Speaking into Silence: Intersections of Identity, Legality, and Black Women's Decision to Report Sexual Assault on Campus

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Higher Education)
in the University of Michigan
2022

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Dedication

To my great-grandmother, Alberta "Fanny" Clark, who taught me about the strength, resilience, and love Black women share with the world.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the incredible participants who were vulnerable and shared their stories with me. I thank them for their offering of time and trust. I will continue to honor their stories by advocating for social change in higher education and our society.

To my family, I thank them for supporting me and my education. I am lucky to have parents that demonstrated the importance of service and leadership through their professions. To my mother Debra Fields, thank you for your commitment to uplifting generations of Black children as an early childhood educator. To my father Dr. Stan Porter, through your dentistry practice and wellness center in an under resourced community, you showed me what it means to be a leader and serve your community. To my step-mother, Selena Porter I admire your resourcefulness and the ability to meet challenges with grace. To all my parents, I thank you for giving me a legacy of service, leadership, and commitment to uplifting our community. To my siblings, Autumn and Ya-Moni, I am looking forward to sharing that legacy with you. To Marjani Fields, my beloved younger sister, everything I've done, even this dissertation, has been to create a better world for you. I'll never stop fighting for you and cheering you on.

I am incredibly fortunate to learn from and work with my incredible committee members. To Dr. Awilda Rodriguez, you always made me feel supported even when we never officially worked together. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be on your teaching team for Intro to Higher Education. It was a formative experience that prepared me during a crucial time. To Dr. Julie Posselt, you were there from the beginning in my doctoral program interview, and it was

our conversation and all the encouraging ways you responded to my research interests that convinced me to come to the University of Michigan. Working with you and seeing your commitment to understanding how social structures, particularly race and gender, shape graduate education set me up for success. The way you build relationships and use your position to create real change for students is admirable. I value you as a person, a leader in our field, and as a friend.

To Dr. Sandra Levitsky, you helped me seriously consider the social value of being a faculty member. Seeing the way you present students with a sophisticated argument over 12 weeks, inviting them to think about the law, inequality, and social structures in a way they never considered, inspired me. I've seen through the URSA project and the students we worked with how your teaching changes students' lives and the world. I am so appreciative for your friendship and all the times you were my Jewish mother— encouraging me to get in my steps, stay healthy, and take breaks. I owe so much to Dr. Lisa Lattuca for challenging me to think deeply about the literature. As a faculty member and department chair, you have helped so many students of color navigate unforgiving academic systems to realize their potential. I am so grateful for all the times you calmed me down, helped me work through problems in my research and professional life, and your friendship.

To Dr. Elizabeth Armstrong, this dissertation would not be what it is if I had never met you. I'm pretty sure in our first meeting, you told me you would be on my committee. Ever since then, I have enjoyed thinking with you, learning from you, and processing unprecedented events with you over the phone. I thank you for all the ways you've advocated and sponsored me, helping me meet incredible scholars through CASBS at Stanford, the Center for Institutional Courage, and beyond. All the ways I feel prepared as a professional are because of you. You've

seen me through the lowest lows and the highest highs, and I appreciate your ability to be steady when I need it most.

I am so grateful for the financial support from the Rackham Graduate School, CEW+, IRWG, Sweetland Writing Center, LSA, and CSHPE. Being a part of the Rackham Merit Fellowship program helped me transition to the doctoral program and provided consistent social and academic support during my degree. I could not have completed this dissertation without funding from the CSHPE and Rackham Research Grants. I am especially thankful for my relationships with the School of Education, the Department of Sociology, IRWG, and CSHPE. Thank you to Jennifer Eshelman in the Department of Sociology for supporting me as an outside student. Thanks to Linda Rayle, Matthew Stehney, and Baljit Kaur for all your work at CSHPE and supporting students. The most influential educational experiences I had were because of Dr. Betty Overton and Melinda Richardson. Thank you for planning our domestic and international research trips. You greatly expanded my worldview of higher education, and I am excited to carry that tradition to my next role.

There are so many scholars and colleagues who supported and helped me navigate this degree and the job market. Thanks to Dr. Marissa Thompson, Dr. Dominque Baker, and Dr. Charles Davis for your advice during the application and interview process. Special thanks to Dr. Ozan Jaquette for taking time to strategize with me and advocating for me. I am so appreciative to Dr. Jose Loya for walking me through your job market process and cheering me on during mine. To Dr. Rosemary Perez, you've been a cheerleader for me, without me having to ask or do anything to earn your respect. It was an absolute pleasure to teach with you and observe the depth of your compassion and commitment to equity in student affairs.

Thanks to my various writing groups for providing me with structure, feedback and support. Thanks to Emily Wilson, Kris Klein Hernandez, and Kristen Glasener for giving me valuable feedback on my proposal and successful application to the IRWG Community of Scholars. Thanks again to Elizabeth Armstrong for bringing together our dissertation writing and support group, especially during the pandemic. Thank you to Spencer Garrison, Lisa Larance, Morgan Purrier, Nora Johnson, Jared Eno, Mercedez Dunn, and Miriam Gleckman Krut for your feedback and caring attention to detail. It was so helpful to share my drafts, ideas, and musings during our meetings.

I am so grateful to have started the doctoral program with Fernando Furquim, Kristen Glasener, Jandi Kelly, Christian Martell, Erika Mosyjowski, Christina Morton, Meghan Oster, and Gordon Palmer. From campus visit day, to our Friday happy hours, to celebrating finishing QPA, to traveling to conferences together, and so many laughs you all have shown me such love and acceptance. To Christian, I am so grateful to know you and travel with you. Our dissertation writing sessions were validating and helped me push through some tough writing blocks. To my *Fast and Furious* family, Fernando and Meghan, you brought so much fun and light into my life (#nocrust forever). To Kristen Glasener, seeing you grow as a scholar and mother has been a blessing. I am so proud to have you in my life. To my Knights Watch brother Gordon Palmer, thank you for all your support throughout this program, your critical consciousness, and unwavering friendship.

Ann Arbor is so full of wonderful people who made my life during the PhD program special. Thanks to Adrianne Madias and the Barre Code Crew for making a space for me to care for myself and feel strong in my body. To Dr. Joseph Myers, Dr. Elizabeth Cardinale, Dr. Amelita Maslach, Michael Kristovic, and Lily Gershenson for attending to my physical and

mental health these last eight years. Thanks to Deanna Coats and Kristen Morris for caring for my hair and braids, which helped me be more productive and active. To Stuart Marley and my Real Irish Travel companions, our trip was so nourishing to my soul and gave me the last push I needed. To my trivia team Eleanor Martin, Erin Kwederis, Alex Minghine, Matt Vedrin, and Dan Delmonaco—having our weekly hangouts made Ann Arbor truly my home. Having your friendship and talking about regular things kept me sane. To Danielle Chiaramonte, I'm so glad we had each other in grad school and could escape for Broadway and film festival trips. To Dan Delmonaco, you've been an amazing friend and source of wonderful conversation, cultural criticism, and my favorite person for all kinds of buffoonery. I would not have made it through the pandemic lockdown without Amanda Richman. Thank you for dragging me into the pit of your obsessions and being kind. Finally, to my "best, good friend" Matt Vedrin, I'm so lucky to know you. Whether we're talking about the nature of research or watching *Forrest Gump* for the 100th time, I have never felt so cared for, accepted, and valued.

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Abstract

Black women experience higher rates of unwanted sex, assault, and harassment, yet rarely report these incidents to police or campus officials (Slatton & Richard, 2020; Washington, 2001). To date, most research on campus sexual assault reporting focuses on white, heterosexual, cis-gendered women at elite institutions (Brubaker et al., 2017; Sabina & Ho, 2014). Further, most research attributes low reporting rates to individual, micro-level processes of survivors feeling shame, minimizing the incident, and internalizing rape myths (Harris et al., 2020; Ryan, 2011; Sabina & Ho, 2014). Research on Black women's reasons for not reporting identify structural racism *and* sexism, pressures to protect the Black community from sexualized stereotypes, and identity related expectations to be the "Strong Black Woman" (Harris, 2020; McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001).

In this study I examined factors that influenced Black women and non-binary students' decision to report sexual assault to police and/or university officials. I used a conceptual framework that combines intersectionality and the theory of legal consciousness. Instead of examining the effects of racism or sexism in isolation, intersectionality holds that these systems of power interlock and shape each other (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Black women, being marginalized by anti-Black racism and sexism, experience particular forms of exclusion at the intersection of racism *and* sexism (P. H. Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). The theory of legal consciousness explores how people perceive the legal system and use concepts associated with the law to

interpret everyday experiences, particularly when they are harmed (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Marshall, 2003).

I conducted 46 trauma informed narrative interviews with Black women and nonbinary survivors of sexual assault during college or graduate school. I found gendered racism pervaded Black women's experiences of higher education. In their everyday experiences, Black women and non-binary students were made to feel invisible and unwelcome by white institutional members. This gendered racism manifested in frequent experiences of racialized sexual harassment in the form of unwanted sexual touching, advances, and coercion. Gendered racism on campus and racialized sexual harassment structured the sexual vulnerability Black women and nonbinary participants experienced, leaving them unprotected from sexual assault across campus contexts.

Participants described sexual assault exposure in their attempts to date, find social support, in academic departments, and at parties. Participants anticipated two possible and devastating outcomes from reporting sexual assault: being dismissed by police or activating an overly punitive legal process against a Black man. Black women described a legal narrative in their communities that demanded they protect Black men from sexual assault allegations but found no legal narratives that supported their need for protection. This double bind silenced 34 participants by discouraging them from reporting or disclosing assaults. Some Black women and nonbinary students conflated university Title IX responses with the legal system, finding both untrustworthy. Five out of six participants who reported to police were blamed by officers using gendered racist assumptions to invalidate them. University complaint and hearing processes re-traumatized the eleven participants who tried to use them.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on intersectionality and sexual violence, finding Black women and non-binary students evaluated reporting options through an intersectional lens. This research offers recommendations for keeping survivors in school, promoting spaces where Black women and non-binary students feel safe, and devising strategies for combatting gendered racism and assault on campuses.

Chapter 1 The Limitations of Campus Sexual Assault Reporting Literature to Explain Low Reporting Rates Among Black Women

Large scale prevalence studies of sexual assault on campus consistently find between 20-25% of women are sexually assaulted during their time in college (Brubaker et al., 2017; Cantor et al., 2020; Muehlenhard et al., 2017). Student sexual assault survivors rarely report to police, with rates ranging from 2% - 11% (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Survivors also rarely formally report to their universities (Sabina & Ho, 2014). The most recent Association of American Universities (AAU) Campus Climate survey found only 25% of students who were forcibly raped reported to their campus Title IX office (Cantor et al., 2020). Black women experience sexual violence at higher rates than white women and report to formal authorities at lower rates than white women (Brubaker et al., 2017; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Slatton & Richard, 2020). Additionally, the sexual harm Black women experience is also racialized, meaning they are targeted based on racist and sexist stereotypes about Black women's sexuality, bodily autonomy, and physical features (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; P. H. Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Gómez, 2022).

Research on campus sexual assault has yet to fully account for why Black women in higher education experience sexual harm at greater rates or why Black women survivors rarely report (Harris et al., 2020). Studies of campus sexual assault and reporting tend to focus on white, heterosexual, cis-gender women at elite institutions (Brubaker et al., 2017; Harris et al., 2020; Sabina & Ho, 2014). Of the 22 studies on college student reporting I reviewed, 14 employed samples ranging from 54% to 96% white students. A few studies examined reporting

sexual assault by Black women at HBCUs (Barrick et al., 2012; Krebs et al., 2011; Lindquist et al., 2013, 2016). However, these articles did not attend to the racial and gendered context of assault or reporting at these campuses (Grundy, 2021; Harriot, 2018; Harris et al., 2020). The erasure of Black women's experiences from research translates to higher education policy responses aligned with the interests of dominant groups, increasing the harm to Black women survivors (Brubaker, 2019; Harris, 2020)

The focus on white women in Title IX research and policy is no accident. The application of anti-discrimination law isolates dimensions of identity insisting plaintiffs demonstrate "but for" their race OR gender (not both), they would not have experienced discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). That calculation is impossible for Black women, a social position subjugated by race and gender (P. H. Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, the group forwarded as most affected by sexual violence and consequently protected by Title IX, a gender discrimination law, is white, heterosexual, middle-class women. If race is discussed, focus shifts to Black men accused of sexual assault, as discourses of racial discrimination center Black men (Bazelon, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Black women's experiences are systematically erased from the narrative and the law (Crenshaw, 1989). This dissertation aims to document the experiences and consequences of this erasure of Black women in the context of campus assault.

The Study

This study aims to understand the factors that influence Black women's decisions to report sexual violence to their university Title IX process. Using qualitative methods (trauma informed narrative inquiry), I investigated how Black women students made the decision to report or not, examining how their intersecting identities and the campus context for reporting influenced their decision. Using an intersectional framework and theory of legal consciousness,

this dissertation examines how power, privilege, and oppression shape the reporting decisions, survivor narratives, and justice agendas available to and used by Black women.

Research Questions

- What factors influence Black women's decision to report (or not) sexual violence to the university's Title IX office?
- How do Black women narrate their response to sexual violence, employing ideas of the law, consciousness of their social location, and intersectional areas of privilege and disadvantage into their decision to report (or not)?
- What institutional practices or experiences are salient for Black women in formulating their legal consciousness around Title IX and sexual violence?

Review of Campus Sexual Assault Reporting Studies

Rape bears a direct relationship to all of the existing power structures in a given society. This relationship is not a simple mechanical one, but rather involves complex structures reflecting the complex interconnectedness of race, gender, and class oppression which characterize that society.

-Dr. Angela Davis (1985, p. 9)

This systematic literature review aims to show how research on reporting campus sexual assault has erased Black women's experiences through sampling and the absence of theoretical frameworks that center systems of power. What is produced from this literature are individual, micro-level explanations (Harris et al., 2020) of why survivors do not report. The uncritical examinations of reporting trends also reinforced racist and sexist narratives about sexual assault. Literature examining racial differences often isolates the effects of race from those of gender and groups Black women with all women of color, obscuring their unique experiences. However, research focused on Black women, mostly outside of higher education, suggests the reticence to report is related to institutional racism and identity related pressures to keep silent about rape in the Black community (McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001).

Factors Influencing Low Reporting of Campus Sexual Assault

The "real rape" stereotype pervades media, prevention education, and campus safety programming. Described by Ryan (2011)the "real rape" scenario "involves a sudden and physically violent attack on an unsuspecting woman, usually by a stranger" (Ryan, 2011, p. 776). The "real rape" stereotype stresses a sexual assault must violent, causing visible injury to the victim. For a person to be viewed as a legitimate victim, they must be "innocent" and not engaged in any activity that compromises their judgement (alcohol or drug use). Irving (2007) argued that sociohistorical definitions of Black women as "sexually deviant, lascivious, and easy," makes them illegible as victims in a "real rape" scenario (p. 69). Instead, the prototypical victim is a white woman (P. H. Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989; Irving, 2007). The sexually deviant stranger in the "real rape" scenario is also racialized, constructing Black men as the profile of perpetrator. Despite evidence that most sexual assaults are committed by people known to the victim and of the same racial background, the "real rape" stereotype influences how people make meaning of sexual violence (Ryan, 2011). The literature on sexual assault reporting is similarly organized around the "real rape" scenario, as assaults with injury, sober victims, and stranger or interracial assailants are more likely to be reported.

Table 1. Characteristics of Incidents and Campus Reporting Patterns

Physical Injury	Women students significantly more likely to report incidents with evidence of injury to police (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011), campus officials (Fisher et al., 2003), and health providers (Amar & Gennaro, 2005).
Identity of Perpetrator	Incidents committed by a stranger were more likely to be reported to police (Fisher et al., 2003; Marchetti, 2012) and to campus officials (Spencer et al., 2017b) Interracial incidents were more likely to be reported (Fisher et al., 2003)
Alcohol	When alcohol is involved, women rarely reported to the police (Fisher et al., 2003; Lindquist et al., 2013; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011) or the Title IX office (Holland & Cortina, 2017)

Studies measuring factors associated with reporting align with aspects of the real rape stereotype. As shown in Table 1, three studies found women students were more likely to report incidents of sexual violence when the incident involved physical injury (Amar & Gennaro, 2005; Fisher et al., 2003; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Though upwards of 85% of rapes on college campuses are committed by someone known to the survivor (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011), the narrative of stranger rape influences how students view and respond to sexual violence. Three studies found reporting to the police and campus officials increased when the attacker was a stranger (Fisher et al., 2003; Marchetti, 2012; Spencer, Mallory, et al., 2017). Holland and Cortina (2017) found that women students in their study felt it would be unacceptable to report to university cases involving known perpetrators or strangers. Researchers found women rarely

reported incidents to police or campus officials if either party used alcohol or drugs (Fisher et al., 2003; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Lindquist et al., 2013; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011). Three studies examined hypothetical reporting, measuring student likelihood to report to formal entities. Orchowski et al. (2009) found students more often felt they would report to police, campus authorities, or health centers in a hypothetical situation. Participants rated reporting to police higher than confidential supports. Two studies found students associated characteristics of the "real rape" scenario (assault by a stranger or being sober) with higher reporting intentions (Deming et al., 2013; Moore & Baker, 2016). The alignment of the results with the "real rape" stereotype suggests it influences how students make meaning of assault.

Emotional Reactions to the Incident

Studies of reporting repeatedly connected negative emotions with low levels of disclosing sexual violence to formal authorities. Feeling shame, embarrassment, fear, or self-blame frequently surfaced as psychological barriers to reporting sexual violence (Demers et al., 2018; Moore & Baker, 2016). Five studies cited negative emotions, including fear of retaliation (Fisher et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2017), shame and embarrassment (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Spencer, Stith, et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2007; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011) or self-blame (Holland & Cortina, 2017) as reasons for not reporting to police or campus authorities.

The problem with many of these studies is that authors do not always clearly distinguish between how survivors feel about assaults with how they feel about the prospect of making an official report. It is possible that anticipation of interacting with authorities generates negative emotions somewhat independently of emotions generated by the violence experienced. Few studies measured and controlled for how survivors perceived the police or campus supports. Understanding how survivors perceive reporting authorities is vital to uncovering why reporting

is so low. Socio-legal theorists Ewick and Silbey (1998) argued the law "refigured" how people made meaning of injurious experiences, turning mundane events into "harassment" or minimizing brutal violence of a spouse by labeling it "a domestic dispute" (p. 16). In this way, the law can change how a person makes meaning of a sexual assault that may increase or decrease their likelihood of reporting.

Minimization of the Incident

Articles often argued women did not report because they rated the victimization as not serious enough to report (Demers et al., 2018; Holland & Cortina, 2017). In a regional study, students most frequently described not reporting because the assault was "not a big deal" and "not serious" enough to report (Demers et al., 2018). In a national study of college women, Krebs et al. (2007) found 56% of survivors of physically forced assault and 67% of incapacitated assault survivors stated the incident was not serious enough to report. Similarly, 68% of women did not report sexual victimization to the police because they thought the incident was not "not a crime" (Zinzow & Thompson, 2011). Most women (81.7%) in Fisher et al.'s (2003) national study rated "not serious enough" as reason for not reporting sexual violence to police. The severity of violence did not influence the frequency in which women selected "not serious enough to report" as a reason in Fisher et al. (2003). Across victimization types, 70% of rapes, 79% of sexual coercion, 85% of sexual contact, and 78% of threats were associated with rating of "not serious enough" (Fisher et al., 2003). For university reporting, 64 of 232 sexual assault survivors endorsed "it was not a big enough deal" to explain why they did not report to campus authorities (Spencer, Mallory, et al., 2017). Most of these studies (Demers et al., 2018; Fisher et al., 2003; Krebs et al., 2007; Zinzow & Thompson, 2011) used survey research and provided "not that bad" or not serious enough as an option. Therefore, it is unclear whether students

endorsed this statement because of how they felt about the incident or how they anticipated legal authorities would view the assault during reporting.

In their study, Holland and Cortina (2017) offered more context to why women minimized sexual assault. In some instances, participants minimized the impact of the assault, "feeling as though the outcomes were not bad enough to warrant or justify using formal campus supports" (Holland & Cortina, 2017, p. 56). Survivors perceived campus supports as only acceptable to use if one suffered extreme trauma and psychological impact. Women were, in a way, making room for others who suffered more to have access to services. Other times, women minimized the incident itself. Some survivors specifically stated they did not report to their campus because the incident did not include vaginal penetration, which they deemed more severe than unwanted sexual contact or attempted rape (Holland & Cortina, 2017). In minimizing assaultive behaviors, women felt their experiences of sexual assault were commonplace, therefore not of interest to campus agencies. One survivor shared, "It happens all the time. If people reported all instances of sexual harassment that take place at fraternities, the university would never be finished investigating" (Holland & Cortina, 2017, p. 56). Holland and Cortina (2017) acknowledged the influence of rape culture on campus and how reporting options were publicized as factors in why survivors minimized assault and did not report. The tendency to minimize sexual violence is more of a cultural response. As Stacey May Fowles articulated in the collection of essays *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* (Gay, 2018), "the survivor who was raped at knifepoint feels guilty she has taken up the space of a survivor who was raped at gunpoint. Everyone believes there is suffering worse than her own" (p. 285). Across the spectrum of sexual violence, women are conditioned to minimize their experiences, resulting in low rates of reporting and help-seeking.

The minimization of sexual violence may also result from inequality in the sexual domain (McClelland, 2010). In a study comparing sexual satisfaction across gender and sexual orientation, women assigned negative emotions to the low end of sexual satisfaction, including "emotionally sad," "pain," and "degradation" (McClelland, 2010, p. 647). By comparison, the men surveyed never mentioned negative emotions or fears of harm, only referencing less satisfying sexual outcomes. McClelland (2010) wrote:

> intimate matters are often examined at the individual level, using theories and methods that strip the social from view…theoretical and methodological models are needed which allow us to consider the individuals as social agent—even as they inhabit and enact intimate experiences" (p. 672).

The campus reporting literature lacks theoretical frameworks that account for power and inequality (Harris et al., 2020; Sabina & Ho, 2014b). If social inequality influences how people imagine, act, and make sense of consensual sex (McClelland, 2010), inequalities will certainly influence how survivors evaluate sexual victimization.

Characteristics of the Reporting Options

Several studies did measure reporting rates in relation to perceptions of police or university officials. James and Lee (2015) found in their majority White sample (86%) that satisfaction with the police was positively associated with the likelihood to report. Also, surveying mainly White students, Spencer et al. (2017) found women who had received training about campus policies and procedures and had positive perception of campus climate were six times more likely to initiate a report with their university. Women students who were suspicious of formal reporting options, believed reporting would achieve nothing or result in further negative consequences (Holland & Cortina, 2017, Spencer et al. 2017). Black women college students cited concerns police would disrespect or blame rape victims for their attacks as reasons

for not reporting (Neville & Pugh, 1997). Thompson et al. (2007) found more women anticipated they would be blamed for sexual assault by police when compared with physical violence.

Holland and Cortina (2017) offered the most comprehensive view of how women students view formal reporting options on campus. Holland and Cortina (2017) surveyed 840 women about sexual assault and reporting while they were students at a large, public, and well-resourced university. The analytical sample consisted of 284 women with demographics as follows: 71.8% White, 11.3% Asian American, 8.1% multiracial, 5.3% Black, 2.1% Middle Eastern, 0.7% Latina, and 0.7% selected another race/ethnicity. Most of the sample identified as heterosexual (77.5%) and were first year students (68.9%). Over a third of the participants had experienced one form of sexual violence ranging from unwanted sexual contact (48.9%) to completed rape (24.3%). Only 5.6% of women made formal reports to the university. Holland and Cortina (2017) coded qualitative responses from an open answer section of the survey asking women to detail why they did not report or seek help from Title IX office, the sexual assault crisis center, or a resident assistant. In contrast to most studies in this review, this approach allowed students to express concerns that could not be captured by a list of options decided by researchers (Holland & Cortina, 2017). It also provides insight on unique and specific concerns women have about the different reporting options available, instead of initiating a Title IX grievance with having confidential conversation with a person at a campus crisis center.

