NHS Services

Help after rape and sexual assault (NHS Information)

 Call NHS 111 for non-emergency treatment advice

Other Sexual Violence Organizations

Rape crisis helpline: 0808 802 9999; website rapecrisis.org.uk

Victim support helpline: 0333 300 6389; website www.victimsupport.org.uk

The survivor's trust: 0808 801 0818; website thesurvivorstrust.org

Women's aid federation: 0808 2000 247; website womensaid.org.uk

Survivors UK – male rape and sexual abuse support; website survivorsuk.org

The Jyoti Service (specialist for Black, Asian and minority ethnic women): 01274 308 270.

GALOP (specialist for LGT+): 0800 999 5428; live chat https://galop.org.uk/get-help/helplines/

Appendix G: Model Consent Form

Thank you for reading this form. If you have any questions regarding anything on this form please ask the researcher now. By signing below, you are agreeing to the following:

I voluntarily agree to be commissioned as an external model for this project.

I understand that even if I agree to be commissioned in this study now, I am able to withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind or need to provide an explanation for my withdrawal given the sensitive nature of the project. I understand that if I need to withdraw, I will be paid in accordance with the agreed hourly rate for the work completed up to withdrawal.

I confirm I have received a full brief of the desired art piece I would be modelling for before giving my consent to participate, and have had the time to ask any questions needed.

I understand that any details given about the participant themselves that they have provided to help me create the art piece cannot be shared with others, and I agree to not share any details of my participation as an external model in the project with others.

I understand that due to confidentiality and anonymity, my appearance in the project will not be credited and my details will be fully anonymised.

I understand that the photograph I appear in may be displayed in the researcher's thesis, a conference presentation and published in academic papers.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

X
_____
Signature of Research Model

Date of signature of model:

X
_____
Laura Jane Hepworth
Signature of Researcher

Date of signature of researcher:

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