Comparing responses across formal reporting options, Holland and Cortina (2017) demonstrated women perceived specific barriers for each reporting option. Participants thought campus resources were only available to those in immediate crisis, although the campus did not have a limitation on when someone could report. Nonetheless, that perception prevented some women from seeking help (Holland & Cortina, 2017). When discussing why they did not report

to the Title IX office, women shared they anticipated negative or unwanted consequences from reporting. Participants worried reporting to the Title IX office would adversely affect their social networks, particularly when the assailant was a friend. Some women referenced the "real rape" stereotypes and explained drinking lowered the chance of being believed. Some women also shared they did not report because they coped or handled the situation themselves. Disclosing to informal supports (friends and trusted adults), ignoring the event, and using defensive strategies to prevent escalation were alternatives to making a formal report (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Women in Holland and Cortina's (2017) study wanted to disclose to someone with personal familiarity and confidentiality. Even though all participants lived in university housing, many did not feel close enough to their resident assistants or other staff to disclose such a personal and traumatic incident. Some women also raised concerns about reporting to housing staff because of a lack of confidentiality. On this campus all housing staff members were Responsible Employees who had to report any instances of sexual violence to the Title IX coordinator or similar university official (Holland et al., 2018). Women aware of this policy avoided talking to housing staff to prevent compelled disclosure, which could possibly lead to a formal grievance procedure they did not want (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Holland, et al., 2018).

Racial Differences

When campus sexual assault reporting studies include race, they tended to conflate the experiences of all women of color and compare these experiences with those of White women, producing counter-intuitive and contradictory results. Surprisingly, Fisher et al. (2003) found incidents involving Black women were more often reported when compared to White women. On the contrary, Wolitzky-Taylor et al. (2011) found White women were most likely to report to the police, compared with college women of all other racial backgrounds. Thompson et al.

(2007) found non-white [sic] women were significantly less likely to report because of fears of being blamed for their assaults by the police. Though not statistically significant, non-white [sic] women were 57% less likely than white women to report to the university (Spencer, Mallory, et al., 2017). Measuring likelihood to report to the police among college men and women, James and Lee (2015) found gender and race were the only significant predictors for reporting, with women more likely to report and "non-white" students less likely to report. To understand the racialized and gendered effects on reporting, an intersectional approach is needed.

Four studies were conducted at HBCUs, but researchers drew few conclusions about the racialized and gendered context of reporting at HBCUs. In Amar and Gennaro (2005) researchers surveyed Black women at a private HBCU and a private PWI, recruiting a convenience sample of 863 students, 70.5% Black women. Curiously this study did not compare reporting patterns for Black women at the HBCU and the PWI. Lindquist et al. (2013; 2016), Barrick et al. (2012), and Krebs et al. (2011) examined sexual assault at HBCUs, yet these studies suffer from limitations in the sampling and lack substantive inferences regarding sexual assault at HBCUs. Both studies were an out-growth of the Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study (Krebs et al., 2007), conducted in between 2005-2006 with a sample that had 66.9% White women and 16.2% Black women. In 2008 the same team conducted a similar survey at four HBCUs. Initially, researchers randomly selected 1000 women at each institution, but response rates were too low. Trying again, researchers invited all 15,891 eligible HBCU women to participate, yielding a response rate of 24.9%. The measures were like the original CSA (Krebs et al., 2007) and lacked questions about culturally specific barriers to reporting(Donovan & Williams, 2002; Neville & Pugh, 1997). As McNair and Neville (1996) noted, Black women may use general coping strategies, reflected in the questions on the CSA, and "race or cultural-related" strategies missing

from surveys (p. 3). The solution is not to "just add Black women" to the study of campus sexual assault, but rather to use theoretical frameworks that center power and inequality to understand how Black women's responses are shaped by the intersection of race, gender and class that privileges some women and silences others.

Centering Black Women's Voices

Qualitative research and literature reviews by scholars of color have done the work of centering Black women to identify unique barriers to formal reporting. These factors include structural factors, intergroup factors, intragroup factors, and identity factors.

Structural Barriers

Black women often report structural deterrents to formal reporting, referencing the ways racism, sexism, and classism are embedded in legal and social service systems. During slavery and Jim Crow, Black women were situated as property, non-citizens, and un-rapeble (P. H. Collins, 2000; Freedman, 2013). The sexual victimization of Black women by white men resulted in minimal or no legal consequences (Donovan & Williams, 2002; McGuire, 2011; McNair & Neville, 1996; Tillman et al., 2010). Currently, punishments for the sexual victimization of Black women are less severe compared to when white women are victimized (Crenshaw, 1991; Tillman et al., 2010). Black women who experience gender violence are more than White women to be criminalized and punished (B. E. Richie, 2012).

Black women often point to institutional racism in the legal system to explain why they did not report. Black communities, particularly economically oppressed ones, are targeted by the police and courts with hyper surveillance, over-policing, quick escalation to lethal force, higher sentences, and deprivation of rights through the carceral state (Alexander, 2012; Butler, 2017;

Crenshaw, 1991; Long & Ullman, 2013; B. E. Richie, 2012). Police officers' rape and assault Black women, exerting domination in arrest and help seeking situations (Richie, 2012). Black women survivors in Washington's (2001) study described police as "globally out of control," "insensitive and unresponsive to violence in the Black community," and generally "untrustworthy" (p. 1279). Washington (2001) commented, "Respondents in this study were nearly unanimous in their belief that the criminal justice system was actively hostile to them, as individuals and as members of a broader racial community" (p. 1279).

Social and medical services were also deemed untrustworthy and insensitive by Black women. Black women discussed experiences of racism in interactions with social services providers (Long & Ullman, 2013). Black women expressed skepticism and distrust of rape crisis centers managed by white women (Tillman, et al., 2010; Washington, 2010). Crenshaw (1991) noted rape crisis centers are often unable to address the needs of women of color survivors, who may need housing or other economic resources as opposed to legal services. Funding priorities for survivor services are set along "standards of need" of white middle-class women (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1250). Therefore, Black women survivors did not view these resources as meeting their needs (Washington, 2001). Some survivors in Washington's (2001) study expressed anger and resentment towards white feminist activists, feeling gender equality and anti-violence movements erased Black women's contributions.

Inter/Intra Group Barriers

Racism creates multiple pressures on Black women to stay silent about sexual violence in the Black community (Long & Ullman, 2013; McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001). Black women shared legitimate fears that reporting a Black man for sexual violence will lead to more state violence against the Black community (McGuffey, 2013). Black women did not want to

contribute to stereotypes of deviant sexuality of Black people (McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001). One participant in McGuffey's (2013) study commented, "Everything we do is under a microscope and every bad thing that happens is seen as confirmation of a stereotype of Black people" (McGuffey, 2013, p.123). Black women are charged as cultural protectors, upholding the dignity of the race and shielding Black men from the criminal legal system (Long & Ullman, 2013; McGuffey, 2013; Richie, 2012; Washington, 2001). Breaking this norm could elicit the label of race traitor (McGuffey, 2013). Black women are caught between political interests of feminism and anti-racism, unable to fully turn to either for recognition of racist repercussions of feminist sexual violence policy or gender violence in racial liberation movements (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis et al., 2022; Potter, 2013; B. Richie, 2012; B. E. Richie, 2000). Black feminists throughout history have pushed against this segmenting of race and gender, innovating the core principles and concepts of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, Potter, 2013).

Identity Related Barriers

Black women also face identity barriers to reporting, imposed by racialized and gendered stereotypes, described as "controlling images" by Patricia Hill Collins (2000). The Jezebel trope, rooted in White supremacist agenda to justify the rape of enslaved women, remains a potent image to invalidate Black women's victimization (P. H. Collins, 2000; McNair & Neville, 1996; McGuffey, 2013). Donovan and Williams (2002) explained Black women suffer a "double dose of rape myths" (p. 98) with the combination of gendered victim blaming leveraged generally and the specific racialized and gendered stereotype of black women's hyper-sexuality. McGuffey (2013) found Black women survivors articulated, without prompting from researchers, how the image of the Jezebel influenced both the characteristics of their assault and decision not to disclose. Recalling their assaults, women described instances where assailants deployed the

stereotype during the assault, saying women wanted rough, violent sex (McGuffey, 2013). Survivors also anticipated the victim blaming consequences of this controlling image. McGuffey (2013) concluded, “Fearing that they would not be believed since Black women are publicly portrayed as sexually licentious, many survivors used this controlling image to justify why they did not disclose their assault to authorities “(p. 120).

The controlling image of the superwoman offered a mixed bag of empowerment and silencing. This image portrays Black women as mentally, physically, and spiritually sturdy, able to overcome personal challenges, while also holding up the community (P. H. Collins, 2000; McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001). Some Black women found pride in this image, using it to cope privately (McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001). In some instances, Black women were told to “get over it” when they disclosed sexual assault (McGuffey, 2013). Washington (2001) found being the strong black woman empowered some participants but did not necessarily aid their healing and allow them to tell their story.

Chapter 2 Intersectional Socio-Legal Framework for Studying Black Women's Reporting Decisions

Research reviewed on campus sexual assault reporting obscures the multiple, interlocking inequalities shaping Black women's experiences with sexual violence, the legal system, and higher education. To understand how Black women make meaning of victimization and the formal options to address it, theories that center power and reveal how people make meaning of the law after experiencing harm are required. Therefore, Black feminist thought and legal consciousness theory form the basis of this study.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought emerges from a multiply subjugated social position within primarily (though not exclusively) racial, gender, and class systems (P. H. Collins, 2000). In her seminal work, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) writes that Black women's oppression is deeply embedded in the construction of the United States, working through economic, political, and ideological disenfranchisement. Black women were essential to the production and maintenance of US capitalism through slavery (P. H. Collins, 2000). This economic exploitation continued through low wage domestic work and persists today in the unrecognized emotional labor consigned to Black women, including in higher education (Harlow, 2003; Porter et al., 2018). Collins's (2000) term controlling images describes the "ideological dimension" of Black women's oppression. Controlling images are rooted in white supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist interests to justify and normalize the oppression of Black women (P. H. Collins, 2000)

Collins (2000) argued Black women have a distinctive and shared understanding of racism and sexism, based on their social position at the bottom of both systems of power. This affords Black women with a unique knowledge of how oppression works in general and specifically related to being Black and a woman. Collins (2000) contributed the concept of the matrix of domination, which demonstrates how multiple forms of oppression are interconnected and mutually constitutive forces shaping social life. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and ablism rely on the creation of "oppositional binaries" that designate one group as privileged and the others as deviant, less deserving, and inferior (P. H. Collins, 2000, p. 78). Within the matrix of domination, Black women are situated in the "inferior half" of both the racial and gender hierarchies (P. H. Collins, 2000, p. 79). Therefore, Black women experience social deficits that are like Black men and white women, but also unique forms of discrimination and violence where racism and sexism converge (P. H. Collins, 1998, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an analytical and social justice organizing framework to understand – and challenge – the matrix of domination (Cho et al., 2013; P. H. Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Potter, 2013). Instead of conceptualizing marginalization along a single dimension, intersectionality recognizes racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other systems of domination interlock and shape each other (P. H. Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Especially relevant to this study, Crenshaw (1989; 1991) centered the case of sexual violence against women of color to explain how intersectionality works at the structural, political, and representational levels. Structural intersectionality describes the ways a single-axis approach to sexual violence by the legal and social service systems ignored and intensified violence against women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). Single-axis approaches favor the most privileged members of

social groups. Crenshaw (1989; 1991) argued the gender only approach to sexual violence produced policies and practices geared to middle class white women, erasing violence against women of color.

Political intersectionality traces how anti-racist and feminist organizations often use a single-identity framework, erasing Black women's experiences. Within feminist organizations. white members fail to reckon with race, pursuing strategies that "replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1251). Beth Richie (2012) chronicled this in *Arrested Justice*, tracing how movements for ending violence against women colluded with the "Tough on Crime" agenda and increased state surveillance of communities of color. Black women also experience sexism in Black liberation movements (Crenshaw, 1991). Political agendas centering cis-gender Black men that do not recognize how Black women are also targeted by state violence reflect how gender creates intraracial hierarchies (P. H. Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 2012). The stereotype of Black man as rapists and the persecution of Black men for false accusations of rape by White women made "the primary beneficiaries of the Black community's concern over racism and rape, Black men" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1269). Black women often straddle agendas for racial and gender equity, struggling for these movements to see them fully as Black women (Potter, 2013).

Representational intersectionality refers to how controlling images (P. H. Collins, 2000) condone and excuse the violence Black women experience (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) examined sexually explicit rap lyrics, often containing descriptions of raping Black women. Crenshaw (1991) argued the censorship of rap was not motivated by concern for Black women, rather white leaders worried about the potential threat to White women by Black men gleefully rapping about rape. Intersectionality, across these levels of analysis demonstrates how racism

and sexism co-construct each other to oppress Black women, isolate them from potential allies, and normalize the violence Black women experience.

Applications to Campus Sexual Violence

The matrix of domination and intersectionality provide powerful analytical tools for understanding reporting campus sexual assault. On its face, the literature on campus sexual assault reporting has not accounted for Black women (Harris et al., 2020). However, the need for intersectionality is deeper than a failure to acknowledge the "additional" issue of race through including Black women in studies. Approaches rooted in a gender only or race only analysis privileges White women and Black men respectively, hiding how the intersection of racism and sexism structure the sexual violence Black women experience. To help theorize how Black women make meaning of sexual assaults and reporting decisions, I will use the theory of legal consciousness.

Legal Consciousness

The study of legal consciousness examines how legal ideas, norms, and relational dynamics become embedded in everyday interactions and situations (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). The intellectual origins of legal consciousness arose from the enduring question of why people continue to rely on the legal system despite its established failings. By shifting the focus of study to everyday interactions from official legal actors, Ewick and Silbey (1998) observed people employed legal themes, ideas, and doctrines as they narrated their lives. Based on narrative interviews with 430 people, Ewick and Silbey (1998) found people drew on the law as an interpretive framework to describe interpersonal conflicts and harmful experiences, reinforcing

the importance of the law outside of formal institutions of courts and police. Three concepts are necessary to understand this theory: legality, the law, and legal consciousness.

Legality

Legality refers to features of social life that originate with the law and are deployed in everyday interactions and decisions (Ewick and Silbey, 1998). Ewick and Silbey (1998) argued legality "makes us all legal agents" (p. 20) as we draw on legal concepts, language, authorities, and procedures to interpret and move through the social world. Legality consists of schemas and resources. Schemas are interpretive frameworks, such as cultural codes, discourses, logics, and expectations derived from the law (Berrey & Nielsen, 2007; Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005). Concepts like guilt or innocence, conventions associated with contract relations, and procedures perceived as fair emanate from legal sources and are operationalized in non-legal settings. Pithy sayings like "possession is nine tenths of the law" or "you can't fight city hall" communicate legal meanings. We apply schemas in everyday life to interpret our experiences, navigate social relations, and understand our sense of self in relation to the world (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Legality also refers to resources— material advantages of power— unequally distributed in society. Ewick and Silbey (1998) listed education, experience with the law, money, property, social networks, and physical strength as resources employed in legal contests. Legality as a "ongoing structure of social action," is therefore deeply intertwined with other social structures, like race and gender (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Legality is a way of making meaning of the world, experiences, and social relations and a "toolkit" (Swidler, 1986) for interacting in the world.

The Law

Ewick and Silbey (1998) use the term "the law" to refer to aspects of legality used by and/or within formal institutions. They also found participants described the law in varied and contradictory ways. At times, the law appeared abstract, distant, like a "transcendent force governing human affairs" (Ewick & Silbey, 1998, p. 15). Images like Lady Justice represent this view of the law as unbiased, fair, and powerful. Participants also described the as a game or contest based on who had the most resources and social status (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Lastly, the law represented a powerful set of interests to participants who felt cowed by rules and arbitrary acts of injustice (Ewick & Silbey, 1998).

Legal Consciousness

Ewick and Silbey (1998) conceptualized legal consciousness as a cultural practice and process that "both reflects and forms social structures" (Silbey, 2005, p. 334). Legal consciousness is the participation in legality—instances when people utilize legal terms, concepts, and resources to make meaning of and respond to an experience. Drawing on Swidler's conception of culture, Kostiner (2003) stated studies of legal consciousness are less concerned with what people think or do, but rather "what they 'think with' (p. 330). In other words, legality is what people think and act "with" (schemas and resources) and legal consciousness is how they narrate and act on those interpretations (storytelling and social action). People do not create novel aspects of legality, but rather draw from it. Conceptions of legality are constrained by what has already been institutionalized within the law or previous social action (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005). Legal consciousness can be analyzed through the stories people construct and how they arrange aspects of the law, their personal background, and social context (Ewick & Silbey, 1998). Whether faithful to the law's intent, positive, or critical, legal consciousness — the participation in legality— reinforces the hegemonic power of law over social relations by

continuing to regulate our beliefs, self-perceptions, decisions, and interactions outside courtrooms (Ewick & Silbey, 1998).

Ewick and Silbey (1998) found three narrative types associated the images of law described above. In the first narrative "Before the Law," the law is imagined as a distant, powerful, an elevated force which operates by fixed rules with neutral actors. This consciousness idealizes legal institutions and asserts the law as a legitimate force in everyday life. "With the Law" describes an orientation of the law as a game, based on social resources and malleable rules. People with a narrative dubbed "Against the Law" see it operating according to powerful interests, flawed by human weakness, and as a site for resistance (Ewick & Silbey, 2003, 1998). This legal consciousness is cynical and suspicious of the law, legal representatives, and legal institutions.

Legal Consciousness, Social Identity, and Possibilities of Black Feminist Thought

Ewick and Silbey (1998) found people in marginalized groups (the poor, people of color, women, persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly) more often narrated a legal consciousness "Against the Law." People in these groups reported numerous incidents of marginalization and injustice, rarely seeing their interests and lives reflected in the law. People from these groups more often resisted, avoided, or saw no opportunity to triumph in a legal contest. This finding is somewhat limited by Ewick and Silbey's (1998) characterization of dimensions of identity as discrete from each other, reflecting a single-axis approach to systems of power. The matrix of domination demonstrates how all the systems of marginalization Ewick and Silbey (1998) listed interlock and constitute each other, producing nuanced social inequities at the intersections (P. H. Collins, 2000). Thus, the intersection of privileged and targeted identities may produce areas of advantage and access to helpful aspects of legality. Some white

women have access to opportunities to participate in domination through deploying race and class advantages in the system of domination (Hamilton et al., 2019). Performing the most revered form of femininity, only available to white women (see cult of womanhood in Collins, 2000), white women may be able to access aspects of advantage, deploying a legal consciousness that trusts and benefits from the law, despite being marginalized by gender. The theory of legal consciousness also does not account for when multiple marginalized identities converge and the complexities that may produce. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how the matrix of domination interacts with legality and is deployed through the legal consciousness of Black women in response to sexual assault on campus.

Chapter 3 Trauma Informed Narrative Inquiry

The conceptual framework for my study provides a way of understanding how the consequences of intersecting identities influences how women make sense of and interact with the legal environment of Title IX on their campuses. The conceptual approach suggested qualitative methods, specifically narrative inquiry, as an appropriate methodological approach. Additionally, the topic of sexual violence necessitated integrating trauma informed research practice employed in psychology and clinical fields of medicine, nursing, and psychotherapy. Together, these perspectives form what I call trauma informed narrative inquiry— a methodological approach that foregrounds stories and storytelling and compassionate research design to promote catharsis and healing alongside theory-building and witnessing (González-López, 2010).

What is Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is an interdisciplinary, qualitative research method to understand human experiences through stories and storytelling. Narratives are essential and constitutive features of human experience and social life. Humans are "storytelling organisms" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) producing myths, fairy tales, literature, art, and media to codify knowledge, power, identity, morality, and resistance. Hearing and telling stories allow us to make sense of and navigate our everyday lives. In narrative inquiry, narrative is both the phenomenon of interest and the method of data collection, analysis, and dissemination (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2016). Researchers elicit stories through talk, writing, or visuals for the purpose of understanding not only the content of the story, but more importantly the subjectivity, sources of

meaning, and authority people deploy in storying their lives (Kim, 2016). In both the data collection and analysis, narrative researchers pay as much attention to what people say (the story) as how they say it (narration), attending to metaphors, word choice, vocal patterns, and verbal ticks that reveal the mood, emotions, and perspective of the storyteller (Kim, 2016). Narrative researchers structure their methods and interactions with participants in a way that allows for the fullness of participants' stories to be told and most importantly, heard. In analysis, narrative inquirers use a host of literary, linguistic, and theoretical tools to interpret meaning, through "analysis of plotlines, thematic structures, and social and cultural references" (Kim, 2016, p. 190).

Narrative Inquiry and Black Feminist Thought

Narrative inquiry honors and complements the theoretical traditions of Black Feminist Thought and legal consciousness. Black women's knowledge creation flows from our varied experiences and collective standpoint as multiply subjugated by race and gender (P. H. Collins, 2000). The everyday knowledge of navigating intersectional domination that Black women share amongst each other and across generations such as "strategies for dealing with White folks and skills of how to 'get over'" forms the foundation of Black Feminist Thought (P. H. Collins, 2000, p. 38). Black feminist knowledge does not belong solely to the elite but emanates from intellectual and liberatory projects that imagine a world where Black women are truly free (P. H. Collins, 2000). Narrative inquiry honors the position of Black women as knowledge creators. This method complements the Black feminist project of making the richness and complexities of Black women's lives visible (Alexander-Floyd, 2012).

Narrative Inquiry and Legal Consciousness

In Ewick and Silbey's (1998) study of legal consciousness, narrative functioned as the method, object of analysis, and the resulting mechanisms for theorizing of how the law maintains its power through everyday interactions. Their interview guide encouraged participants to tell stories of neighborhood problems, disputes with community members, grievances, and triumphs over powerful actors. The stories also revealed aspects of their identities. As people storied their social reality they reinterpreted their experiences as plots with narrative arcs, adversaries, and moral struggles. Ewick and Silbey (2003) transposed features of narratives (ordering past events into a plot, relationships among characters, and moral significance) into concepts of social action. The stories cohered to narratives of legality with distinct images of the law, possibilities and constraints of agency, and hegemonic notions about how the law should and should not be employed (Ewick & Silbey, 2003, 1998). Ewick and Silbey (2003) reflected how some participants referred to their stories of resisting powerful actors as their "favorite story," meaning the stories had personal and social value to the storyteller. Zimmerman and Kim (2018) wrote "narrative inquiry moves away from epistemological concerns (i.e., knowing) and moves towards ontological concerns (i.e., being and becoming)" (Zimmerman & Kim, 2018, p. 222). This makes narrative inquiry an advantageous approach for studying life as lived through social structures, using narrative methods to put flesh, action, and speech on otherwise abstract concepts of the law.

Trauma Informed Methods

As a sensitive topic, researching sexual violence should be conducted with great care, preparation, and understanding of potential risks to everyone involved in the research project (Fontes, 2004). For participants, sensitive topics may involve additional burdens or "psychic costs" such as unwelcome feelings of shame, sadness, and stress (Lee & Renzetti, 1990, p. 511).

Researchers may experience deleterious emotional and physical effects during the entire course of the research process (Coles et al., 2014). Drawing on studies focused on the effects of trauma related research, I will distill principles of trauma informed inquiry and integrate them with practices of narrative inquiry.

Concerns for Participants

Concerns in trauma related research for participants include participant agency, burdens that exceed time and inconvenience, and whether participants experience any benefits. The first concern relates to survivors of sexual violence as a vulnerable group and the ethics of engaging this population in research (Downes et al., 2013). According to Cook et al. (2015), Institutional Review Boards have placed greater requirements on studies related to sexual violence. Research on sexual violence does require some unique protections for participants, however some IRB recommendations are misplaced and increase the notion survivors are "uniformly damaged and psychologically fragile" (Cook et al, 3015 p. 2). Instead, we must recognize this population as fully agentic, practiced in knowing what activates them, and what types of actions may put them in danger (Downes, et al., 2013). Therefore, researchers must provide a clear description of the study, its aims, and central research questions so survivors can make informed decisions about their participation. Further, the decision to withdraw from the study at any time must be made explicit, not only in the informed consent, but also throughout the interview (Josselson, 2007).

The second concern involves the potential of negative burdens on participants beyond the cost of their time. Researchers and IRBs alike are concerned about increasing distress among participants. However, researchers must distinguish emotional distress from re-traumatization. Legerski and Bunnell (2010) explained, "Re-traumatization involves direct exposure to a traumatic event, either the same event or one that elicits a similar emotional response" (p. 431).

Direct contact with a sensory trigger (e.g., a smell, sound, physical contact, or seeing the source of trauma) is unlikely during a research interaction. Further, researchers mitigate this possibility by having the participant choose the location of the research interview, focus on establishing rapport, and remind participants they can pause or stop the interview at a time (Campbell, 2001; Campbell et al., 2010). Researchers should distinguish their approach from negative experiences participants may have with medical or legal providers (Fontes, 2004). Situating research interactions as supportive, open, and non-judgmental can counteract the "societal context of disbelief, fear, and shame" attached to disclosing sexual assault (Fontes, 2004, p. 143).

Participants can experience emotional distress during research on sexual violence (Fontes, 2004; Hoover & Morrow, 2015). Studies show participants report experiencing mild to severe emotional distress, fatigue, anxiety, and sadness from describing traumatic events (Campbell et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2003; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997; Hoover & Morrow, 2015). Distress was most observed immediately after taking a survey or doing an interview (Cook et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2003). Studies that evaluated distress longitudinally found participants' distress decreased after several hours (Griffin et al., 2003) and diminished when assessed one and two weeks after exposure (Legerski & Bunnell, 2010; Cook et al., 2015). Researchers also found as distress decreased, positive affect increased as did interest in participating again in similar studies and recognition of personal benefits (Edwards et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2003; Cook et al., 2015). Therefore, distress experienced by participants may occur, but it is more likely to be temporary and outweighed by benefits (Cook et al., 2015; Edwards et al., 2009; Griffin et al., 2003; Hoover & Morrow, 2015; Legerski & Bunnell, 2010).

Studies have demonstrated that though survivors report distress from research on sexual violence, they also report experiencing positive emotions. In their review of studies on sexual

victimization research, Legerski and Bunnell (2010) found most studies included some positive aspect to research participation, including feeling the study was vital, not regretting participation, wanting to participate in similar future studies, and finding participation useful to healing. Other studies have tried to identify research practices that increased benefits for survivors. Campbell et al. (2010) interviewed 92 rape survivors in Chicago about their assaults. After the research related questions, interviewers asked participants how they felt about the interview process. The sample was diverse, including a majority of women of color (50% Black, 5% Latina, 7% multiracial, and 1% Asian American). Most survivors (70 out of 92) described the interview as positive. Campbell et al. (2010) observed most survivors shared "the experience of having someone listen with patience and real engagement as they talked freely, and sometimes cried freely, was very impactful" (p. 70).

Through coding survivor responses to the interview, Campbell et al. (2010) outlined several practices that contributed to a positive research interaction. Being able to tell one's story uninterrupted was cathartic for participants. Survivors commented that the questions helped them reframe and analyze negative interactions with disclosure, reducing self-blame and sadness (Campbell et al., 2010). In the protocol for the study, interviewers repeatedly emphasized survivor's agency and choice in depth of disclosure. It was always the survivor's decision whether to answer a question, how much detail to share, pause the interview, or withdraw from the study (Campbell et al., 2010). Participants highlighted this practice in their reflections on the study, saying it increased their comfort and made them want to share more of their story. Survivors also highlighted the importance of interviewer's preparation and ability to respond to changes in the emotional state of participants. Most participants felt supported and at ease with

interviewers, experienced support during emotional outbursts, and appreciated the lack of judgment and blaming in the interviewers' reactions.

Concern for Researchers

To learn about rape is to see things for the first time, to open one's eyes and to see the world in a completely new but unfortunately scary way. It's a tremendous loss, because once you see it, you can't go back. A switch gets turned on and can never be turned off. We long for when it was dark, when we couldn't see, when we were unaware.
-Rebecca Campbell (2001)

As the above quote illustrates, researching sexual violence takes a toll on the researcher. Vicarious or secondary trauma results from exposure to traumatic events and/or people who have experienced trauma (Coles et al., 2014). Through exploring their own and other's emotional well-being, researchers of trauma have made connections between their work and vicarious trauma. Conducting interviews with participants requires emotional labor—regulating one's emotional display through surface level expressions or deeper emotional adjustment to match the demands of an interactional context (Hochschild, 1983). During the interviews, the researcher is focused on the participant's emotional well-being, doing the emotional work of offering comfort, support, and empathy (Coles et al., 2014; Woodby et al., 2011). During this phase, researchers of sexual violence reported emotional exhaustion, stress from ruminating on survivors' stories, nightmares, and increased anxiety (Coles et al., 2014). Coles et al. (2014) also found sexual violence researchers experienced physical symptoms including rapid heart rate, sympathetic pain, and nausea. These psychological and physical reactions may persist during coding and analysis. Woodby et al. (2011) noted that coding posed greater emotional vulnerability for researchers because they had more time to dwell on participant's stories through transcribing, listening to recordings, and reading transcripts. Further, the emotion work of monitoring the participant's emotional state when conducting the interview provided a buffer from researchers

dwelling on their own feelings. In the coding phase, those negative emotions resurfaced without the aid of the "smiles, nods, and other gestures of enthusiastic engagement" of the interview interaction that helped both parties cope in the moment (Woodby et al., 2011).

As a rape victim advocate, I experienced secondary trauma after my emergency room visits with survivors. With my active—almost cinematic—imagination, I would re-play the survivors' stories in my mind repeatedly. These calls caused significant exhaustion and distracted thinking. I coped by replacing these images by watching movies or TV, going for a run or workout class, listening to music, keeping busy by cooking and cleaning, and spending time with friends. More recently, I experienced some strong emotional reactions to coding data about doctoral students experiencing racism and sexism. Knowing my emotional susceptibility to stories of injustice and violence, I took measures to maintain my emotional well-being and physical health. Those included continuing therapy sessions, debriefing with peers studying traumatic topics, physical exercise, and spending time with supportive people.

Trauma Informed Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry complements the goals of trauma informed research with focus on eliciting narratives, making space for participants to tell their full story, and positioning participants as teachers of the phenomenon of interest (Kim, 2016). Yet, to have a fully trauma informed approach, researchers should also incorporate ongoing informed consent practices, have a background in trauma-informed work, and practice reflexivity. Ongoing informed consent goes beyond attaining a signature on a form. Instead Fontes (2004) recommended continually checking in with the participant during the data collection phase and actively confirming consent when transitioning to difficult topics. Hoover & Morrow (2015) added researchers should reengage participants' consent after the interview, revealing how the information will be used

and disseminated. These practices attempt to mitigate the reach of a researcher's power and reinforce the goal in narrative methods of positioning the participants as experts of the phenomenon (Kim, 2016; Zimmerman and Kim, 2018).

Preparation in trauma informed work helps guide researchers through managing the emotional swings of participants during interviews and can inform thoughtful questions in a narrative phase of the interview (Campbell, 2010). My preparation comes from receiving 60 hours of training on sexual violence and domestic violence through Rape Victim Advocates (now Resilience) and counseling survivors through legal and medical decisions in Chicago emergency rooms for two years. Additionally, I have studied sexual violence, Title IX, trauma, and the adjudication of campus sexual violence for over a decade. As a member of the University of Michigan Sanctioning Board, a responsible employee through University Housing, and lab manager for the Title IX project, I have a vast amount of content knowledge and practice- based experience on this issue.

Another aspect of trauma informed narrative inquiry concerns reflexivity. Reflexivity requires continual critical examination and reflection of the "relational and personal aspects of conducting, interpreting, and representing research" (Hoover and Morrow, 2015, p. 275). Rather than following a script or reporting observations, reflexive researchers interrogate their actions, taking an additional step back to assess moments of ethical concern and addressing the question "how do I know what I know" throughout the research process (Kim, 2016, p. 105). Kim (2016) described this approach to narrative research as phronesis, "the moral, ethical judgment to act wisely and prudently, which is more than the possession of epitome (general content knowledge) or techno (skills or techniques)" (p, 105). In trauma informed narrative inquiry, phronesis represents the ability to actualize content knowledge on sexual violence and skills from advocacy

work into sensitive and responsive interactions with participants and critical reflection on narrative data and analysis. My background, knowledge, and conceptual framework prepared me to do this trauma informed narrative based qualitative study.

Research Design

The data from my dissertation come from 60 trauma-informed narrative interviews with survivors of unwanted sex, harassment, and assault experienced during college or graduate school. As shown in Table 2, I recruited a diverse sample (77% Black, 87% Women of Color) primarily through social media, using posts and ads on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Table 2. Demographic Sample Characteristics of Full Sample, n=60

	Participants	
	n	%
Gender		
Women	56	93%
Nonbinary	4	7%
School Status at Sexual Assault Exposure		
Undergraduate	48	80%
Graduate Student	12	20%
Racial Background		
Black/Black Multiracial	46	77%
Latina	5	8%
Middle Eastern	1	2%
Asian/Asian American	2	3%
White	6	10%
Institution Type		
Predominantly White Institution	46	77%
Historically Black College or University	14	23%

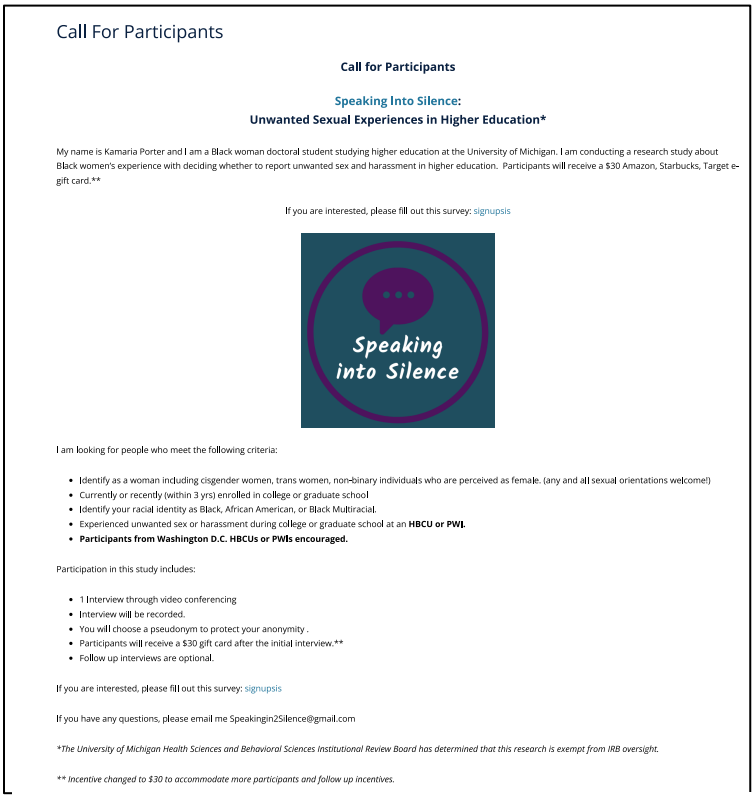
My analysis focuses on the 46 interviews with Black women and non-binary students. Appendix A shows demographic characteristics of the analytical sample of 46 Black women and nonbinary students. Four participants identified their gender as nonbinary. Most participants attended predominantly white institutions (70%, n=32) and were in undergrad (78%, n=36) when they experienced sexual assault exposure. The majority of participants did not report sexual assault exposure to any formal authority (73%, n=34). Of the 12 participants who did report sexual assault exposure, 11 interacted with university Title IX officials, 4 participant cases were investigated and advanced to a hearing, 2 participant cases were decided in favor of the accused student. Seven participant cases did not advance because of the Title IX officer's unhelpful reactions or the school stopped investigating without alerting the student. Six participants interacted with police and only one participant advanced to a legal proceeding. Four participants encountered victim blaming attitudes from police, making them unable to advance a criminal case. One participant's case advanced to a prosecutor who decline to prosecute.

Recruitment

Recruiting participants for this research study required creativity, adaptability, resource management, graphic design, marketing, and user-experience (UX) developer skills. I created a pathway through a series of online tools for participants to learn about the study, share their information, and schedule an interview. I needed to create a cohesive brand for the project, so participants could recognize the project across social media posts and my recruitment tools. I used my title "Speaking into Silence" as the branding theme, creating a logo. The logo uses the image of the three dots that appear when someone is typing a text message, to symbolize the pause and decision to speak or not. I choose a color scheme of dark teal (as a play on the bright teal used by Sexual Assault Awareness Month) and purple. Using the logo, colors, and title, I

based on my recruitment materials around a coherent brand. Using Canva and Venngage, I created content using stock photos and graphics. It was somewhat challenging to find a wide range of images of Black women in higher education settings. The racism embedded in these tools required I be creative and craft posts around images I could find.

I created a WordPress website as the main source of information about my dissertation research. The "Call for Participants" page (shown in Figure 1) contains my recruitment flyer describing the study, my goals, criteria for participants, the incentive amount, and IRB information. This page allowed me to define "Black woman" expansively: "Identify as a woman including cisgender women, trans women, non-binary individuals who are perceived as female. (Any and all sexual orientations welcome!)." I wanted potential participants to know how I conceptualized gender, to welcome nonbinary and trans participants and communicate my values as a researcher.



Call For Participants

Call for Participants

Speaking Into Silence:
Unwanted Sexual Experiences in Higher Education*

My name is Kamaria Porter and I am a Black woman doctoral student studying higher education at the University of Michigan. I am conducting a research study about Black women's experience with deciding whether to report unwanted sex and harassment in higher education. Participants will receive a $30 Amazon, Starbucks, Target e-gift card.**

If you are interested, please fill out this survey: signupsis

I am looking for people who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a woman including cisgender women, trans women, non-binary individuals who are perceived as female. (any and all sexual orientations welcome!)
- Currently or recently (within 3 yrs) enrolled in college or graduate school
- Identify your racial identity as Black, African American, or Black Multiracial.
- Experienced unwanted sex or harassment during college or graduate school at an **HBCU or PWI.**
- **Participants from Washington D.C. HBCUs or PWIs encouraged.**

Participation in this study includes:

- 1 Interview through video conferencing
- Interview will be recorded.
- You will choose a pseudonym to protect your anonymity .
- Participants will receive a $30 gift card after the initial interview.**
- Follow up interviews are optional.

If you are interested, please fill out this survey: signupsis

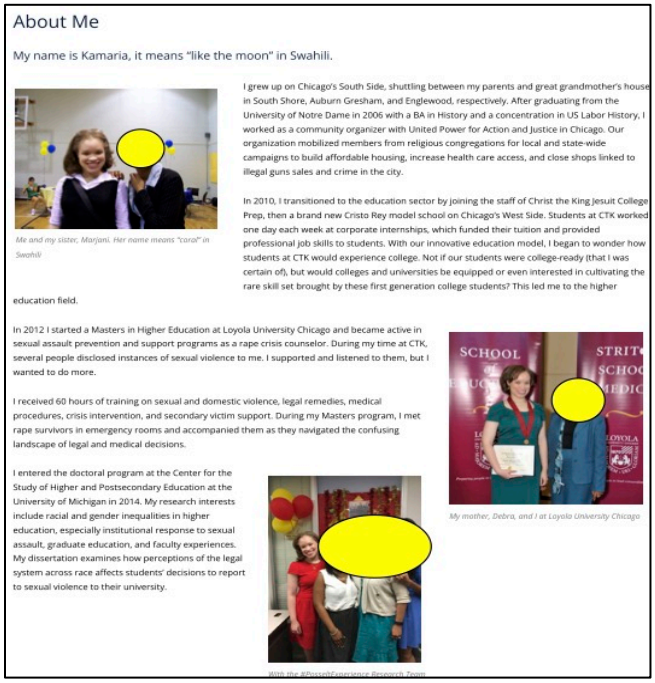
If you have any questions, please email me Speakingin2Silence@gmail.com

**The University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board has determined that this research is exempt from IRB oversight.*

*** Incentive changed to $30 to accommodate more participants and follow up incentives.*

Figure 1. Call for Participants

I created an “About Me” page (shown in Figure 2) designed to convey my Black identity, experience as a community organizer, my training as a rape victim advocate, and my research background. That section begins with, “My name is Kamaria, it means “like the moon” in Swahili.” Along with pictures of me with my sister, mother, and research team, I wanted participants to understand my pride in my Black identity and to see my complexion before the video interview. A few participants referred to aspects of my “About Me” page, saying they felt safe knowing I had a background in trauma counseling.


About Me

My name is Kamaria, it means “like the moon” in Swahili.

Me and my sister, Marjoni. Her name means “cora” in Swahili

I grew up on Chicago’s South Side, shuttling between my parents and great grandmother’s house in South Shore, Auburn Gresham, and Englewood, respectively. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame in 2006 with a BA in History and a concentration in US Labor History, I worked as a community organizer with United Power for Action and Justice in Chicago. Our organization mobilized members from religious congregations for local and state-wide campaigns to build affordable housing, increase health care access, and close shops linked to illegal guns sales and crime in the city.

In 2010, I transitioned to the education sector by joining the staff of Christ the King Jesuit College Prep, then a brand new Cristo Rey model school on Chicago’s West Side. Students at CTK worked one day each week at corporate internships, which funded their tuition and provided professional job skills to students. With our innovative education model, I began to wonder how students at CTK would experience college. Not if our students were college-ready (that I was certain of), but would colleges and universities be equipped or even interested in cultivating the rare skill set brought by these first generation college students? This led me to the higher education field.

In 2012 I started a Masters in Higher Education at Loyola University Chicago and became active in sexual assault prevention and support programs as a rape crisis counselor. During my time at CTK, several people disclosed instances of sexual violence to me. I supported and listened to them, but I wanted to do more.

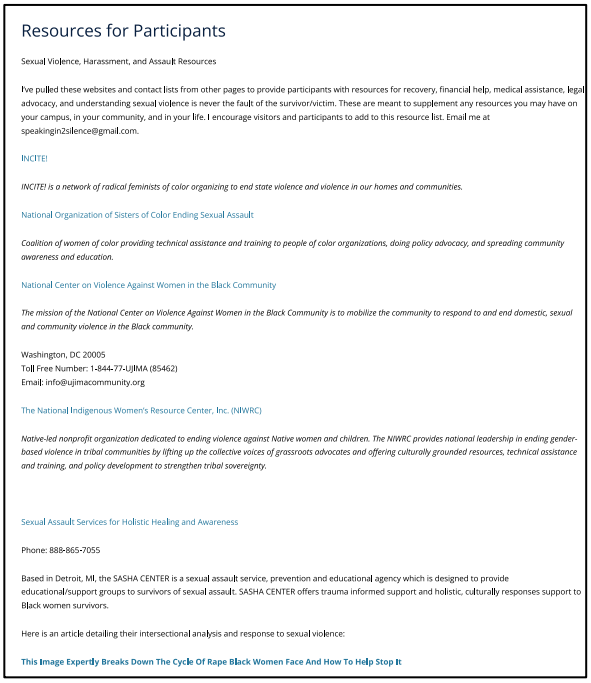
I received 60 hours of training on sexual and domestic violence, legal remedies, medical procedures, crisis intervention, and secondary victim support. During my Masters program, I met rape survivors in emergency rooms and accompanied them as they navigated the confusing landscape of legal and medical decisions.

My mother, Debra, and I at Loyola University Chicago

I entered the doctoral program at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan in 2014. My research interests include racial and gender inequalities in higher education, especially institutional response to sexual assault, graduate education, and faculty experiences. My dissertation examines how perceptions of the legal system across race affects students’ decisions to report to sexual violence to their university.

With the #DissertExperience Research Team

Figure 2. "About Me" Page on Recruitment Website


Resources for Participants

Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Assault Resources

I've pulled these websites and contact lists from other pages to provide participants with resources for recovery, financial help, medical assistance, legal advocacy, and understanding sexual violence is never the fault of the survivor/victim. These are meant to supplement any resources you may have on your campus, in your community, and in your life. I encourage visitors and participants to add to this resource list. Email me at speakingin2silence@gmail.com.

INCITE!

INCITE! is a network of radical feminists of color organizing to end state violence and violence in our homes and communities.

National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault

Coalition of women of color providing technical assistance and training to people of color organizations, doing policy advocacy, and spreading community awareness and education.

National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community

The mission of the National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community is to mobilize the community to respond to and end domestic, sexual and community violence in the Black community.

Washington, DC 20005
Toll Free Number: 1-844-77-UJIMA (85462)
Email: info@ujimacommunity.org

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC)

Native-led nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against Native women and children. The NIWRC provides national leadership in ending gender-based violence in tribal communities by lifting up the collective voices of grassroots advocates and offering culturally grounded resources, technical assistance and training, and policy development to strengthen tribal sovereignty.

Sexual Assault Services for Holistic Healing and Awareness

Phone: 888-865-7055

Based in Detroit, MI, the SASHA CENTER is a sexual assault service, prevention and educational agency which is designed to provide educational/support groups to survivors of sexual assault. SASHA CENTER offers trauma informed support and holistic, culturally responses support to Black women survivors.

Here is an article detailing their intersectional analysis and response to sexual violence:

This Image Expertly Breaks Down The Cycle Of Rape Black Women Face And How To Help Stop It

Figure 3. "Resources for Participants" Page Excerpt

The last research related page is my “Resources for Participants,” excerpted in Figure 3. On this page I collected websites for organizations focused on women of color and sexual violence. Each resource has a link to the website, a brief description of what they do, and contact information. Whenever I talked to a participant that brought a new dimension to the project, I researched possible resources that could speak to that issue. For instance, one participant shared

they did sex work. After the interview, I looked for resources and information to educate myself and post to my page. I found a racial justice focused organization "Sex Workers Project" and posted three articles about sex workers and sexual violence. Also, whenever I saw something useful, I added it to my website and attributed it to the organization. As the pandemic stretched on, I added mental health and trauma recovery tools, including "Trauma Conscious Yoga" and "Liberate" a mediation app created by and for Black people. I consider the resources page another product of this dissertation and plan to keep it active.

Figure 4. Qualtrics Recruitment Survey

Collecting information of possible participants required I create a screening survey. Using Qualtrics (shown in Figure 4), I created a nine-question instrument to gather demographic information, institution attended, and contact information. The gender question allowed participants to self-identify their gender. Another question gave me a sense of where they were in their higher education journey, with options of: current undergrad, current grad students, recent

graduate, and taking a pause from higher education. Participants could indicate if they attended a school in Washington D.C. or provide the name of their school. The race/ethnicity question was open response, allowing precision and some free expression. One person indicated their race was "Blackity Black," a jovial affirmation of racial identity and consciousness.

In the recruitment survey, participants could choose whether they wanted to be contacted for a research interview. I added this in case someone filled out the survey without knowing it was a recruitment tool for an interview study. I wanted potential participants to affirm their interest, even beyond finding my survey. Several people did select "No" to the question. The final questions gathered as much contact information as possible: email, phone, Whatsapp, secondary email, and social media handles. I noticed some participants used "yahoo.com" emails, which they explained during the interview were not their primary email accounts. Participants proactively protected their identity through these internet practices. I encountered and even interviewed a four people I suspect were scammers. Their interview answers were vague and inconsistent with the survey information they provided. I noticed these four participants shared almost identical stories in the interview. I do not think they were trying to derail my research. They probably wanted and needed the money.

Recruiting online reminded me of running a small non-profit. I created a Facebook page, and Instagram account to give my project its own web presence. With the Facebook page and Instagram account, I followed multiple campus sexual assault organizations, rape crisis centers, and advocacy organizations. I was constantly designing ads, playing with wording and images to find the most effective way to reach participants. Managing my expenses, budget, and reimbursements demanded meticulous record keeping. Using research funds from Rackham, CSHPE, and a friend at Facebook, I bought ads on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Using their

ad interface, I could target users based on demographics (age, gender, geo-location) and interests. Social media companies collect an obscene amount of information on users. However, they do not formally collect racial background information. I used interests in "HBCUs," specific institutions, Black publications, Black women celebrities, and Black women focused media. I started by targeting the D.C. metro area but discovered I would get responses from students who lived in D.C. but attended a different school for college. Or I would get responses from Black women all over the country. It became clear that I would not be able to recruit for a comparative case study, so in later ads I targeted areas with Black populations and HBCUs like Atlanta and Virginia. I created easy access links for my website and screening survey (bit.ly/SISresearch & bit.ly/signupSIS) to complement the branding and change the unwieldy links to something someone could remember and type into a browser. All the posts also had these links. Throughout I had to think like a user-experience developer, finding the easiest way to capture a potential participant's attention and funnel them into my screening survey. This process produced 241 interest surveys.

Another challenge was yielding Black women participants for interviews. Even though the study materials said clearly and repeatedly that this study was about Black women, many non-Black women, especially white women, completed the interest survey. I began by prioritizing any response from a Black woman with a recruitment email. Next, I would send recruitment emails to Women of Color. I based my interviews with white women primarily on their institution. Sometimes a person would reach out to me (I created an email and Google Voice number for the project) asking to be interviewed. I would acknowledge these people, even if they did not fit the study criteria. As an ethical researcher of sexual assault, if a participant

wanted to tell their story and made strides to set up an interview by contacting me, I felt obliged to listen and share my resources page.

To recruit additional Black women, I posted the study information in Facebook groups, especially the "Women and Nonbinary People of Color in Grad School" Facebook group. Many scholars post research recruitment flyers and several participants mentioned seeing my post. I also asked friends to post the study on their social media or to share it by email. Some participants agreed to share the study with others. I also heavily recruited on Twitter, through paid ads and posts. Friends and potential participants could easily "like" and "retweet," sharing the study with their networks. This process yielded interviews with 46 Black women. The success of my recruitment relied on skills I honed long before grad school as an activist, community organizer, and school administrator.

Narrative Interviews

Conducting narrative interviews about sexual violence raises important issues about informed consent and confidentiality. The goal of narrative interviewing is to capture the rich detail of a person's life, bringing their story and context to the fore to explain social phenomenon (Kim, 2016). However, that level of detail about participants in a study about sexual violence may expose unwanted information to friends, family, the assailant, and others. Some participants may not have told anyone about their assault until their interview. In Campbell et al. (2009) they noted 11% of their participants shared their story of sexual violence for the first time with the research team. Therefore, it was important participants came to know and trust me as a steward of their stories and identities.

Throughout the recruitment and interview process, I used an on-going informed consent process. The consent form (Appendix B) acknowledges an interviewee's agreement to

participate, have their interview recorded, privacy measures (use of pseudonyms and obscuring identifying details), and their ability to stop, pause, or withdraw from the study at any time. I reviewed the consent form with participants at the beginning of the video interview and started the recording once they completed it. Throughout the interview, I prefaced questions with "let me know if you're comfortable discussing X" and "If you'd rather not answer, let me know." These statements invited participants to decide if a line of questioning would disrupt their emotional well-being. A few times, participants did ask to skip a question and I quickly pivoted to another topic.

As mentioned above, the narrative approach to interviewing, analysis, and dissemination may be at odds with confidentiality. Kim (2016) noted even with pseudonyms, readers may be able to identify participants through deductive disclosure, using clues from the text to reveal participant identities. This is especially true when studying populations marginalized by racism, genderism, sexual orientation, and class. Also, researchers risk deductive disclosure when conducting "backyard research" at their institution (Kim, 2016). My research design and use of social media recruitment aided in reducing possibilities for deductive disclosure. I offered participants the chance to pick a pseudonym or have one assigned.

Narrative Interview Structure

I created a semi-structured narrative interview guide (Appendix C). The guide provided a broad outline of topics and possible follow up questions. I built the interview around three topics, 1) participant's journey through higher education, 2) any unwanted sex, assault, or harassment during that journey, and 3) sources of support participants found helpful or unhelpful. I included these topics in the scheduling and confirmation emails and repeated this at the beginning of each interview. Before I began the interview, I asked the participant to reflect silently and respond to

the question: “What do I hope to get out of participating in this interview?” Participants were asked to keep their answer private until the end of the interview. I wanted to use this reflection to invoke catalytic validity, research that helps participants have a deeper understanding of their social world (Fontes, 2004). I wanted participants to reflect on their motivations and desires for their healing before the interview started, to hold their hopes alongside my research questions.

Interviews lasted 60-150 minutes. I began the interview with an open-ended question about participants’ journey through higher education, asking them to describe where that journey began and where they currently were in that process. Participants tended to use the opening theme as a prologue to their primary narrative of sexual assault. As a storytelling device, prologues give the listener context for understanding the story, set up an arc, or hint at the ultimate meaning of the story. Many participants narrated their transition from high school in their home communities, drawing distinctions and naming ways higher education environments challenged their sense of self. For instance, Alex shared multiple details about her family background and how she conceptualized college as a mobility pathway (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Clarke, 2011):

> So, I come from a low-income neighborhood, and my family kind of straddled the line between being lower middle-class, lower income - just basically working class, so sometimes things were great and sometimes things were not. For me, it was like I had to get out. I had to get out and have a better future to support myself and support my family.

Here Alex described growing up feeling economically vulnerable and viewing the college degree as a way to ensure a “better future” of stability for her and her loved ones. Alex and other participants used the time during the opening question to convey the stakes of success in college, demonstrating a wider range of negative consequences of sexual assault during higher education. Participants also used the opening theme to discuss their intellectual pursuits. Several participants explained how in projects related to racial equity in their fields. Avery was pursuing

a graduate degree and shared, “I am interested in socially-stigmatized topics in health, so sexual abuse, mental health, things like that.” Black women used this approach to the prologue to not only share their passions but more importantly, to introduce their social consciousness of systems of inequality in their respective fields. The opening question about higher education journeys yielded important context for the central narratives and natural ways to discuss structural inequalities during the interviews.

During the second phase of the interview, I asked my participants to describe any instances of unwanted sex, assault, or harassment during higher education. I began by reminding participants about the study focus, confidentiality, and their ability to tell this story in their own words. I told participants to think of themselves as the protagonist and to describe how they felt and processed events. I reminded participants that I would maintain their privacy through a pseudonym and suggested if other people or “characters” came up in the story, I would change those names to protect the participant’s identity. During this section of the interview, it was important to engage in non-judgmental active listening, meaning I would maintain eye contact, mirror the participant’s emotional mood, and offer encouraging, yet minimal responses. It was important for me to not break the flow of the participant’s story by asking questions, making long retorts, or using a facial expression that might interrupt their story. I made short notes, writing down phrases or details I wanted to follow up on later. Since the interviews were through video conferencing, participants often let their eyes wander, looking outside a window or around the room as they talked.

Participants used various strategies for talking about sexual assault. Some went into detail about how they met the assailant or how they came to be in the space where the assault occurred. Other participants’ descriptions of assault were brief, like Martha who said, “but then one thing

led to another, and what I identify as rape." Having the sexual assault narrative section being open-ended invited participants to choose the depth of their narrative and to decide their comfort level. Participants engaged in a process I call "accounting" during the open-ended section. Through accounting, participants expounded on contributing factors that precipitated the assault, such as the amount of alcohol at a party or how they approached a date with the intention to not have sex. In CJ's narrative, she described the bus ride to a Black fraternity party in detail to show all the ways women were being pressured to drink. Participants also underscored aspects of the assailant's character and behavior to show a pattern of disrespect for their boundaries. Josephine used the term "red flags" to indicate the ways the man who assaulted her displayed selfish behavior saying, "He was giving me red flags throughout this entire relationship, but I just wasn't paying attention." Through accounting, participants provided context to their stories, highlighting multiple systems of power that diminished their sexual agency.

Participants also used the open-ended narrative to rebut victim-blaming narratives. During Alex's story, she paused to give a "precursor" and told me about a close male friend she hung out with during a pre-college program on campus. She stated, "We would sometimes sleep in the same bed, or we'd push our beds together. He never touched me, he never fondled me, he never kissed me. We literally slept in the same space." Alex shared this story to account for the trust she had in the assailant to not assault her just because they were in his room alone. Participants used the open-ended portion to tell additional stories that put sexual assault exposure in context. In accounting for assailant's behaviors or their beliefs about the safety of a situation, participants refuted legality— in the form of common attacks on sexual assault survivors—to counteract gendered and racialized assumptions about sexual assault.

After the sexual assault narrative section, I asked participants to take a pause and reflect on how they felt sharing their story with me in the interview. That question allowed participants to decompress from thinking about the incident and process emotions or physical reactions. Some participants compared the interview to other experiences of disclosure, highlighting the ways the interview format made them feel comfortable. As I transitioned to the third phase of follow-up questions, I avoided asking participants questions about the assault itself, letting their description suffice and allowing them to expound if they wanted. That approach helped participants, especially Jennifer, who reflected:

> As I started getting into the story, I realized I actually don't want to get into super detail about what exactly happened, like the act or something. I didn't want to talk about that. That didn't seem like that mattered, so the fact that I could tell the story in a way that I can talk about it without having to get into details that make me feel sick or uncomfortable is good.

By not prying for details or questioning aspects of the assault, I upheld my commitment to trauma informed practice during the interview.

The third phase of the interview prompted participants to describe sources of support they found helpful or unhelpful. This section encouraged participants to share any experiences with disclosing sexual assault. When participants revealed they disclosed to a legal or university officer, I asked them to describe those interactions in detail. During Josephine's sexual assault narrative, she mentioned filing a police report. During the follow-up section, she revealed reporting to campus police departments at two schools and going through a university hearing process. I also asked about informal disclosures with friends, family members, or other university staff. I learned about additional interactions related to reporting when participants revealed they accidently talked to a mandatory reporter. Conversations about informal disclosures with friends and family offered participants the opportunity to evaluate the

helpfulness of different confidants. When participants shared positive disclosure stories, I encouraged them to describe any memorable words or behaviors the support person used. Those conversations helped participants draw further distinctions between unsupportive disclosures and barriers to making an official report.

Before concluding the interviews, I ensured we had enough time to debrief the experience. I wanted participants to end the interview discussing something other than their experience of sexual assault. Borrowing a question from Campbell et al., (2010), I began the debrief by asking "What was it like to speak with me today?" Many participants reflected on how they felt emotionally and physically telling their story. The emotional distress from recalling sexual assault exposure was outweighed for these participants by wanting their story to help other survivors, especially Black women survivors, feel less alone and supported. Naimia compared the interview to previous counseling experiences saying it was:

> Definitely easier than going to therapy. I think what made it easier is knowing that sharing my story is going to help someone which is crazy because I feel like going to therapy and talking about it there helps me, but that's hard. But helping someone else? Sure.

Most participants discussed altruistic and social change motivations as their reasoning for doing the interview. I asked participants to highlight any aspects of the interview that either contributed or detracted from their motivations for signing up for the interview. Some participants made suggestions for topics I should explore with future participants, such as the influence of social class and how survivors' relationship with sex developed after assault. I incorporated these topics in subsequent interviews. I ended the debrief by sharing my resources page, thanking participants, and letting them know they could withdraw from the study even at this stage of the interaction.

Data Analysis

The goal of analysis is to develop claims about how the sources of legality and corresponding legal consciousness expressed by Black women college students are shaped by their intersecting identities. As an interdisciplinary method, analysis in narrative inquiry is less straightforward and varied compared to other qualitative methods. Riessman (2008) described narrative analysis as a form of case study research in that analysis tends to occur both within and between cases or narratives. My analysis proceeded in two stages, in depth narrative analysis of individual interviews and thematic analysis across interviews (McCormack, 2004). For in depth analysis of individual interviews, I used open coding and narrative arc coding. In the second stage I used thematic analysis based on my intersectional socio-legal framework to code for themes across narratives.

Analysis began with reading each interview transcript in its entirety to refamiliarize myself with the participant's story. I open coded each transcript, deriving a list 167 codes. Initial codes captured locations, types of sexual harm, institutional systems (police, Title IX, campus police, legal system), and systems of power (race, gender, age, etc.). Open coding allowed me to identity the wide range of sexual harm described by participants. For instance, racialized sexual harassment emerged from open coding of stories outside of the main narratives of sexual assault. As Black women described their interactions on campus and at parties, the frequency of unwanted sexual contact became a prominent theme. As I analyzed the interviews, I added additional codes to capture new information and themes. Using Atlas.TI coding software, I could attach coded quotations with comments that allowed me to quickly memo on the meaning of new codes and refine my definitions of existing codes.

In the second round of coding, I used narrative elements to classify sexual assault narratives. During the open narrative portion and follow up questions, participants shifted

between story beats, stopping midway to add background details or sharing additional stories of sexual harm from high school. The fluidity of narratives required a coding structure to re-group the data into a sequence for within case description and cross case analysis. Based on Riessman (2008) I used narrative based codes of orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda to re-construct the narrative arc of participants' stories. The "orientation" code captured events and interactions that preceded the sexual assault exposure. This code provided context for how and where participants encountered the assailant, the setting of the assault (during a date or at a party), and Black women's expectations of safety entering a situation. In literature analysis, complicating action refers to the central sequence of events that drive the reason for the story (McCormack, 2004). I used the "complicating action" to capture how survivors traced how situations escalated from safe to assault. This code both captures sexual assault exposure and the ways assailants disregarded Black women's voices during incidents.

Interspersed between events, participants added commentary describing how they processed comments or behaviors of assailants after the assault. Black women students also played out their inner thoughts during the incident as monologues during the interview. I coded these instances as "evaluation" to capture how Black women analyzed events within a gendered racist lens. Resolution, in the structure of narrative arcs, refers to how the central conflict of the story is resolved (McCormack, 2004). Coded material under "resolution" included events after the assault, such as leaving a party, disclosing to a friend, or entering a reporting situation. However, the content of the "resolution" code did not fit with the title. Events after sexual assault exposure included more fallout, betrayal, and disappointment. I used the code for "coda" sparsely. Coda referred to instances when participants summarized their narrative with some resounding lesson or moral. Participants were often still processing sexual assault exposure and

previous disclosures. Black women were actively trying to sort out their feelings about the incident in the interview, processing the effects of judgement, gendered racist assumptions, and subsequent harm from reporting.

The third round of coding focused on themes from the intersectional socio-legal conceptual framework. Unlike grounded theory, thematic analysis explicitly incorporates theory and preserves the narrative integrity during coding (Riessman, 2008). I used a combination of legal consciousness concepts (legality, authority, legal system) and broader categories related to my research questions. Major codes in this process included: reporting, disclosure, the assailant, power dynamics, and support. I coded material without distinguishing the positive or negative valence of the statements. In other words, participants' reasons they did not report were grouped with reporting experiences. Analyzing across reporting and non-reporting narratives helped me see how gendered racism constricted Black women across reporting outcomes. This coding strategy revealed participants who reported shared the similar fears and dilemmas as participants who did not report.

Trustworthiness

Markers of trustworthiness in qualitative research underscore the rigor, care, and reflexivity of the study. Departing from the language of validity in quantitative research, markers for quality in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, and dependability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Credibility refers to accuracy of participant's statements and perceptions. This presents a tension in narrative inquiry, as the method is less concerned with reporting people's uncontextualized perceptions and more with interpretation and making claims about the meanings, assumptions, and systems of power informing those perceptions (Chase, 2011; Josselson, 2007). Participants may disagree or feel alienated by narrative inquiry findings

because, as Josselson (2007) commented, “narrative research involves the task of understanding a narrator differently than he/she understands himself/herself” (p. 549). In this study, a more appropriate measure of trustworthiness is dependability, meaning being able to recount faithfully the processes through which data were collected and analyzed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). I worked to increase the dependability of my study by working with a trauma-informed professional who transcribed the audio files verbatim. The transcriptionist captured the voices of Black women participants by retaining slang, documenting emotional reactions, and punctuating pauses and stunted trains of thought. It also helped that my transcriptionist worked in the field of domestic violence in an Afro-Caribbean community, which increased the accuracy with which Black women’s cadence and word choice were preserved in the transcripts. The transcripts faithfully captured the difficulty many participants had in expressing these stories and the meaning making happening within the interview. I also frequently debriefed my interviews with my co-chair, helping me process my data throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing phases.

Transferability refers to whether readers could reasonably imagine social processes described in a study could hold or occur across settings and populations (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). Researchers achieve this through painting a vivid picture of the findings with detailed information about the context, setting, and circumstances of the participants. Narrative inquiry compliments “thick description” by retaining the narrative integrity of participants and including context at every step of analysis. The narrative codes allowed me to re-construct participant’s stories into a linear sequence of events. In addition, I bolstered the transferability of this study by integrating my knowledge of Title IX and sexual assault on campus. My research on the range of

ways universities handle sexual assault complaints helped me add more context to Black women's experiences of hearings and investigations.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include sampling and distance. Using Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter ads, as opposed to recruiting through institutions, limited my ability to make claims about how participants experienced specific policy contexts within schools. Recruiting on social media limited my sample to participants who were active on those platforms. The social media advertising interface depends on user engagement. Therefore, Black women students who rarely use Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram were unlikely to see my posts and sign up. With the legitimate privacy concerns about these companies and growth of platforms like Tiktok during the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to creatively adapt my approach to reach my sampling goals. My sample is predominantly Black women from four-year institutions and graduate programs. Participants tended to represent large, elite, and well-known institutions. This limits the claims I can make about Black women's experiences in other higher education sectors, such as community colleges and less resourced institutions. Also, I do not compare Black women's experiences in my dissertation to women of different racial backgrounds or to students of different genders. It was important to focus on Black women's stories to add to the literature and to apply my personal and research knowledge on Black women's experiences for this dissertation. Initially, I viewed conducting interviews through video conferencing as a limitation. As a former rape crisis counselor, I had experienced the intimacy of an in-person conversation and felt it would not translate to Zoom. However, video conferencing became the norm of communication during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the participants were using video conferencing to take classes and connect with loved ones. This familiarity with the technology

aided my data collection and fostered the kind of connection with participants I wanted. However, technical difficulties such as dropped calls, lost signal, and inaudible words were a challenge. As an active listener, I was able to get participants back on their train of thought if there was a technology interruption.

Chapter 4 Black Women's Experiences of Gendered Racism and Racialized Sexual Harassment on Campus

Research on campus sexual assault can often obscure or leave out discussions of the campus environment. In a systematic review of 383 peer reviewed articles on campus sexual assault, Harris and colleagues (2020) found studies rarely mentioned campus cultures or the "sociohistorical contexts" of US higher education institutions (p. 30). When discussed at all, the spaces of interest tended to be housing and party spaces, not students' experiences in classrooms or going to offices for advising appointments. This focus on the site of sexual assault, which often occurs in private or secluded corners of a social event, obscures the importance of the campus space for the sexual harms experienced by Black women and non-binary students. I found that campus space—including academic and co-curricular space not focused on socializing— structured both the sexual harm and difficulties finding useful supports experienced by my participants. This chapter details how forty-six Black women and non-binary participants made meaning of their social world in higher education, highlighting the ways racism and sexism, referred to here as gendered racism, collaborated to limit their college and graduate school aspirations.

Of the sample, 32 participants attended predominantly white institutions for undergrad or graduate school. Discussions of the campus social geography and their sense of belonging or exclusion functioned as prologues to experiences of unwanted sex and assault on PWIs. Being a Black woman on campuses or in classes with few students of color and fewer Black students, participants described being both invisible and highly visible. For Black women at HBCUs

(n=14), their sense of community was more stable and supportive, especially for students at Spelman College — a historically Black women's college. However, participants still experienced gendered racism in their interactions. As Black women at Black institutions, they encountered intraracial hierarchies that interrupted and challenged their academic and professional goals (Commodore et al., 2018).

In addition to detailing the interracial and intraracial forms of exclusion Black women and non-binary students experienced in higher education, I also highlight the frequency of participants mentioning racialized sexual harassment on PWIs and HBCUs. The particular social position and corresponding controlling images ascribed to young Black women led to ubiquitous experiences of unwanted sexual attention, touching, and street harassment across institution types (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Collins, 2000; Gómez, 2022). The harassment often emerged outside of participant narratives of specific incidents of sexual assault, which were the focus of the interviews. Understanding the ways Black women and non-binary students mapped the social structure of their campuses as racialized and gendered— for some also ableist and heterosexist— brings the context of higher education institutions back into the frame. Understanding participants everyday experiences with gendered racism on campus not only corrects the individualistic conclusions in the extant literature, but also aids in analyzing Black women students' legal consciousness of sexual assault and reporting. How people make meaning of their social position within their communities and view sources of authority as helpful or antagonistic are important for understanding their perceptions of the law (Marshall, 2003; Nielsen, 2000). Through their narratives, Black women participants connected these everyday experiences of gendered racism to the incidents of sexual assault. The ubiquity of gendered racism on campus shaped how Black women viewed reporting options.

Throughout the chapter, I anonymize some institutions and name others. By naming institutions where Black women and non-binary students experienced harassment, some elite and well-resourced universities, readers will observe how institutions with histories of excluding Black women reproduce gendered racism. In a few cases, matching storytellers with multiple marginalized identities (race, gender identity, class, and occupation) with institution names threatened the privacy of participants, especially at PWIs, because there are so few Black students. In those cases, I do not name the institutions.

Mapping Racial Geographies at Predominantly White Campuses

Black women and non-binary participants who attended predominantly white institutions emphasized the whiteness of their campus environments, stressing the dominance of hierarchical structures that put them at a disadvantage. Gloria explained her decision to attend the University of Virginia was "purely" financial and that she enrolled even before visiting the campus. When I asked Gloria to describe the culture of UVa, she responded:

> I think a pinnacle of UVa culture is that there's a place at UVa called The Corner. It's basically a row of all the stores and restaurants that students frequent. And one of them was called the Southern Prep. That was the name of the store. And if you go in, it essentializes exactly what that is, like bow ties, and bright-colored dress shirts. I'm not sure what the word is for this dress that I guess antebellum Southern women wear, but essentially a modernized version of that dress. I mean, that's what UVa culture was.

For Gloria, the presence of Southern Prep and campus rituals like "Girls in Pearls and Guys in Ties" emphasized the importance of "white southern tradition" that was foreign to her as the daughter of Ghanaian immigrants and a first-generation college student. The unwelcoming dominant culture made finding community in her transition to college challenging.

Sharee communicated the whiteness of the midwestern Selective Liberal Arts Campus (SLAC) she attended by stressing the rurality of the space, "You get off the bus. It's in the

middle of nowhere… I'm in the woods. There is no town. The nearest town is like a 12-minute drive away. They've got a Wal-Mart. That's all that's going on over there." This isolated and quaint environment where students lived in residence halls shaped like "tiny little castles" was different from her upbringing in Chicago. As Sharee's narrative unfolded, the isolated location, far from the Black and Latinx people of her pre-college life, represented an early warning of the gendered racism she would experience. For Josephine, living on a college campus during the 2016 elections revealed white supremacist sentiments at her campus. Josephine recalled the night of the election as "the most terrifying night ever" as she walked across campus, seeing the sudden appearance of Trump flags outside residence hall windows and hearing students chanting his name. Taking the time to paint the setting for their college journey and experience of unwanted sex and assault, Black women and non-binary students named multiple systems of power that ultimately shaped the sexual harm and gaps in support they experienced.

Several Black women framed their descriptions of campus around recent racist incidents at or near their institution. During Josephine's junior year a campus police officer, a white man, murdered a Black high school student. Josephine expressed disappointment in her institution for delaying sanctions against the officer (who was later acquitted for the murder). In another anecdote Josephine shared students of color in dance groups were routinely kicked out of the library, the only campus space open for nightly rehearsals. The general lack of attention to the concerns of students of color showed Josephine, "that the institution is there to protect the institution, and if you're not with that, then tough shit, essentially." Jade attended a public PWI in the Midwest and began her narrative saying, "The cops there and the people, like some of them were just really, really racist." More specifically, Jade described an incident where the Black president of the school was verbally accosted by white students in a passing pickup truck.

Athena, a participant at a Big Ten campus, also experienced abuse from passing cars "pulling over and yelling monkey noises and then driving off" in a midwestern college town. The ubiquity of racist harassment marked the campus space and surrounding areas as unwelcoming and potentially lethal for Black people.

These descriptions of racist incidents often do not coexist with narratives of campus sexual assault in the research literature, but for the Black women and nonbinary students I interviewed they are essential to understanding how they saw themselves as unprotected by the institution. Taylor illustrated this in her narrative about American University:

> I don't know if you've heard that it made national news… there was a crime targeted at the first Black female president of the student government, and then toward AKA, historically Black sororities. There were banana nooses…coming into Freshman year with the knowledge that this is the precedent that has been set. It's a lack of accountability for racial threats targeted at Black women, so already going in knowing you're lacking support also plays into whether or not you're willing to seek resources from the administration.

Following up on the story, I learned American University's first Black woman student government president Taylor Dumpson received a barrage of racist and sexist messages online, prompted by Neo-Nazi bloggers (Padilla, 2019). With all the hate and harassment on campus and online, she never assumed office as president. Taylor, as a participant, felt so strongly that this incident framed her university experience that she chose her pseudonym as homage to Dumpson.

Some participants indicated marginalization by describing campus demographics. Anna Julia described herself as a "Black student in a very white space" referring to the private, Catholic midwestern university she attended for undergrad. Mae shared her elite private northeastern college was only 8% Black. Both women came from educational environments where they were one of a few Black girls. Mae grew up in a diverse suburb outside of Washington D.C., but in high school, Mae's academic pathways were shaped by race and class.

Though her school was predominantly Latinx, all her advanced placement and honor's level classes "were predominantly white" including a STEM program that "was mostly white and mostly male." Anna Julia graduated from a large high school with 1900 students, yet only 100 students were Black. Even though being one of a few Black girls was not new for them in college, Anna Julia and Mae still battled gendered racism on their campuses.

Attending a PWI for some Black women and non-binary participants was their first time being minoritized in an education space. Growing up in an "affluent Black community" Viola was accustomed to seeing people who looked like her all the time. She remarked on the transition to college, "I was used to having support, but not at a PWI." Giselle, a nonbinary student, excelled in majority Black schools and "never felt insecure about being smart because I was Black or because I was a woman" until college. Similarly, Athena shared this of their transition to a large midwestern public institution:

> I always knew my Blackness because it was so obvious, it was so there the same way that white people forget they're white. I forgot that I was Black because everything was Black… and then I came here [to PWI] and I noticed it is so many white people. There were times where I would be the only person of color in class, and so I felt connected to my Blackness in defense of it in a way that I'd never had to before.

Positive pre-college educational experiences where Black women and nonbinary students felt secure in their identities underscored how the whiteness of the campus changed how they learned. Having to manage racist comments in classes, defending Blackness, and bracing for gendered racism burdened Black women students.

(In)Visibility of Black Women on Campus

Being one of a few Black women on PWIs was salient for many participants as they described their lives on campus. Participants described instances of their identity or right to pursue higher education being unseen by white institutional actors. Being invisible accompanied

instances where white students, faculty, and staff disregarded Black women and non-binary students' voices, aspirations, and even their actual physical presence. Other times, the same actors would suddenly put Black women and non-binary students on the spot, hyper-focusing on their race, gender, class, and sexuality with an objectifying curiosity. In this way, the whiteness of the space, people, and attitudes made Black women the target of suspicion, distrust, and outright disdain. The uneven social terrain of predominantly white institutions allowed very few spaces where Black women and femme students felt fully legible as pursuers of knowledge, fun, and development— the hallmarks of a "college experience."

(In)visibility in Academic Spaces

Several participants discussed first year classroom experiences as representative of the gendered racism they encountered daily. Athena, a non-binary Black student who grew up in a predominantly Black community where they never had to defend their Blackness (but did defend themselves against harassment based on their fat and femme-identity), only noticed "the distrust that is naturally thrown our way" when they began college. In one example, Athena described taking a test in class and having the moderator tap their shoulder to demand they sit in the front to complete the test. The assumption they were cheating was something Athena experienced frequently in college. Sharing these stories with other Black students, Athena heard "that happens to [Black students] all the time." Athena reflected further explaining, "I think [other Black students who] grew up in areas where that was normalized or maybe they experienced things with police officers where they knew that their bodies were untrustworthy in that way, but I didn't have too many experiences like that" until attending a PWI. Giselle, who identified as non-binary and queer, recalled being in lab groups in their first-year science classes where white students would actively ignore their comments. Giselle elaborated:

> I went to a of majority Black grade schools, so I think in that space I never felt insecure about being smart because I was Black or because I was a woman, but I think that was the first time where I really felt that stark feeling of, oh, students in class really don't listen to me. Before I had gotten to [PWI], I was in this pre-med program in high school. Although I don't feel like I was super prepared, I at least knew anatomy. That was one thing I felt like I was confident about. We had a lab for one of the Biology classes. I just remember being in our little lab groups. I would be like, "Oh yes, that's called the xiphoid process" or, "that's called" -- whatever, and then having people kind of like brush me off, or second guess it, or have to fact check behind me in a way that they wouldn't do to other students.

For Athena and Giselle, all Black K-12 environments made them feel secure in their intelligence as Black youths, yet those pillars of confidence were destabilized by white educational authorities and peers. They felt, for the first time, untrustworthy and unseen in educational spaces.

Some participants shared ways white students objectified Blackness in classroom spaces, affecting their sense of belonging. Anna Julia reflected being one of three Black students in a huge Biology class and hearing a white student make a comment about nappy hair. She added, “I'm convinced that white people don't actually have any concept of what the hell nappy is. You have no working reference, no cultural reference, no historical reference. You're just co-opting the language of Black folk, and also just doing it wrong.” For Anna Julia, the combination of being one of a few Black students and hearing white students co-opt or mock her culture contributed to her decision to switch from Pre-Med to double majoring in Women’s studies and African American studies. The STEM pre-med track “wasn’t a space that was friendly to Black folk…it came with a forced assimilation and a forced self-minimalizing” that Anna Julia refused to do. After Harriet graduated from Spelman College, she attended a PWI for graduate school. The transition was an “all-around environmental shift” after being surrounded by other Black women students. Harriet expected the graduate student population at a prestigious PWI to be

"culturally aware and sensitive," so she was hopeful about her new beginning. One of her first experiences on campus, Harriet revealed, "I had an issue where someone felt the liberty to come up and touch my hair while I'm registering for classes." This incident had a "lingering effect" as she noticed more "micro-racism" in her classes. Harriet was often the only person of color in her graduate classes, which made her hyper-visible when topics of race surfaced. People in the class would turn to her to be the spokesperson for all Black people, a stark departure from her HBCU learning environment. Being the "spokesperson" or token added a layer of stress to learning that white students did not have to deal with in pursuit of higher education.

For Rebecca, a Black woman currently finishing her PhD in a highly ranked STEM program, her undergrad experience at an elite mid-Atlantic SLAC was "the most imposter syndrome I had ever felt." It was striking to both of us as Black women doctoral candidates with several years in academia behind us. Rebecca keeps her diploma behind her, visible in the video conference window as a reminder of what she endured. When I talked to Mae, she was a current undergrad at a northeastern elite SLAC on the Pre-Med track. During the interview, Mae interrupted her train of thought to share an experience that happened recently with a program administrator who actively discouraged her saying, "You can't do this; you're going to fail." Mae shared the administrator's comments with a friend in her major and noticed a stark difference in advising. Mae elaborated:

> [the white student] told me that this same administrator has always told her, 'Oh, you should really consider taking classes over the summer,' and has always been very encouraging. My friend is white. It kind of makes you wonder. It just kind of really builds up like 'can I really do this? Should I be doing this?'

With the support of her mother— who Mae called often in tears— who told her, "You can't let them force you out of what you want to do," Mae received the affirmation needed to counteract

the gendered racism at play. Across a spectrum of interactions with white faculty, administrators and students, Black women and non-binary students described feeling unseen.

(In)visibility on Campus

Gendered racist interactions extended beyond the classroom to participant's daily lives on predominantly white campuses. Giselle described walking around Georgetown University and "there's like four white people spread out across the street and none of them will move out of your way. You have to like get into the street or sideways your way through them." Reminiscent of Jim Crow laws requiring Black people to relinquish public space to white people, Giselle added, "I feel like that's a very small way that [white students] show they don't see you or they deserve space more than you." These small potent inequities communicated to Giselle and other Black students they did not have a right to occupy "space" at Georgetown. Participants also encountered racism in diversity related work they hoped would support other students of color on PWIs. Athena worked as a multicultural housing resident advisor, meaning if a person's roommate called them the N-word they would go to Athena. Other RAs dealt with noise complaints while, Athena "got to see some of the nastiest things and nastiest people on campus because I worked there for three years." On top of the trauma of knowing intimately what other Black students endured, housing leadership would question Athena's reports at student staff meetings. Athena reflected on how their position was treated differently, "Why when my white co-workers report stuff it goes by without a hitch, but when I report stuff, there is so much follow up, so much making sure that I saw it right or I read it right." While Athena was drawn to the position because of their passion for social justice, Athena dubbed this university action as "radically insignificant" in the sense that it was a rare policy for a PWI to have, but the position did not come with power or resources to disrupt or change social conditions for students

marginalized by race. In the end, Athena saw the role as "fake-discipline [for] racist, homophobic, sexist, ableist people" and a symbolic attempt by the Big 10 university to appear inclusive.

Sharee's first couple weeks of school were characterized by "rough" experiences that demonstrated the gendered racism and classism embedded in her midwestern elite SLAC. As mentioned above, Sharee choose a PWI, in part, to "escape" her home life in Chicago. Sharee had always taken charge of her education, choosing her high school, applying to colleges and scholarships, and going on college visits alone through pre-college programs. Sharee wanted the chance to "learn a different side of myself" and "genuinely focus" on her academics. She and her white first-year roommate chatted over the phone and added each other on Facebook over the summer, sharing their interests in fashion and bonding over losing grandparents. At the time, Sharee used her school's logo as a profile picture, so her white roommate had not "registered that I was Black." Sharee self-described herself as the "nerdy Black girl from the projects" and suspected her posts about liking Joss Stone and Avril Lavigne made the digital version of herself palpable to her roommate, who gave off "Gossip Girl vibes" hailing from NYC's Upper East Side.

Sharee set the scene her arrival: "when I walked in, she seemed startled. She came for a pre-orientation program. She moved out within nine days … because, in her words, 'She's Black, and I think she's from the projects. I'm scared she'll cut me.'" The remark about "cutting" was characteristic of Sharee's nerdy, pop culture infused humor. She was quoting a popular *MadTV* sketch character Bon Qui Qui who popularized the phrase "I'm a cut you." Sharee, just being herself, said their room would be about studying and joked that the roommate needed to speak up if there was something getting in the way of that, adding for emphasis, "If you don't speak up,

I'm a cut you." Listening to her story, reminded me of my mother's experience at Millikin University (a PWI in Illinois) in the 1970s, when her white first-year roommate moved out because she was also a Black, nerdy girl from Chicago. Adding my own tensions with my white first year roommate at the University of Notre Dame in the early 2000s created this personal and empirical realization that all three of us had experienced a particular form of classed, gendered racism at predominantly white institutions. This experience for Sharee marked her as an "outsider" among white and Black students. Sharee's Black classmates did not want to associate with "that kind of Black" at an elite PWI. Multiple and interlocking systems of racism, sexism, and classism snatched Sharee's dream of college away from her almost immediately.

Black women and non-binary participants also described looks or interactions with white students that conveyed fascination with their Blackness. In these instances, white students expressed a strange mix of admiration and objectification of a participant's race, gender expression, and sexuality that made participants uneasy. Giselle, who highlighted their experiences of feeling invisible on campus, also shared interactions that made them feel their Black queerness was "eroticized" by white students. Giselle shared white students would stare intently at Giselle's hair and makeup, pepper them with questions about Black music artists, and "overly" want to be friends. Giselle saw it as an "over infatuation" based on their Black queer-femme identity and presentation that did not make Giselle feel welcomed, but rather like a "petting zoo experience." As Gloria started identifying as queer in her second year, she did not find a queer of color or Black queer community at University of Virginia. As described above, white southern culture characterized the social terrain of the campus. To explore her identity, she attended events mostly organized by white queer women. In those spaces Gloria shared feeling "fetishized" for her Blackness and sexuality. Gloria explained:

> Going to their functions, a lot of the times I felt very fetishized. Fetishized not only sexually, but just the idea of them being able to have a Black woman in their circle was I guess a big deal. I think it was good for my ego, but in retrospect, I didn't have real connections with those people. They weren't people that pushed me to be a better person or to really question anything about my queerness or about my identity.

In these overly excited interactions, white students hyper focused on Gloria and Giselle's Blackness and sought friendships with them as an accomplishment of being seen with someone "cool" or making their majority white group seem progressive. As Gloria clarified, these relationships were one-sided and not spaces where Black women could explore their queerness alongside race. Black women and non-binary students felt commodified by these overly friendly white students who desired association with Blackness, but no genuine interest in engaging with them as whole people.

Finding Community and Affirmation at Historically Black Campuses

For Black women attending HBCUs, many started their narrative explaining how they chose their college to avoid the racism described by participants at PWIs. Naomie purposely choose an HBCU because of her pre-college experiences in majority white areas in the US. Attending an HBCU gave Naomie an environment where she could "thrive" and "be free" of the racism and the lack of cultural affirmation she expected at a PWI. Angie avoided applying to public PWIs because they were "majority just like white women, and I was like 'that's not the population I want to be with.'" Black women also sought out HBCUs to immerse themselves and grow in their Black identity when pre-college experiences prevented that. Naomie took full advantage of her HBCU experience, serving as a leader in academic, professional, and cultural organizations. Serena was a military kid, which functioned as her dominant culture growing up. Serena observed her father would not discuss race because of his position in the military. When

Serena discovered HBCUs as a possibility at a college fair, she applied to several and chose one with her preferred sport. She was excited to have a Black woman coach in her sport for the first time. Serena commented on her undergraduate institution saying she was "affirmed and re-affirmed" as a Black woman, something she did not experience growing up in military culture. Harriet, who also grew up in a military family, echoed these statements. The constant moving and being in environments where there were few Black people, attending an HBCU was her "end-all-be-all." Like Serena, Harriet "loved" attending an HBCU and called it a second home. Letitia felt supported at her HBCU as an international student from Nigeria. Except for a few "administrative issues" Letitia was enjoying her economics major and living on campus.

Being in a space "designed for Black women" was vital for Black women attending Spelman College. Martha explained that at Spelman, "I knew that I wouldn't encounter racism or sexism. If someone didn't like me or a person had a challenge with me, it was because of me. It wasn't because of these external social constructs." Not having to battle gendered racism allowed Black women to explore their academic and social interests. Martha highlighted the value of gaining a deeper understanding of "the diversity within the Diaspora" through spending time with Afro Caribbean and Afro-Latina students. She was able to both appreciate similarities and differences within Blackness and to reflect on her upbringing in Southern Black culture. With Spelman being a part of the Atlanta University Center, Martha loved being exposed to different speakers, classes, and resources at the surrounding campuses of Clark Atlanta University and Morehouse College. Harriet echoed these aspects of Spelman College, saying she deepened her social analysis of issues affecting the Black community and came up with her graduate research interest on Black women in active military service and vets. Being at Spelman was a respite from Harriet's background as military kid in a "macho or boys club environment." Angie felt

protected and safe at Spelman. When she started school, Angie struggled with insomnia and enjoyed the opportunity to walk around campus at 2 am because Spelman's campus is closed and monitored by campus security. Unlike Black participants at PWIs, Angie felt campus security was there to keep her safe, rather than to monitor and harass Black students. Angie shared "I don't think I could have walked around at night and been equally safe" at another university because at Spelman, her life and educational goals as a Black woman were valued.

Cracks in Community

Black women at HBCUs expressed gratitude for their college and graduate school experiences being surrounded by other Black students and learning from Black mentors inside and outside the classroom. Alongside praise, Black women included critiques of their institutions, revealing cracks in support for Black students with other marginalized identities. Participants mentioned gender separation and visitation policies in housing at HBCUs as barriers to inclusion for Black non-binary, trans, and queer students. Serena and Martha critiqued the implicit assumption of heterosexuality through the policies and language about socializing. Serena remarked on the assumption that a romantic or sexual partnership was heterosexual translated to how HBCUs responded to sexual assault. She elaborated, "to think only sexual assault can happen to a woman or just in a hetero-sexual relationship?" reflected a lack of attention to inclusion issues within the institution. Naomie viewed some of the policies at her and other HBCUs, such as regulating what students wear or prohibiting locs, as a reluctance to let go of "traditional" ways. Naomie knew campus administrators cared about her and other students but wished student voices could be centered more.

Black women also expressed disappointment in their HBCUs for failing to specifically support and rally around racial justice efforts for Black women. Anna Julia reflected on her time

at Howard University as highlights and lowlights, pointing to barriers she faced as a Black woman. Anna Julia came to graduate school to pursue her "ministry" of understanding and improving the experiences of Black women leaders in education. Anna Julia faced on-going resistance to her chosen topic saying department leaders frequently discouraged her focus on Black women's perspectives. Further, she experienced racialized gender harassment when a non-Black faculty research advisor compared her assistantship to slavery, saying "I ask you to do something, and you just do it." This comment activated Anna Julia's trauma radar as a survivor and a Black woman. She explained, "And I remember that sent me into a trigger that day because having somewhat of a bit of knowledge on how slavery was for Black women, it reminded me that that also included lack of body autonomy." Serena mentioned similar resistance to her work as a Black woman in athletics at an HBCU. When she started in the department, a colleague recommended she tread carefully around male co-workers, for fear her gender and sexuality would be viewed as part of her advancement in the unit. Black women at HBCUs wanted institutional change, including spaces for Black women in the form of women's centers. Anna Julia organized a well-researched proposal and presented it to campus leaders, but she received no follow-up. Renewed conversations about a women's center after Kamala Harris' Vice-Presidency were viewed with some skepticism, as Black women did not want to be seen as a "fad" and later forgotten. Finally, the deepest sources of strain for Black women at HBCUs were their experiences of sexual harassment and assault.

Racialized Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment remains prevalent on college campuses. The American Association of Universities (AAU) climate study of 181,752 students at 33 campuses in 2019 found more than half of undergraduate women (59%) and nearly two thirds of Trans/ GenderQueer, and Non-

binary students reported at least one form of sexual harassment during school (Cantor et al., 2020). Research on Black women, in college and in workplaces, reveals the kinds of harassment they experience is often racialized, combining "aspects of both race and gender oppression" (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002, p. 111). Racialized sexual harassment, defined by Buchanan and Ormerod (2002), is unwanted sexual attention, touching, or sexual coercion that also invokes harmful stereotypes of Black women's sexuality and physical attributes. Black women and nonbinary students described a wide range of sexually harassing behaviors, from comments about their butts to quid pro quo demands for sex or dates. This section shows the range of racialized sexual harassment, highlighting the variety of spaces Black women found unsafe. Party spaces were particularly dangerous for Black women in how gendered racism created a particular experience of sexual vulnerability. This section argues racialized sexual harassment is a harbinger of sexual assault in that it structures and normalizes the lack of respect for Black women's bodies.

Interracial Sexual Harassment

Black women described the sexual attention they received from white students that reenforced harmful stereotypes about their race and gender. Dania, an Afro-Latina woman experienced daily harassment from a white man in her graduate program at Loyola University Chicago. He made "very sexually inappropriate" comments in front of other students. The harassment kept happening after Dania clearly expressed she wasn't interested. Ariana expressed hearing sexualized comments from white men desiring sex with Black women to experience "something different" or to produce "cute" mixed race children. It angered her when a white woman professor gushed over children with Black and Asian parentage. When men from other racial backgrounds approached Ariana, she reacted with suspicion wondering "maybe they just

want me for sex or they only want to like have kids that are like mixed, or whatnot." These narratives of exotic sex and exotic looking children revealed to Ariana that non-Black communities refused to "cherish" Black women as full human beings. Alex experienced similar stereotypes in her attempts to date during college at a PWI. White and Asian men would say things like "I want to be with a Black girl before I leave college" which frustrated Alex. Being on "somebody's bucket list" made her feel her Blackness and gender was reduced to a sexual accomplishment. These attitudes contextualized the harassment, unwanted sex, and assault Black women later described.

Giselle described being groped and verbally harassed, mostly by white men. During second year, Giselle befriended a white man student in the same apartment complex. After hanging out one night, Giselle hugged him to say goodbye and he grabbed their butt "with both of his hands during our hug." Giselle was shocked, but the guy seemed amused and "thought it was funny." Giselle left and never hung out with him again. Alex discussed how being groped in social situations and on dates made her strategize ways to not let men "have access to you" by siting on the other side of the table. Navigating unwanted sexual contact, especially in public, proved challenging as Black women transitioned to college. During Ariana's first year at a large southern PWI, she befriended another Black woman, Alyssa, in her biology class. Alyssa began hanging with Davis, a white male classmate, who would walk with them towards the residence halls after class. During their walks or shared meals, Davis repeatedly groped Ariana, touching her butt and thighs, making her uncomfortable. She explained, "he just always would kind of get close to me and just kind of like always try to find a way to touch me in any way shape or form and I didn't understand it." As a Black queer woman, this unwanted sexual contact from white

men baffled Ariana. To escape it, Ariana used the conclusion of the class to break contact with Alyssa and Davis.

Racialized Sexual Harassment and Colorism

Mixed race Black women described unwanted sexual attention and harassment through the lens of colorism. Taylor noticed subtle differences in the racialized sexual harassment she experienced in her midwestern hometown and during college in Washington D.C. As one of the few women of color in her mostly white high school, Taylor's mixed-race identity translated to a "perceived sexual promiscuity" that made her a target of sexualized remarks and unwanted sexual contact by white boys. On her university campus, the unwanted sexual harassment continued but switched to Black men fetishizing her for being light skinned. Taylor explained one interaction with another mixed-race Black man who called her "dangerously pretty because I'm light-skinned and exotic or whatever." For Taylor, who had a strong connection to her Black identity and studies Black women's experiences of sexual harassment, it angered her how Black men would name her skin tone as an excuse for groping and touching her inappropriately. Tessa also described unwanted sexual attention from Black and white men who fixated on her light skin. When Tessa started college, she immersed herself in the Black student community at her PWI. She noticed Black men complimented her look or said she was "the most eligible because you're the lightest-skinned." Tessa reflected on this saying:

> Dude, telling me that I'm light-skinned doesn't turn me on. That's kind of an insecurity for me. I think I felt that oftentimes that is why people were attracted to me on a base level was like this, 'Oh, she's Black, but she's not really Black.'

These colorist comments angered Tessa, as it represented "the same bullshit that we've been doing for centuries," and reinforced white supremacist beauty and reproductive ideals within the Black community.

In another instance, Tessa described being stalked by a white male student, in the first weeks of her first year. He was not in her classes or social circle and out of nowhere, began following her. Tessa explained:

> He would show up to where I was on campus, and then he would follow me or talk with me and wouldn't leave me alone…He would talk to me about dating or why I should date him. I didn't know him … He had just identified me as somebody that he was interested in.

The white student tried to sell himself to Tessa, boasting about his wealthy, prestigious family background. At first, Tessa tried to avoid him or prevent him from identifying her residence hall. As the harassment persisted and escalated to unwanted physical contact, Tessa pointed out the absurdity of his actions saying, "I've never insinuated to you that I was interested in dating." He responded by insulting her with sexist epithets. This jarring experience was a "weird" way of starting college. Lauryn also described being fetishized as a mixed-race Black woman in relationships. When she dated a white male student, he would use their relationship as an accomplishment, boasting "oh, I have a Black girlfriend." Lauryn noticed he used his interest in her as an excuse to make racist jokes. She also experienced unwanted attention with other students of color, who Lauryn dubbed as "team light-skin," who hyper-focused on her skin color, but showed no interest in her as a person. These inter and intraracial interactions frustrated mixed race Black women because it represented a preference for whiteness within their Blackness that haunted their relationships and personal sense of bodily security.

Racialized Sexual Harassment at HBCUs

Black women at historically Black college campuses also described racialized sexual harassment. Serena played volleyball in high school and college and felt comfortable when her fellow teammates slapped each other on the butt in athletic camaraderie. However, during college other students, especially Black men, would touch her body and make sexualized comments. Students created a bullying website directed at Serena and her teammates, making up rumors about their sexual activity. As a curvy, thicker woman Serena had experienced unwanted sexual attention from men her whole life. She stated, “I can remember hearing comments from older men regarding how I look or people saying I'm developed or look older than what I am, etc., regardless of my facial structure, or voice, or whatever.” This trend continued in her experience as a student and a staff member. Serena worked at an athletic department at an HBCU. When she started the position, another employee repeatedly tried to touch her and violate her personal space. At a staff gathering, he propositioned Serena for sex, which shocked and diminished her ability to do her job. Serena added:

> He didn't violate physically. But still it made me feel uncomfortable to the point where I would avoid rooms he was in or had to be in a group setting to have conversations. He even would text me from time to time. I was like, ‘No, I don't want to respond.’

Being a Black woman in athletics, Serena had to combat unwanted sexual attention in a male dominated field.

Crystal experienced racialized sexual harassment at her field placement while she attended Prairie View A & M. Crystal worked in a facility with elderly patients as part of her nursing degree. A nursing assistant, a Black man, would “always give [her] compliments” and asked her out. Crystal rebuffed his advances because she was not interested and she was technically his supervisor. One evening, while Crystal was working with the nursing assistant, he made more overtly sexual comments. Crystal said:

> I think I was playing some song, mostly every song has something to do with sex. And the person in the song said something sexual, and [the nursing assistant] was like, 'Oh, you want me to do that to you?' I was like, 'What?!' I think it was Summer Walker's *Girls Need Love* when she was like, "I just need some dick.' And he was like 'Oh, is that what you need? I can give that to you.' He said something in that manner. So I'm like, 'What the hell!?'

As a Black woman trying to build her professional career in medicine, Crystal was shocked and annoyed by his unwanted sexual advances. With more positional authority, Crystal tried to handle it herself, telling him his behavior was inappropriate and to stop, saying she did not want to have to report him. Crystal shared that he "didn't really say sorry" and disregarded her requests for help with aggressive patients as retaliation. The harassment compromised her field placement and delayed her degree completion.

Anna Julia disclosed a traumatic abuse of power she experienced as a graduate student at Howard University. Her transition to graduate school created economic strains from moving to a more expensive city. When Anna Julia's financial aid refund was delayed by four months, she visited student services for help. She spent most of the day in line, until a senior administrator approached and offered to resolve the issue. The administrator, a Black man, walked her to his office and something was immediately off to Anna Julia. The administrator neglected to turn on his office lights, leaving the room dark. Anna Julia recalled:

> One of his co-workers actually walks in the office and says, 'Why y'all sitting in the dark?' I was like, 'Yeah, I'm wondering that, too.' A woman, because she's like this looks weird. And at that moment, red flags started really going off in me, like hey, something ain't right here.

The administrator ignored these comments and made a show of "pretending to click on things" and calling someone to disburse her aid that day. After one moment of relief for finally getting her aid, the administrator switched gears saying, "Now that I've done that for you, here's what I

want you to do for me… I've got your number through your student account. You've got to let me take you out." Anna Julia felt her skin “crawling” and said whatever she needed to escape. Yet, the administrator already demonstrated he would use access to her information and likely use his power over student financial aid to coerce her. The administrator called and emailed her daily. She ignored the messages to prevent escalation on his part. The situation still activated Anna Julia years later, sharing:

> I didn't know what was going to happen, and if you are bold enough to leave me in a dark office and play this quid pro quo situation, you're bold enough to do whatever it is you want to do. In addition to that, you've got my class schedule. You know where I'm at. You know where I live. My mind went to every horror story about how women are targeted and victimized, not to mention my own aunt was murdered after leaving her own campus by somebody who had stalked her, who worked at the campus. So, I know this personally. I know this story.

This instance of sexual harassment deeply affected Anna Julia’s sense of safety and bodily autonomy. The layered power dynamics of a senior administrator with unlimited access to her whereabouts indicated danger. This man’s power to destroy her financial well-being and practiced predatory behavior of picking someone needing help further signified she could not rely on the institution to ensure her safety. Anna Julia’s own family history with her aunt’s murder on a university campus all combined to demonstrate her social position as a Black woman — even on a Black campus— was not protected.

Angie, who attended Spelman, talked about two incidents where men followed her at night. In the first, Angie noticed a man taking the same shortcuts as her toward the Spelman campus. Once she knew campus safety could see her, she confronted the guy and scared him off. Another time, Angie and other Spelman women were followed by Black male students who cat-called them. Angie again pushed back, declaring “Stop following us!” She also reported the men to public safety, who stopped them from following her and her friends. Angie felt safe at

Spelman, knowing the public safety staff wanted to protect students. That knowledge seemed to empower Angie to rebuke street harassers. She explained, “I've been more aggressive and, I think, protective of myself in that way. Even in other situations that's not that, I'm more willing to speak my mind and say stuff and be more bold.”

The striking difference in Angie’s narrative demonstrates the ways race and gender interact in Black women’s experiences of sexual harassment at HBCUs. Participants from Spelman spoke with confidence and affection for their institution. Angie’s praise of campus security officers was rare across the entire sample of Black women and non-binary students. For participants from Spelman College, who were all cis-gendered women, they connected their sense of safety and educational success to being on a campus “designed for Black women.” Black women at other HBCUs enjoyed much of their institutional experiences, however their gender and sexuality remained areas of subornation. Anna Julia encapsulated these nuances when she said, “I tell people all the time Howard is a beautiful place to be Black, and it's an incredibly tough place to be a Black woman.” Exploring the intersectional failures (Crenshaw, 1991b) of PWIs and HBCUs is necessary to eradicate systems of race, gender, sexuality, and class that create sexual vulnerability and reproduce barriers to Black women and non-binary students’ academic and professional success in higher education.

Racialized Sexual Harassment at Parties

In the first month of school, Sharee attended a party where there were few Black students. Even though she did not drink, Sharee attended to dance “as Black people dance” and enjoyed mixing it up among different groups of dancers. A white student came up to Sharee and she started dancing near him. Sharee continued the story:

> And while we were dancing, he went ahead and proceeded to just put his hands down my pants and start groping me… I was like, 'What the fuck? What's wrong with you?"' I pushed him off of me, and he was like, 'What do you mean this is not okay? *I do this to Black girls all the time*. [emphasis added]'

The incident with her white roommate moving out, and then experiencing a sexual assault at a party with the explicit articulation by the assailant that her Black womanhood made her a target altered Sharee's expectations for her college experience. Unwanted sexual touching during parties robbed Black women and non-binary students of their bodily autonomy and right to have fun.

Returning to Gloria's vivid description of University of Virginia, Black women and non-binary students noticed how social spaces on PWIs were often designed for white, wealthy men. Taylor, who attended American University, mentioned party spaces being "segregated" with AU Black students attending parties with other Black students at Howard or Georgetown. Pauli, a non-binary Black student in D.C. corroborated this trend, adding "At a white party, it's not really as if they know each other, but at a Black party, it's like everyone knows each other." The tightly networked nature of Black campus life at PWIs both increased the level of camaraderie and intensified the surveillance of Black women. Everything women and non-binary students did at parties would be recorded and shared throughout the network.

Since party spaces on campus were claimed by white students, Black women mostly attended parties off campus or at apartments rented by Black students. C.J. attended a southern public PWI and described parties sponsored by Black Greek organizations off campus with students having to cross state lines to attend. At Tessa's northeastern PWI, Black students at her school and surrounding colleges would put on joint events in town or at student's private apartments. Off campus gathering trends created scenarios where Black women and non-binary

students could not leave uncomfortable or dangerous party situations, being far from campus (Hirsch & Khan, 2020).

Some PWIs invested in Black student organizations, with Columbia's Black Student Organization having social gatherings on campus or the Black House (a residence and social space) at Georgetown University. These areas made finding and cultivating Black community easier than at other PWIs. Participants still noticed unequal treatment. One participant familiar with the Black House shared:

> Frequently we host parties a lot - just student parties - and our parties consistently get shut down before midnight all the time, and it's wild because you'll see white people partying until 3:00 a.m. and nothing happens. Nobody gets called.

Black students at PWIs must work harder to create social spaces and even established Black social spaces receive disproportionate attention by police and neighbors.

Black women and non-binary students described being grabbed sexually and groped at in Black party spaces. Pauli stated, "the party atmosphere is very violent towards Black women in terms of if you're dancing, someone thinks they can just come up and grab you or grope you." Letitia, who attended an HBCU, shared, "So I'm throwing it back on someone at the party, and then he's trying to grab my breasts or something weird like that. Things like that happen sometimes, and it's like, 'Eww, No! This is not what's happening.'" Participants hated the frequency of unwanted sexual touching they received when they just wanted to dance and have fun. Cam had to get herself out of numerous uncomfortable interactions at clubs. As a bisexual woman, Cam hung out with other queer Black students in the city during her graduate program. Whenever Josie, a Black woman in their program, joined, Cam felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable. Josie would often sidle up to Cam on the dance floor and begin grinding and touching her. Cam would run away and find a new dance space, but Josie would immediately

find her and start groping her again. Cam's queer and straight male friends found this amusing and would only step in to help when Cam pleaded with them. After Taylor was sexually assaulted at a party, she took a break from the social scene. When she started being more social, she would only go out with other women friends to dance. Still, Taylor would "be grabbed, be pulled into dance and bent over and all that."

Participants noticed ways the party spaces were structured to disadvantage Black women. In their second year at Georgetown, Pauli noticed men in their year threw parties over the summer when Georgetown hosted programs for students of color to transition to college. Black men students would exclusively invite incoming Black women attending pre-college programs. After noticing all the women at the kickbacks were incoming first years, Pauli commented, "that's kind of fucked up that they're doing a program trying to get their lives together, and you guys are taking that as an opportunity to essentially groom them. That's essentially what's happening." Pauli started to track how often Black men commented on "getting with" younger, incoming students. Pauli told these male peers their comments made them uncomfortable but was brushed off for "player hating." Later, Pauli noticed the same guys who threw these parties on a list created by Black women to warn each other of assaulters in the community. Numerous Black women and nonbinary students described being assaulted or first encountering the assailant at a party during a pre-college program or the first semester.

Drawing on Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney's (2006) exploration of party rape in social spaces controlled by high status white men at a PWI, my findings indicate Black women found similar social structures in Black party spaces. Black men with more status—through Black Greek life, athletics, or simply being older— cultivated party spaces to their sexual advantage by providing alcohol, having events in their apartments, or whisking Black women to

remote places for parties. Status, age, and year in school added additional layers of disadvantage for Black women entering a segregated college social scene either controlled by white men or Black men. Choosing to socialize with other Black students to find friends and possible partners, Black women encountered racialized sexual harassment.

Conclusion

Gendered racism in classes and interactions created a context for the sexual assault Black women and nonbinary students described in their narratives. The messaging Black women received from white institutional actors either made them feel invisible and unworthy of support. Paradoxically, white institutional actors hyper-focused on their Blackness, throwing distrust and suspicion on Black women. These instances of (in)visibility threatened Black women's success and sense of belonging. Black women spoke of this duality of being unseen and marked as an intruder of college spaces reserved for white students on PWIs and Black men at HBCUs. These instances of (in)visibility framed Black women's experiences of sexual harassment, reinforcing racial and gender hierarchies that disadvantaged Black women. Racialized sexual harassment through unwanted advances and frequent sexual touching at parties further alienated Black women from freely experiencing college. This chapter contributes to the literature on campus sexual assault by showing how race, along with gender, class, and age, shapes campus social cultures and creates unique sexual vulnerability for Black women. The party pathways described by Armstrong and Hamilton (2013) were closed off to Black women through a segregated party scene and unwanted sexual touching. This chapter shows how Black party spaces remixed the hierarchal structures described by Hirsch and Khan (2020). Instead of elite white men in their junior or senior year preying on first years, high status and advanced Black men students cultivated party spaces to increase their access to young Black women looking for community.

This chapter establishes the importance of analyzing the campus space and climate, connecting gendered racism to the ways Black women felt unseen, disrespected, and unprotected from racialized sexual harassment. It also provides vital context for understanding participants legal consciousness after sexual assault exposure, emphasizing reasons for reporting sexual assault are informed by Black women's everyday experiences with gendered racism on campus. Feeling unseen by institutional actors and unprotected by their peers provided Black women with a semblance of how reporting assault might "go" for them. Subsequent chapters will show how participants integrated their social analysis of their institutions after sexual assault exposure to decide whether reporting options could address sexual harm or were likely to make circumstances worse.

Chapter 5 Sexual Assault Exposure

This chapter focuses on Black women and non-binary participants' narratives of sexual assault exposure. Most Black women and non-binary students described sexual assault by men they knew, ranging from trusted friends, dating prospects, or people in their social network. Most assaults were intraracial, meaning the assailant was another Black person. Participants also described relationship and intimate partner violence; a phenomenon understudied in the higher education.

Black women and non-binary students detailed sexual vulnerability across a variety of relational contexts. Participants sought out these relationships for support and connection in college, particularly at PWIs where Black women felt multiply marginalized. In this way, sexual assault exposure disrupted Black women's attempts to successfully navigate a gendered racist institution. In their stories, Black women spoke mournfully of how sexual assault exposure in certain relational contexts further limited their ability to feel it was possible to be protected from violent gendered racism. I organize Black women and non-binary students' narratives across six salient relational contexts, demonstrating how each potential safe haven was destroyed by sexual assault. Most incidents fall under the category of sexual and dating projects, meaning the assault occurred in the process of Black women pursing intimate and romantic relationships with (mostly) Black men. A second portion of sexual assault exposure involved a betrayal of trust with a close Black male friend or someone connected to the participant's friendship support group. Rounding out close ties, I detail seven participants' experiences with intimate partner violence and abuse, highlighting how IPV heightens the lack of protection to bonds supposedly

based on love and affection. Analyzing sexual assault exposure through close ties and relational contexts aligns with legal consciousness. Describing how the law infuses everyday life, Ewick and Silbey (1998) wrote, "aspects of life become strangely refigured through law" (p. 16), meaning legal meanings associated with rape infuse prior relational dynamics, prompting Black women to reevaluate their social ties. Sexual assault is a violation of trust, a crime, and (in the higher education context) a violation of Black women's right to education. As a violation of one's person and one's rights, sexual assault exposure transformed Black women's approach to relationships and their sense of who can and cannot be trusted.

Another set of incidents occurred within spaces Black women depended on for their social and academic life. Black party spaces were frequent sites of sexual assault. Prior to victimization, Black party spaces represented a way for Black women to have fun, make friends, or simply dance in a presumably safe space of intra-cultural camaraderie. However, Black party spaces were controlled by men and were defined by gendered racist practices of violating Black women's bodily autonomy. This made assaults at parties, or immediately after the party, frequent. Two instances involve ties through Black women's graduate programs, which presented additional layers of risk and professional consequences. The last set of narratives involve assaults by strangers. In most narratives, Black women did not name the assailants. This represents a form of distancing from the sexual assault exposure. I also posit participants refrained from "naming names" to avoid implicating the assailant even in a research interview. I have either adopted the vague descriptors participants used or created names to aid the flow of writing.

Betrayal of Dating Projects

When Tessa started college at a small PWI, she quickly sought out community with other Black students. Black students socialized across campuses, creating a wider community of support among students from across the African Diaspora. At one of these multicampus Black student events, Tessa met Derek through an acquaintance. Tessa described Derek as tall, a "super senior" at a different school and that he "seemed confident." They decided to have a hangout at Derek's apartment. Tessa stated she went into the night wanting to just "be cool" with Derek get to know him better. She clarified, "I didn't go into it thinking we're going to have sex. That wasn't my goal of getting together, whereas I think that was his goal." After Derek's roommate left, they started watching a movie on the couch and talking. Tessa remembered feeling typical first date nerves of hanging out with someone new, but Derek seemed at ease. The two started kissing, which Tessa welcomed, saying, "I wanted to kiss and do things that weren't sex, but I didn't really want to have sex necessarily." During kissing, Derek began "pushing" and "try[ing] to do more." Tessa responded each time by pushing him off. This back and forth of setting her boundaries (just kissing) and Derek disregarding her physical cues continued for "a really long time" and Tessa began feeling tired and pressured. She explained:

> I think I kind of gave in because I started to feel the power of the situation where it's like 3:00 in the morning. I'm at this dude's apartment. I'm not close to campus. This isn't a city where you can just hop on the L and it's easy to get places…I gave in, basically.

Afterwards Tessa felt so upset and uncomfortable she immediately left, refused Derek's offer to drive her, and walked the mile back to campus alone in the dark.

Tessa distanced herself from Derek, avoiding his calls to her room's landline and declining his requests to get together again. Out of nowhere, Derek showed up at her residence hall. This surprised Tessa because 1) he had never been there before, 2) he did not attend her

school, 3) and she did not sign him into the building. When Derek made it to her room, Tessa felt unmoored. Even though she was a first year, Tessa lived alone. She recalled, “I think I was hit on by a lot of dudes Freshman year, and I actually think that some of it had to do with the fact that people knew that I lived alone because it was an opportunity.” Tessa opened the door to tell him to leave her alone, but Derek pushed his way inside, took off his coat, and settled into her room. At that point Tessa felt intimidated, describing Derek as “taking over my space.” Derek began grabbing Tessa, even though she kept saying "Dude, I'm really not into this right now. I just don't really want to.” Tessa continued her story:

> he just started being really rough and pushing me around. Turned me over and pulled my underwear off. He was very aggressive. [Crying] …I didn't scream or kick him, all I said was, ‘No. I don't want to do this,’ and said it over and over again. At a certain point, I just stopped saying it and just allowed stuff to happen, even though in this instance it was painful. When he was finished or I thought he was finished, I was like, ‘You have to leave.’ I kicked him out, and he was upset and yelling.

After Derek left, Tessa discovered he had vandalized her bathroom by peeing all over stall and sink. He continued to call her and since it was a landline, she could not screen the calls. Though she never saw him again, Tessa feared he could get to her, since he knew where she lived and knew he could get in without her permission.

Tessa’s story illustrates dynamics of sexual assault exposure participants encountered as they tried to pursue dating and sex in college. Tessa initially wanted to explore a relationship with Derek and saw the hang out at his place as one step toward that goal. Participants who described sexual assault by men they wanted to date used their narratives to trace how their visions of how to gradually grow a relationship were disregarded and violated. Participants, already schooled in gendered racist stereotypes of Black women’s hypersexuality, approached dating and sexual projects with caution. Like Tessa, participants talked about ways they set and

asserted their boundaries of what did and did not want. Participants used various strategies to communicate non-interest, such as a verbal "no," reiterating their desire to not have sex, and physical cues such as moving a hand away from an intimate area or pulling clothes back on. In several instances participants did not have the chance to say no when an assailant initiated a sex act while the participant was sleeping or incapacitated by alcohol.

Sexual assault within dating projects was complicated, as narratives surrounding college sexual projects operate against women (Armstrong et al., 2006; Chin et al., 2019). Liking someone, going to their room or apartment, or letting them in your space before an assault invalidated experiences of assault, as widely circulated narratives defined these feelings and behaviors as indicators of consent (Chin et al., 2019; Hirsch & Khan, 2020). Tessa's story also illustrates many of the power dynamics Black women and non-binary students identified as salient, including inability to defend their own space, younger age, lack of connection to Black Greek life, and being physically overwhelmed, alongside gender and race.

Alex came to college with strong sense that she needed to protect herself from sexual harm. Growing up she was "sheltered from family members… because there was someone in my family that raped a number of girls in my family - like a whole entire generation. I was sheltered from that person." Alex believed doing all the "right things" would allow her to "be a romantic, sexual person but not be assaulted." At a college party in her first semester, she hung out with a Black student she considered a friend. When he invited her to his room, she made sure he understood her boundaries. Alex recalled:

> I made it very clear. I was like, 'I don't want to have sex. I am a virgin. I don't want to have sex. I only want to make out with you. If you don't want to do that'… I was like if I gave him the option to go pick some other girl at that party who wants to have sex with him or wants to do whatever he wants, that would be okay.

The guy agreed to her terms and they went to his room.

At first, the two were kissing and Alex felt validated thinking, "It was what I wanted, and I was like, 'Okay, this works… Yay.'" However, the guy started grabbing her sexually and putting his hands down her pants. Alex removed his hands repeatedly and reminded him of the "social contract we had created," but he would not stop. Alex felt paralyzed and trapped, not knowing what to do as the guy started unfastening her pants and holding her down. Thinking back on the incident, Alex felt she had "become a statistic" after spending her whole adolescence "dodging bullets, having people protect me, me protecting me, not putting myself in a situation" to be violated. Since the guy was a friend and she had given him an "out" to find another person who wanted to have sex, she did everything "right." Alex pre-negotiated her boundaries, saying she would go to his room to kiss and talk, but not have sex. In the moment, she used verbal and physical strategies to communicate what she did not want and reminded him of the "social contract" they created. Having all her strategies thwarted made dating without risking assault seem impossible.

Black women also described sexual assault in interactions with men they were already dating or seeing casually. Martha went on a few dates with a student at a neighboring HBCU to her campus, Spelman College. She invited him to her place and "thought that we were going to hang out as usual." Instead, he raped Martha. The two never had sex and "never talked about bringing sex into our relationship." The guy also disrespected Martha's strict adherence to condom usage during the assault. Martha shared "I don't think my feelings or what I wanted was considered." Soon after, Martha got into a car accident, which she connects to her depression and disorganized thinking from the assault. Letitia tried dating during a summer internship when she was assaulted. She was in a different state and did not know anyone. She met "this fucking—

sorry— this guy" and they met up several times. Letitia started to really care for him and decided she "wanted to start a relationship." He invited her to hang out at his place while his parents were traveling. Letitia agreed. Things were going well and she felt they were building a relationship. Letitia did not want to have sex yet, so when he insisted on performing oral sex on her, she reluctantly agreed. During the act, Letitia suggested they "go back to kissing" to end the sexual contact. Instead of doing what she asked, the guy penetrated her without her consent. Letitia was shocked, "And I was like, hold on, what? When did you even put on a condom? How did this happen?"

Anna Julia belonged to a Christian student group based on practicing abstinence until marriage. Anna Julia wanted her relationship to not involve sex, but her boyfriend coerced her and assaulted her after she said "'No' pretty clearly." Looking back, Anna Julia traced the self-blame she felt to a lack of understanding of "concepts and conversations around consent." Growing up in a Christian environment and being generally admonished about sex as a Black woman, she never experienced in-depth discussions of consent. Further, she recognized being a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and being sexually assaulted in high school formed her "thoughts around what sex was supposed to be"— confusing how she processed sexual assault exposure in college.

Sexual Assault Exposure in Online Dating

Tru described an instance of sexual violence from a man she met on a dating app. During the summer before her junior year at an HSI, Tru's father passed away. Though she did not have a relationship with her father, she associated his absence with childhood sexual abuse by relatives and family acquaintances, surfacing memories and past trauma. Her estranged relatives, not knowing how to comfort her, encouraged Tru to drink more. Tru began drinking heavily that

semester. One evening, Tru communicated with a dating app match and they agreed to hang out at her place. Tru had been drinking and when the guy arrived, she recalled, “I just remember him being on me and asking him to stop, and he didn't… I just remember I said, ‘You're hurting me. Stop.’ He muffled me, and he did it.” Tru felt “really hurt” by the whole experience, which compounded her grief and PTSD from previous abuse and assault. The assailant disregarded her protests, taking advantage of a state of mind compromised by grief-motivated drinking.

Ruth connected with a white guy on Tinder during Covid lockdown and set a time to hang out after chatting for several weeks. They bonded over mutual geeky interests and Ruth considered him a source of support during a lonely time of living on campus during the summer. When they set their first time to meet, making sure it was Covid safe, he came to her room and sexually assaulted Ruth. The assault was so difficult for Ruth that she went home the next day, despite school starting the next week and a desire to shelter away from her family because of Covid. Sexual assault exposure when trying to date in college diminished Black women’s sense of sexual agency and body autonomy.

Ignoring Black Women’s Boundaries in Sexual Situationships

Sexual assault by someone Black women had previous consensual sex with was also harmful. Mae was sexually assaulted by a Black student she had consensual sex with months prior. When she met up with him this time, she told him she did not want to have sex but was interested in making out. He kept insisting they have sex and penetrated her without her consent. Mae described feeling “frozen” and “confused.” That college sexual assault exposure reminded her of a previous forcible sexual assault during high school. That previous assault activated Mae’s sense of fear, causing her to freeze and made her unable to prevent further violence by the college assailant. Mae recalled, “I know I didn't try to move, but I just felt very coerced… I don't

know if I would call it rape, but I definitely do feel like something was taken from me." Similarly, Josephine had a causal "friends with benefits thing" going out with Nate, a Black student at a different school. Josephine invited Nate over because she had received a rejection letter from an internship she really wanted. Nate brought over his schoolwork and studied in her room while Josephine fell asleep. In the fog of sleep, Josephine noticed Nate was suddenly in her bed, kissing her. She described "immediately" feeling something was wrong. Nate continued and performed oral sex on her. Yet, when he asked if they could have "raw sex" Josephine still felt groggy and didn't have time to answer before her penetrated her without consent. Josephine froze and rebuffed his attempts to cuddle. During the night Josephine "didn't feel right" and went to the bathroom with her phone to Google "How to know if you have been raped?" Josephine confronted Nate before he left saying she did not consent to the sex they had. Nate reacted angrily, yelling at her about not wanting to go through another sexual assault accusation.

Ashleigh had a casual sex situationship with Mark, a Black graduate who lived next door. They shared a balcony and became friends, later adding a sexual component to the friendship. When both were preparing to leave town, Mark permanently to medical school in a different city and Ashleigh to Johannesburg to supervise students doing field study trip, they planned to meet up and say goodbye. At first everything was consensual, but Mark "decided to transition and try anal sex." Ashleigh said "no" and that she did not want to try it, but Mark disregarded her and continued, pushing her body flat against the bed. Ashleigh "knew something was off about the experience" but had to quickly switch her mindset to leaving the country. Ashleigh had no time to process the assault. She shared:

> I went from being raped, and then three hours later I was supervising 40 students in the airport and trying to get all of them safely to South Africa. And then I was responsible for them in another country where the drinking age is 18, and there's weed everywhere. I was like I just didn't have time to think about it.

Sexual assault exposure ruined these Black women's attempts to pursue dating and sex in higher education. They worked to set boundaries with people or to define boundaries for a particular interaction and encountered men who ignored and overrode their wishes. When assault happened within sex or intimacy that started consensually, Black women struggled to label the harm at the time, only later coming to an understanding of the violence through research, counseling, or disclosing to friends. Mae still didn't have a clear definition of the incident, knowing "something was taken" from her. Ashleigh struggled because her experience did not match media images of sexual assault. Ashleigh mentioned comparing her experience to the show *Law and Order SVU*, commenting, "that it started off consensual, but at some point, became non-consensual. So that was quite a problem with me trying to recognize it as rape because that didn't fit within my understanding of rape at the time."

Destruction of Social and Academic Worlds

Sexual assault exposure in Black social circles had wide ranging consequences for Black women's sense of belonging on campus and mental health. Cam was coerced and assaulted by Frank, another Black student in her psychology graduate program. Cam stopped talking to Frank after he repeatedly tried to force her to perform oral sex. Cam described herself as a forgiving person, so when he contacted her after a few months she agreed to hang out with him. Cam went to his place to watch a Marvel film. Frank seemed annoyed when Cam was more focused on finding the right streaming app to watch *The Hulk* than talking to him. When Frank got on the couch, laying behind her, Cam reminded him "we're just friends, right?" He said yes and they continued watching. Contradicting himself, Frank rolled her over and started kissing her. Again, he pressured her for oral sex, repeatedly. She kept saying no but was coerced to do "other things"

to make him “stop asking.” After, Cam felt uncomfortable lingering in the Psych Department building, fearing seeing Frank and Josie, a Black female student who repeatedly sexually harassed her.

Letitia disclosed being coerced, sexually assaulted, and physically assaulted by a guy she was dating who also knew her friends. They all met through being first- and second-generation students of Nigerian descent at an HBCU. Letitia turned to her women friends when the guy punched her in the arm. She was dismayed when they asked, “What did you do to make him punch you?” Any time Letitia tried to tell her friends about his abuse, they blamed her and continued to hang out with the assailant, who often paid for group hangouts and birthday parties. Letitia experienced multiple betrayals from her college friend group and eventually cut ties with them. Having to fight for her dignity and her voice with other Black women intensified her stress during college.

Sexual Assault During First Year in College

Black women shared stories of sexual assault exposure during their first year in college when they were trying to find a social group and support. Before college, Gloria had no experience with drinking and her immigrant parents could not offer her guidance on navigating that aspect of college life. Her campus had a heavy drinking culture and she got very drunk at her first campus party. Leaving the party, she walked with a gay male friend. She felt safe with him and they stopped by his dorm room to hang out. Gloria started to feel incredibly sleepy, incapacitated by alcohol and tired from being out late. Her friend told Gloria his roommate was out of town so she could lay down in his bed. When she did, there was already another guy in the bed. Gloria’s memory of the night was “vague” and many details were shared with her later. While trying to sleep and passing out, she was raped. The incident “was very fracturing” to her

friend group. The women in the group took her side, while the men “didn't want to feel responsible or like they were being blamed for what happened.” Gloria drifted away from these first-year friends because she could not “feel safe” around them.

In other cases, Black women were exposed to bullying, gossip, and exclusion from Black communities after sexual assault. Avery had a sheltered upbringing growing up as a preacher’s kid. When she made friends with a group of other Black women, Avery was excited to have new social experiences. A football player on campus took an interest in her and they hung out, just chatting and kissing. Avery was surprised when her new Black woman friend posted about her on Facebook, calling her a “real Becky.” Avery discovered one of the women liked the same football player. She was excluded by the group. After she found some new friends, the football player reached out again to hang out. While they were making out, he got undressed and started initiating sex. She said “No” and “stop” jokingly because she did not realize the situation was “getting serious.” He didn’t stop, raping her without her consent or a condom. Avery did not tell anyone about the assault at first, because she already had a bad experience with campus gossip.

Naomie met Dave on a Nigerian student group chat and they formed a close friendship. She viewed him as a “very good friend” and the two would chat and FaceTime daily. Naomie had not made any other friends that summer and was excited when Dave wanted to hang out and watch a movie. The two were having a chill time, but Dave started touching her sexually. Naomie used physical cues, removing his hand each time he grabbed her. He continued to touch her, confusing Naomie and causing her to freeze up. She was already in a fragile state recovering from a car accident and feeling isolated as a new college student. The whole incident felt ‘icky” and wrong compared to other times she had kissed guys. The assault dogged her throughout college because Dave was in the same major as her friends. She saw him at academic and social

functions throughout her college career, including watching her friends dance with him at parties. Naomie added, “I mentally don't understand how I low-key got through it sometimes because it's like a lot of people can't even deal with seeing their assaulter in court. I had to see mine every day for like two and a half years almost. I had to go to parties and clubs, and he'd be there.” Seeing the assailant interacting with her friends like everything was normal confused and angered Naomie. She retreated away from social gatherings by taking more babysitting shifts and working more.

Naima attributed her inability to find community at her HBCU to her sexual assault. As she talked, the grief of losing the close college friendships and camaraderie enjoyed by other HBCU alums was palpable. Naima started college studying jazz performance, a male dominated major. She befriended her male classmates and looked forward to pledging a sorority. One of her bandmates, who was affiliated with the brother fraternity to the organization she wanted to pledge, flirted with her and seemed interested in dating her. At a party hosted by the fraternity, Naima was “shit-faced” and stayed over at the guy’s apartment. He had sex with her while incapacitated. She was so drunk she did not remember anything of the night. During her pledging process, she discovered the guy who assaulted her was dating an officer in the sorority she was pledging. Naima was shunned by the sorority members, students on her line, and accused by other Black women of being a “home-wrecker” when it was the guy who assaulted Naima and cheated on his girlfriend.

Sexual Assault Exposure by High Status Black Men

Sexual assault by men in high status groups involved added layers of degradation and disrespect. Athena, a non-binary student at a Big 10 university, recalled having sex with a football player during their first year. Athena would later identify as queer and avoid sex with

men, unless it was for sex work. The football player “stealthed” Athena during sex, meaning he removed the condom without Athena’s knowledge and penetrated Athena without consent. In the same incident, he brought another football player into the room to have sex with her without asking Athena’s permission. Athena tried to leave the room, but the men blocked the door. Athena decided to report but faced social scrutiny and bullying from all the Black students in the area. Athena was slut-shamed and ridiculed before they could tell their story of assault. Lauryn experienced similar treatment from a guy in a well-known Black fraternity. When they had sex at his apartment, he frequently brought his frat brothers into the room for sex without her consent. The fraternity guys all stealthed her and penetrated her without condoms. In one instance, the fraternity guy she was seeing embarrassed her in front of all his friends. After they had sex, he came back into the room with a slice of pizza. Lauryn asked for some food and he said, “go get it, it’s in the other room.” Thinking they were alone in the apartment, Lauryn went to get some food, still naked. She walked out to find all the fraternity brothers sitting there, enjoying her humiliation. High status men used their power to force Black women and non-binary students into dangerous sexual situations involving multiple partners and unknowing, unprotected sex.

Danai was assaulted by the friend of a guy she trying to date. Danai had not heard from the guy she was talking to in a few weeks, despite calling and messaging him. The guy’s friend and roommate messaged her to ask, “What’s going on with you and my boy?” Danai was distressed with the sudden ghosting and accepted the friend’s offer to “talk it out” and give her advice on the situation. At first the two talked and watched a Tyler Perry movie on BET. Suddenly he forced himself on her and she said, “You know, I really don't think is appropriate. You know I'm with your friend right now. That's not cool." He continued to assault her. Danai considered screaming for help, but worried people who blame her for him being in her room.

Additionally, he was a 6’7’ basketball player and overpowered her physically. The assault ruined her potential relationship with the guy she liked. She tried to tell him about the assault and he ignored her, likely misplacing his anger on Danai and not on his friend who committed the assault.

Friends Violating Trust Through Sexual Assault

During her junior year, Gabrielle had a study session at a Russell’s house, a Black male student who was one year ahead in school. They met during her first-year pre-orientation when her PWI organized welcome events for Black students, gathering the community of students together. When they met in her first year, Gabrielle sensed Russell wanted to hook up with her, but she “didn’t want to have sex with him.” In addition, Gabrielle started a relationship with another Black male student, dating him for over a year and a half. Gabrielle had an established friendship with Russell since then. That night Gabrielle recalled, “I forgot how it got set up, but the overall intention was I was going to go over to his house to study… I had sweats on with underwear. I wasn't doing anything in particular to look any old type of cute way. I had no makeup on. I had my hair up in a bun.” The night was going well, the pair studied. Gabrielle grew tired and went to lay down in his bed, fully clothed. In the midst of sleep, she noticed Russell enter the room, get on top of her, and remove her sweatpants and underwear. She described the assault:

> I was literally half asleep still and drowsy…I was [like], "Stop." I didn't fight because I didn't know how bad it could get. At that moment, I was so shocked and stuck in fear because I was like, if he's doing this, what else could he do.

Consumed with fear and shock, Gabrielle disassociated, feeling herself separate from her body, “I couldn't even move. He was on top of me. He was pinning me down.” When he finished,

Russell laughed and teased Gabrielle, saying “That's payback for sophomore year” referring to when he pinned for her, and she did not reciprocate. That comment solidified for Gabrielle that he knew the sex “wasn't something that I wanted to do. And by definition, that's sexual assault.” The assault and the aftermath diminished Gabrielle’s sense of trust in people and her ability to protect herself.

Pauli had a difficult transition to their first year of college. Pauli felt isolated and struggled to pay for the mental health resources they needed. Around the same period, a childhood friend of Pauli’s died. Grieving in an unfamiliar and unsupportive environment weighed heavily on Pauli. Pauli met a guy through a filmmaking course, he was Black and a few years ahead in school. The two became friends and Pauli described him as “one of the only people that I would hang out with… I considered them to be one of my closer friends.” Seeking support, Pauli relied on him and wondered if he wanted a romantic relationship. Even after telling Pauli he had a girlfriend, he would flirt excessively when they hung out. When he assaulted Pauli, Pauli realized “it was just a really toxic situation, really manipulative, and psychologically abusive relationship.” Looking back, the guy knew Pauli felt isolated and cut off, meaning he could take advantage and not face accountability because he was established in the Black community on campus and Pauli was not.

In some instances, Black women described sexual assault after helping a friend avoid harm. Serena got a call from a longtime friend, saying he was too drunk to drive home. Since he was close to her place Serena invited him to sleep it off at her place because she was worried about what would happen if he, a Black man, was pulled over. She explained, “We just know the dynamics of Black men or Black people, in general, and police force, etc.” Serena set up the couch for him and went to her room to sleep. He asked to get in the bed with her and she agreed.

They were friends and Serena had shared sleeping areas with male friends without issues before, so it did not raise any alarms. She commented, “we have seven years of a relationship and history of friendship, so I did not feel unsafe with him.” When he started to kiss her, Serena welcomed it somewhat. They had been intimate in the past, but Serena resisted and said “Hey stop, I’m not trying to do this right now” when he got on top of her and started undressing her. Serena panicked:

> He's like, "Come on. I just need to get mine. I just need to get mine." That's what he kept on saying. I was like, "No, I'm okay. I don't want to do this right now." And he kept on going. He's on top of me. He's a football player (well, former football player), bigger than me. And I just laid there. I had tears rolling down my face. And then after that, he rolled over and passed out.”

In distress and confused, Serena left her own bed and slept on the couch she had prepared. The assault was extremely damaging, as he was a trusted friend and colleague at her HBCU.

Sucre, an Afro-Latina student, experienced an assault by a friend she attempted to help. Jake, a white man, practically grew up with Sucre and her family. She shared, “He would spend every holiday with us. I remember even Mother’s Day and Father’s Day him being with us sometimes.” One evening a friend called Sucre to say Jake was drunk at a bar and violently provoking the bouncer. This was a common occurrence for Jake, so Sucre went to pick him up to dry out in her parent’s garage. Jake’s aggression continued in the car ride, “he was like punching the window. He was punching the rearview mirror. He was really, really violent.” Sucre tried to get him to calm down, but his aggression turned towards her. He began hitting and groping her, pulling on her piercings and calling her sexist slurs. While driving, Sucre pushed him off and threatened to crash the car if he did not stop. When they made it to her house, Sucre hustled him into the garage, trying not to wake her parents. Once she got him inside, he grabbed her by the hair, shoved her down, and raped her repeatedly. Sucre described:

> I remember screaming. I remember also not wanting to be heard. It's a garage. The garage was split by a laundry room, so like by a small space. I remember at one point I heard my mom making noise. I think it was my mom or my dad. Someone was making noise at one point, and I remember he held my face down on the pillow, and then the noise went away, I guess.

The violence of the assault, combined with Jake being so close to her family "messed" with Sucre's head, not being able to reconcile the two. Sucre shared, "I think in my head I kept convincing myself that it wasn't malicious, but that totally disregards me. I don't care if it's malicious. It did hurt. The impact was still really painful physically, mentally, psychologically." Sexual assault exposure by a close friend multiplied the trauma and confusion for Black women and non-binary students. It also complicated how and whether participants could seek support within shared social circles.

Sexual Assault in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence

Viola felt excluded and isolated attending a PWI for college, so she sought out a church home and joined the choir. She met Black students and found social life that gave her the "camaraderie" she did not find on campus. Viola started dating Mike, the son of the pastor. The relationship was turbulent, with Viola not wanting to be sexually active and Mike pushing past her boundaries. Viola distanced herself from Mike when he cheated on her. However, Mike kept reaching out and as a Christian, Viola felt guilty about not forgiving him. She agreed to meet him again. Mike took Viola to his grandmother's house, the pastor's mother, and tried to sexually assault her in the basement. Mike was grabbing her, pulling her hair and ripped her underwear. She pushed him away and said "No" repeatedly and until he seemingly gave up. During the car ride back to Viola's apartment, Mike apologized for what he did, getting Viola to stay talk more in the car. Viola described what happened next saying:

> So we're talking, and he climbs on top of me again. We're in the car. I'm pushing him. I'm like, "Please stop." But at this point, my underwear had ripped and had rolled up my belly. I had my sundress on. I remember him just like -- he looked at me, and I said, "No, please. I really don't want to do this." And he just put it in anyway. And I had never frozen like that or like I don't know what to do here because it was like no more fight.

Viola struggled to find support and had to distance herself from the church. She did not feel "any place was safe anymore for a while because it's like church isn't safe" and that was the only space at a PWI where she had found community.

Harriet, a military kid and proud HBCU graduate, entered a graduate program at a predominantly white, elite university to craft an academic and professional career to advocate for racial justice. Starting graduate school in a new city, Harriet wanted to build more long-term relationships. Harriet found familiarity in John, a tall, African American, Army enlisted guy. They hit it off and started dating. Being connected to the military brought them closer, they shared experiences and lingo, and Harriet was excited about the prospect of dating a guy her parents would embrace immediately. After one of their dates, John wanted to have sex. Harriet did not feel comfortable enough to have her first sexual experience at that stage and told him she was not ready. Harriet shared, "he did not take kindly to that. It got really violent really fast, and I ended up being sexually assaulted in my apartment." This was not a one-off, John assaulted Harriet three additional times before they broke up. Looking back on it, Harriet said:

> I like to think I'm a pretty strong person. I can deal with a lot, but starting a new graduate school program, moving to a new city, dealing with an abusive boyfriend - it was a lot to deal with in that first semester.

Jennifer and Sucre also experienced intimate partner violence during graduate school Jennifer met another Black graduate student in his 7th year at a Black student social. He "swept her off her feet" with bold romantic gestures. Jennifer was looking for support and love, she had just broken up with a long-term boyfriend and been sexually assaulted by a stranger. Jennifer

was vulnerable and told him she did not want to have sex. As they dated, he continued to pressure her, making her feel manipulated into giving in sexually to "be supported and held" during a time of need. Sucre started dating a white guy when she moved to the Midwest for school. They lived together and Sucre really depended on him because she did not have other friends in town. The guy also isolated her, demanding she stay home and wait from him to come back from work. Sucre described many psychological and physically abusive incidents where he would come home drunk and force her to have sex that was painful. Sucre felt stuck because they lived together and she did not have a social support network as a graduate student.

Athena experienced intimate partner violence, abuse and sexual assault while dating a Black woman, referred to here as Stacey. During the relationship, Athena described several kinds of abuse and Stacey sexually assaulting Athena on their birthday. After experiencing sexual assault exposure from men, it was challenging for Athena to identify what Stacey did as assault. Athena explained:

> it was almost a gentle sexual assault… I just had a lot of conflicting emotions, like when you tell somebody not to do something and then they do it anyway, and you know in their heart that they weren't trying to be malicious.

Athena tried to tell Stacey about the harm they felt, but Stacey said she felt "sexually nervous" and made a mistake. Athena started experiencing psychological and physiological symptoms, such as their hair falling out, sudden weight gain, and depression. Athena traced these changes to the assault and the abusive relationship. Athena ended the relationship, saying "I broke up with her because I was like I don't think I can mentally or physically withstand this anymore."

After the assault, Athena entered sex work to regain power and sexual agency. Athena explained that sex work helped them "understand the ethics of sex, understand the morals of stuff." Entering sex work also helped Athena earn money to pay for therapy and meet Black

women “colleagues” who also experienced sexual assault and relationship abuse. Athena found that sex workers possessed and shared valuable knowledge, such as how to react physically to unwanted actions during sex. Athena shared learning “to slap them or kick” someone away instead of freezing up. Learning and working alongside sex workers “radicalized” Athena as a Black feminist who challenged the “respectability politics” they saw as the primary mode of Black women in higher education. As a sex worker, non-binary, and plus sized femme, Athena advocated through research and activism for Black women who inhabit social status, labor, and bodies “that are considered deviant” and deemed unworthy of support.

Cori got into a relationship with a white, male bisexual student their first year in college. Cori identified as non-binary and bisexual, but found few people of color in the queer community on campus. Cori’s ex-boyfriend used Cori’s ignorance of kink and BDSM to sexually assault and abuse them. The ex also made racist and sexist jokes, said he was ashamed to introduce Cori to his conservative white parents, and insulted Black neighborhoods Cori liked to visit. Cori ended the relationship and later learned how consent was fundamental to kink practices, furthering the harm they experienced in the relationship. Ruth started a long-distance relationship with a mixed-race Latino guy she met online. They connected over shared nerdy interests and started talking every day. When Ruth decided to visit him, she experienced a different side to him. During that and subsequent visits, he physically and sexually assaulted her. It was challenging for Ruth to separate herself because she loved him and the two frequently talked about marriage. When he ended the relationship, Ruth was devastated because she lost this possible future and was victimized by him. That duality overwhelmed Ruth and caused her to spiral physically and mentally. Black women and non-binary students who experienced intimate partner violence felt excluded from campus sexual assault discourses that often neglect

relationship violence and other forms of coercive control. The added dynamic of loving or dating someone abusive made Black women and non-binary students feel isolated and scared to disclose.

Sexual Assault in Parties

Sexual assault exposure at parties largely flowed from Black women and non-binary students' descriptions of gendered racism they observed in social spaces. Unlike Sharee's story described in the previous chapter, most of the assaults at parties occurred at all Black events. At PWIs, party spaces remain segregated. White Greek life organizations have the most power, reflected in being able to gather on campus or close to campus. Black Greek organizations and student groups tend to have gatherings off campus. At HBCUs, rules prohibit on campus parties with alcohol, meaning social gatherings occur in off campus student residences (*HBCU Campuses*, n.d.). These are spaces controlled by Black men, usually in high status organizations of Greek life, athletics, and Black student union leadership. Some of the incidents already discussed, such as assaults described by Athena and Lauryn, occurred in apartments and during parties controlled by high status Black men. Assaulters with high status increased the victim blaming and lack of support from other Black women, as described by Danai, Naomie, Avery, Naima, and Letitia. In the stories explored here, the structure of party spaces comes to the forefront (Armstrong et al., 2006), exploring how the lack of bodily autonomy combined gendered racist structure of the space created sexual vulnerability for Black women. In most of the stories explored here, assailants were strangers or very loose ties, someone the participant knew of (because the Black community is so tightly networked) but a person they had never really interacted with outside of the assault.

Lorraine was eager to get involved in the Black Student Organization at an elite PWI. Members were so supportive during visit days designed for students of color and Lorraine saw the BSO as an "utopian" Black academic haven within an elite PWI. She attended an official BSO social event to support the organization and make new friends. Later in the night, people started to "feather off" from the BSO-university sponsored party to residence halls for after parties. The group Lorraine was hanging with went to a senior residence hall, "where a lot of the parties happen because, again, there's not really regulations. They can have alcohol and stuff like that." Others in the group were drinking, but Lorraine didn't drink. During this afterparty, Lorraine was sexually assaulted by a Black guy who lived with her first college crush. A few days later, the student who assaulted her approached her in the dining hall during breakfast. She was caught off guard and avoided his requests for her phone number. The assault and subsequent discomfort seeing the assaulter drastically changed Lorraine's social behaviors on campus. She stopped going to breakfast in the dining hall and distanced herself from the Black Student Organization. Despite her efforts, she would still see the assaulter, as first years share classes and resource spaces. Lorraine shared, "And for a while, whenever I would see him, I would kind of freeze up like I did that same night." The whole experience was confusing and disheartening for Lorraine because two social prospects of a fun college life were lost to her: getting to know her crush better and being active in the BSO. It took a year for Lorraine to start to re-integrate herself into the Black spaces on campus.

Taylor also described sexual assault exposure in her first year at a party. Taylor attended American University and shared Black students in the D.C. area would often combine for parties, hosted by the more elite schools. Taylor attended a party at Georgetown and met up with a guy she had been talking to on social media. They hung out at the party and since it was on GU's

campus, the guy brought Taylor back to his room. Taylor was “overly intoxicated” and assaulted while incapacitated. Taylor shared she did not know at the time how to label the assault saying, “I knew that some things had happened that were harmful for me and I thought it was wrong, but I didn't really know exactly. I didn't have the language to know exactly what that was.” Taylor was further confused on how to approach seeking help or reporting because the guy went to a different school.

Multiple Sexual Assaults and Party Spaces

Several women shared multiple stories of sexual assault exposure. In a second incident, Danai and a friend went to hung out with a guy Danai was talking to at another school. He lived in a co-ed suite, so Danai and her friend felt comfortable going over, even though it was late. Danai did not drink, but felt “very, very tired.” Danai remembered the guy pressuring her to drink, even though she refused. After hanging out for a while, it was too late to leave, so Danai and her friend slept over in unoccupied rooms. After Danai fell asleep, the guy came into the room and tried to “force himself” on her. She said no and pushed him off. He left briefly and came back a second time and “really” tried to assault her. Danai “adamantly” said “Get off of me!” He left another time, responding to a call from a friend who was locked out. Danai continued the story:

> And it just so happened that he locked himself out of the room, so he couldn't come back. So, he slept in the living space because I was knocked out by then. I woke up in the morning, and I was like, "You slept out here?" He was like, "Yeah, I locked myself out of the room." But I never spoke to him again after that because I was really upset about him trying to force himself on me where we were just all hanging out, and there wasn't supposed to be anything like that.

At the time, Danai did not discuss this second incident of unwanted touching and attempted sexual assault. It felt mentally and emotionally impossible to process after multiple incidents of sexual violence in high school and college that made her feel she "didn't have a voice."

Gloria shared a second incident at a party in her second year. She started dancing with a guy, who seemed "out of it" from alcohol. Gloria only felt tipsy, saying, "I don't think I was drunk… I had my wits about me." The guy insisted they go downstairs and pulled Gloria behind a curtain that separated the kitchen area from where other people were hanging out. He started touching and kissing her, badgering her to "do more" and have sex. When Gloria refused, the guy took his penis out and said:

> 'Well, just beat me off real quick.' I remember that very poignantly. He took my hand and started moving it, and I yanked my hand back, and I was like, 'I just want to go back upstairs.' I'm pretty sure I left him in there.

After rejoining the upstairs party, the guy followed Gloria around for the rest of the night. Even when she was dancing with a friend, the same guy "would just come and not even necessarily say anything, but just stand next to me or stand behind me" continuing to intimidate her after the assault. His harassment got to the point where Gloria decided to leave the party earlier than she wanted.

Naima shared another story of assault during her sorority pledging process. Naima stopped by a dorm room where her potential fraternity brothers were drinking. Since she was leaving town the next day, Naima had the night "off" from pledging and distancing from the male fraternity members. As discussed above, most of her friends were men in her major and she was already isolated from other Black women because of the first assault. When Naima arrived, the guys asked if she would help one of them get back to his room. She agreed and helped the drunken student back to his room. They talked a bit, but when she got up to leave he grabbed her,

pushed her on the bed, and assaulted her. In addition, he bit and bruised her neck and upper body. These stories of assault involving Black women being in party and social spaces, not drinking or simply passing through a party, expose the extent to which Black women are at risk. Danai trusted the guy to just leave her alone to sleep and was shocked when he tried to assault her twice. Gloria experienced assault and tried to rejoin the party, but the guy continued to harass her and her friend trying to dance. Naima thought she was doing a guy a favor by helping get back to his room when she was assaulted. The intersection of Black party spaces being controlled by men and the racialized sexual harassment Black women described at parties escalated to assaults by Black men they barely knew.

Incapacitated Assaults at Parties

As discussed in the previous chapter, Black women found party spaces particularly dangerous. These spaces were controlled by Black men of higher status—either through being older or members of powerful social groups in athletics, Black Greek life, or Black student union leadership. Party spaces for Black students were often off campus, as Black Greek organizations rarely had their own houses or had designated spaces close to campus. CJ started her interview detailing a "very traumatizing experience" she had in her first year at a large southern PWI. As a Black student, CJ and her friends liked to attend events organized by Black Greek organizations, wanting to "embrace a piece of Black culture that at a PWI you don't get to experience all the time." They decided to attend a "hay-ride themed" party thrown by a Black fraternity. The party was located across the state line, so the fraternity rented yellow school buses to transport guests to a "barn in the middle of nowhere" for the festivities. During the 45-minute drive, students "started just pouring alcohol into people's mouths. There was no mixers, no chasers." CJ knew what she could handle, alcohol-wise, and was having a fun time, singing along to the music with

her friends. However, the scene started to feel “sketchy” when men started spraying whipped cream and licking it off women’s bodies, without consent.

Once everyone arrived at the barn, CJ said she felt “drunk out of my mind… I don't know how this ended up happening because I thought I knew how much I drank, and I didn't drink anything beforehand.” The fraternity hosts were grilling food and provided substantial amounts of alcohol. CJ danced and drank with her friends. At some point, CJ noticed a “big dude” wearing a “Security” shirt guiding her outside of the barn. She was not fully conscious and remembered stumbling and tripping while he ushered her outside. The guy prompted CJ to perform oral sex on him while she was incapacitated by alcohol. CJ recalled standing up after, thinking “What did I just do?!” She noticed her legs were covered in mosquito and ant bites. The first guy lifted her up and passed her off to another guy. The second guy took her to a different side of the barn for oral sex. CJ remembered seeing “girls that are doing the same thing that I'm doing” and feeling confused and scared. When the second guy walked her back to the party area, CJ started “bawling” and looking for her friends. They could see she was upset, and CJ recalled trying to explain what happened:

> At first, I was like, ‘I did a really bad job,’ to, ‘No, this man really just took advantage of me.’ Both of them did. I'm just standing in the corner like what do I do? What did I do? What is happening?”

CJ couldn’t leave until the buses allowed them after midnight.

Kerry started college at Howard University with a full scholarship, including funding for housing and books. She maintained a rigorous academic program and a full-time job with a government agency in D.C. She was excelling at both but was often tired and not available for social activities. During Homecoming, Kerry’s friends wanted her to come out as they attended various parties. Kerry also had a friend from childhood visiting who wanted to experience the

grandeur of Howard Homecoming. Kerry and her friend met up with others at a house party. Kerry did not drink, as she was tired from her demanding schedule. Her friend started talking with a guy, so Kerry asked one of the hosts if she take a nap while her friend socialized. Kerry fell asleep in a room separated from the party. Kerry described herself as a hard sleeper. She shared:

> When I was asleep, I was asleep. My grandparents told me when I was younger the fire alarm would go off and I wouldn't wake up. I was one of those people once I was asleep, I was dead to the world.

During the night, Kerry woke up and realized, "Someone was having sex with me while I was asleep. Once I realized what was happening, I was freaked out. I tried to get away." Kerry had no idea who the guy was or how she was all of a sudden undressed from the waist down. After the rape, Kerry searched for her friends, told them what happened, and started figuring out how to get back home. Kerry had a loose description of the guy, but when her friends searched, he was gone. A friend helped Kerry go to Howard University's hospital, but after waiting for several hours, un-showered in dirty clothes, she had to be transported to different facility because they did not perform forensic medical exams. Everything that followed had a dramatic and devastating effect on her body, health, and academic pursuits. Interactions with police and university officials exacerbated the harm of the rape unequivocally and will be described in following chapters.

Right after graduating, Jennifer went to the annual reunion and commencement celebrations at Princeton. Jennifer went to a different PWI in the northeast but knew several Princeton students either graduating or coming back for reunion. A few weeks before the reunion, Jennifer broke up with her boyfriend of 2 years. She was "devastated" by the breakup and went to the reunion "still upset" and wanted to distract herself that night. Princeton reunions

are notorious for having multiple locations with open bars. Jennifer described the event as one of the largest purchases of alcohol annually. Jennifer shared being drunk to the point of incapacitation. The rest of her story came from “flashes of memory.” She remembered being separated from her friends and being “dragged” by a Black man she had never met. Jennifer explained, “I specifically remember I kept asking, ‘What's your name? Who are you? What's your name?’ They wouldn't answer me.” The man was pulling Jennifer in and out of campus buildings. Again, she pleaded with the stranger, “Please tell me who you are. Please take me back to my friends. I don't know you." Looking back, Jennifer thought, “he was just going through these buildings trying to find a place to take me. Eventually, he found one, I think.” The unknown man sexually assaulted Jennifer while incapacitated. She added, “I remember obviously I said, ‘No, no. Leave me alone. I don't want to do that. Please stop.’” Jennifer’s friends found her later that night, passed out, naked, and all alone.

Angie had not seen her friend Chris in a while and they decided to get together and catch up. A friend of Chris’ also stopped by who Angie knew, but thought was a bit of a “weirdo.” Angie and Chris were in high spirits, drinking laughing, talking animatedly. Looking back, Chris’ friend seemed separate from their fun as he wasn’t drinking as much as them. Once Chris left to take a call from his girlfriend, the other guy advanced on Angie, forced himself on her, and tried to take off her pants. Angie yelled, pushed and kicked, but felt outmatched because she was drunk and he wasn’t. Chris came back upstairs, hearing Angie’s protests, pulled the guy off her, and kicked him out of the apartment. Chris checked on Angie, who was shaking and crying, and set her up in his room to try and get some sleep. Chris stepped out for a bit after that and returned with bruised knuckles.

During her junior year at a midwestern public university, Jade's roommates threw her a surprise welcome home party. Jade spent the previous semester studying abroad in the Virgin Islands. She always planned to do a semester at an all-Black university. Jade's roommate was a "social butterfly" and invited lots of people. Jade felt tired after returning from abroad and excused herself from the party early, assuring her roommate they could continue in her absence. Jade fell asleep in her bed but was awoken to find that one of the party guests, a Black male student, "had crawled in my bed and was fondling my breasts." It took Jade a few minutes to register what was happening, feeling shocked and drowsy. She ordered him to "get out," transitioning from "shock to rage." He finally got the message and ran out of her room. Jade felt "violated" by the assault saying, "especially [being] in that vulnerable state where you're sleeping in your own bed" disturbed her.

Sexual Assault Exposure in Graduate Academic Contexts

For graduate students, sexual assault exposure corresponded with being new to a department or community. Black women graduate students entered contexts where they had few social supports, often moving to new states away from family, partners, and peer support. Within departments incoming students are heavily dependent on faculty and advanced students to learn how to navigate the space, curriculum, and unstated expectations or processes that determine graduate student success. Within fields, advanced and established graduate students can wield power to ruin Black women's careers before they start. These dynamics translate to Black women not having robust support after sexual assault exposure. In addition, individuals with more power can manipulate these dynamics to not only cause harm, but also leave Black women without social support within their departments to recover and succeed in graduate school.

Rebecca prefaced her narrative of sexual assault exposure with a "side note" that during her recruitment to a grad program at Michigan State "there was somebody who already had their eye on me as somebody they wanted to be with, and I had no clue that that was the case." In her first semester, Rebecca attended a graduate student social organized by students in her Biostatistics program. She met Blake, a white 7th year student, who invited her to join a study group. As a new student looking to make connections, Rebecca reasoned, "I know like five other people in this group. My cohort mates are in this group. Nothing about that seemed sketchy." Rebecca shared her number to find out where the weekly meetings happened. Rebecca saw Blake at the study groups, but found it odd when texted her "almost every day" about things outside of study group and academics. Blake started texting her "really weird stuff" about what she prefers in relationships. Rebecca was in the middle of planning her wedding and responded, "My fiancé. [laughing] I felt it was an obvious answer." Rebecca also stopped attending the study group.

In the spring Blake set a date for his dissertation defense. Rebecca felt relieved, explaining "He was on his way out the door. The reason why I had put up with any of the weird stuff was like, okay, this person is about to leave." Blake invited Rebecca to his post-defense celebration, confirming the location would be somewhere Rebecca liked, which was strange considering it was his party. Rebecca was surprised to be the first to arrive and when the wait staffer came for their order, Blake ordered for her. As more people joined, Rebecca noticed "he was really encouraging me to drink. Encouraging nobody else to really drink." As the celebration started to break up, Blake begged Rebecca to stay saying, "You know, it would be really bad if I hurt myself essentially out drinking while I'm here defending my dissertation, about to graduate." Rebecca sympathized and agreed to stay a bit longer.

During that time, Blake bought her 2-3 more drinks. Blake pivoted and insisted he had to stop by his apartment to get something and it would only take five minutes. Rebecca agreed to come along, not wanting to alone at a bar. Once she got out of the Uber to his place Rebecca "started feeling super sick, like it hit me all at once which was just like four drinks had never done that to me before or since, so I don't know. I don't know." She sat on his couch and drank water, but continued to feel terrible. Blake ushered her, incapacitated and sick, to his bedroom and laid her on his bed. Rebecca could barely move but managed to roll on to the floor. When Blake noticed she migrated to the floor, he laid a blanked and pillow near her. Rebecca thought, "okay, maybe this isn't weird. I have clearly misjudged him. He's actually trying to help me now. I've overreacted."

Instead of leaving her to sleep, Blake laid next to Rebecca and started spooning her, kissing on her back and holding on to her. She remembered thinking, "I was right the first time. What the heck!" She kept telling him "No" and to let go of her because she needed to throw up. After she pleaded several times, he released his hold and Rebecca stumbled to the bathroom. Rebecca vomited several times, but also stayed in the bathroom, afraid of what would happen if she left. When she opened the door, Blake was standing right there. He grabbed her and threw her on his bed. Blake started groping and kissing her, taking any opportunity when she was unconscious to take off her clothes. Despite being incapacitated, Rebecca kept pulling her clothes back on and rolled on her stomach to obstruct his access. When he started pulling her pants off from behind, Rebecca remembered feeling "the most scared because I realized I had no control. If he had really tried, he probably could have successfully raped me that night, but I kept holding onto my pants." After a while, Blake stopped undressing her and said, "You're so lucky you're with me and not some other guy." Blake continued to press Rebecca to have sex and

would not hear her requests for a ride back to her car. She bargained with him, saying she would come back to his place if he helped her prevent a parking ticket. He finally agreed and Rebecca made it just in time to escape the parking ticket.

Once in the relative safety of being in public and feeling more sober, Rebecca said she was going home. Blake reacted angrily and said, "It's your fault because you're a pretty girl who came to a guy's place. You should know what that means." Rebecca challenged him, saying in their majority male department, she had hung out at other male students' apartments without incident. He also threatened her career prospects if she told anyone, even her fiancé, saying, "Well, it would be a shame if anything were to happen to your career behind this. I'm going to be graduating first and you have all these years left in grad school." Rebecca's knew this was not an empty threat. Their subfield is small and tightly networked, so Rebecca knew Blake could "ruin" her that easily. Once Rebecca finally got home, she changed her clothes, put the ones she was wearing the corner, and went to take a final exam. She shared, "I had been studying and I was ahead back then in all of my classes. Thankfully, I was able to get through, get a 4.0, and then after the exams, I just remember laying around feeling depressed." Rebecca avoided the department building, barely ate, and isolated herself because she did not know how to respond to the assault and threats from Blake.

In her first semester of graduate school at UCLA, Olivia was new to the Los Angeles social scene. She joined a few friends to celebrate a milestone at a night club in popular area in LA. Olivia and her friends were drinking, though Olivia noticed she felt "unreasonably drunk" compared to how many drinks she had consumed. She later learned places like that one were "kind of shady" in terms of drugging drinks and though she practiced vigilance of watching her drinks, it was difficult to monitor everything. Olivia called an Uber to get home, but realized

when she arrived, she left her keys at a friend's place before they got to the bar. The Uber driver offered to drive her to the friend's apartment to retrieve the keys as a "favor." Unfortunately, her friends had not made it home, leaving Olivia with no way of getting into her apartment and away from friends. Without any options, the Uber driver said, "Well, you know, you don't have anywhere to go. You can just wait for your friend at my friend's place." Olivia reasoned since he was about her age, had already helped her, and this second location was nearby, it was a reasonable option. When she arrived, the Uber driver's friend was there playing video games. Again, Olivia was abnormally drunk, either from being drugged or the amount of alcohol hit her differently. She passed out. At some point, Olivia regained consciousness to find the Uber driver was having sex with her while incapacitated. She shared:

> Basically, it looked like he had just pulled my shorts down, and the friend was still there on the couch playing video games like none of this was happening. It kind of felt like I was watching it happen from above me. It was really strange. It was kind of like – I thought that I would panic, and scream, and run, but I just kind of froze which was not the response that I ever thought I would have in that situation … I always felt like I would be the one to kind of be like, "Help me," or something like that, but it was just like everything froze up. I didn't know what to do.

Olivia must have passed out again, because when she woke it was morning. The Uber driver "acted like everything was cool" and offered to drive her to the friend's house to get her key. For a second, Olivia questioned herself, but knew "something about this just isn't right." When she was home, she looked at her phone and noticed the ride was not stored in her Uber app. The driver had an Uber sticker, but none of his personal or car information was recorded. Strangely, Olivia got several calls from a new number, the faux Uber driver must have put his in her phone while she was passed out.

Black Women's Reactions to Sexual Assault Exposure

Initial reactions to sexual assault exposure, largely happening in the moment, resemble emotional reactions highlighted in the campus sexual assault literature. Many Black women and non-binary students recalled freezing, feeling confused, and fearful of what else an assailant might do if they were already disregarding a "No" or previously stated boundary. When Black women experienced sexual assault or rape while asleep or incapacitated by alcohol or drugging, they had no opportunity to say "No," coming into consciousness realizing something terrible was happening to them. However, in their narratives, Black women and non-binary students made meaning of sexual assault exposure through their multiple marginalized social position of being Black women. My findings depart from the literature on sexual assault on campus that tends to conflate emotional reactions to the assault with barriers to reporting (Sabina & Ho, 2014). Instead, I found reporting decisions were based on how Black women survivors anticipated they would be seen by legal and campus authorities and whether the consequences of reporting would cause more harm to Black communities.

Black women viewed the source of the assault and assailants' motivations through an intersectional lens. Black women and non-binary students named racial hierarchies that privileged Black men's lives and needs in their families, communities, and on campus. Black women spoke at length about the intersectional failure of Black men (particularly assailants and those who defended their assailants) to be strong allies to Black women. Whether in their social circles or in the media, Black women wanted their male peers to support them as much as Black women championed the entire Black community. Across PWIs and HBCUs Black women wanted a space (inclusive of non-binary and trans students) to discuss gendered racism and sexual violence and devise their own solutions.

Some Black women viewed sexual assault as a direct attack on their identity as Black women. When Ruth was assaulted by a white man she met on a dating app, she believed the way he treated and approached her was fueled by gendered racism. She stated:

> There was a point in which I said no and made it clear that this was not what I wanted, and it was ignored. I think that a lot of times in society, Black women's pleas for help or just issues in general are easily ignored, and kind of just written off, and not paid attention to.

Rebecca learned after unwanted sexual contact with a white graduate student that she was not the first Black woman he had targeted. In one instance, someone told Rebecca they saw Blake force a Black woman on a date to drink a handle of vodka and then drive away with her. Rebecca pieced together a chilling pattern that corresponded with her experience of his attention and flirting despite her refusal and being engaged. Lauryn discussed being called a "Thot" (That Ho Over There) saying the term meant the assailant did not, "think of me as a human being, a person with my own feelings, my own thoughts, with my own opinions. I'm more than a sex toy." Sexual threats and assault alongside gendered racists slurs like "Thot" indicated Black women's sexual assault exposure was racialized.

Sucre stated that every man who assaulted her made comments about her body, piercings, and hyper-sexualized her, saying she "wanted it." As an Afro-Indigenous woman, Sucre connected these sexual assaults to white supremacist and colonial violence saying, "the rape and murder of indigenous women has happened in every generation of my family since this land got stolen." Cori's white abusive ex-boyfriend serially dated Black women and femme identified people, likely causing similar harm to them. Jade and Jennifer spoke of a sense of entitlement Black men assailants seemed to have in relation to them as Black women. When Jennifer started graduate school, she experienced coercion and intimate partner violence from a Black man far along in a different graduate program. She viewed the situation as connected to Black men

believing “they can just go around here and take bodies as they want to.” Jade was angered by the “audacity” of the Black student who groped her in her sleep, thinking he could “help himself to her body” while unconscious.

Many Black women spoke about how they are not protected in the Black community, including their families. Family members viewed Black girls as “mature” and self-sufficient, while Black boys (only within the context Black families and communities) were seen as needing support and protection from racist systems. When Josephine disclosed the assault to her parents, their initial response centered the Black male assailant, comparing him to Josephine’s brother, a Black man in college as well. This centering of her brother and the Black male position hurt Josephine and reminded her of how Black girls are positioned in families. Josephine recalled her parents never having “the talk” about police violence with her and her sister, but observed a “more protective” approach with her younger brother. Josephine felt, as a Black girl growing up “responsible for the advances we have from older men or assaults or growing up too fast or being ‘fast’ We're always responsible for that.” Danai had a similar experience of being chastised by her mother for unwanted sexual attention from older men as a prepubescent teen. Danai added her mother’s background as an African immigrant and a Christian played into how she was treated as a young girl. Naomie felt, as the only daughter, unprotected in situations within her family, not seeing her parents or brothers as sources of unreserved support. She explained, “It's really just Black women against everybody else because we're not protected by our own. We're not loved by our own. We're really just loved by each other.”

The lack of protection of Black women extended to the campus space. Black women observed an intraracial hierarchy that privileged Black men. Sharee commented feeling alienated by the Black Student Union at her PWI, saying “the Black Student Union became the Black

Man's Union, basically. So, it was some BS. They were out there being misogynistic, calling all the women females." Gloria discussed issues within Black Greek life at her PWI. Black women planned a public forum to address sexual assault at Black fraternity parties. Hundreds of students attended and witnessed Black women sharing their experiences. Fraternity affiliated men did "promise to do better," yet Gloria felt solutions should have been led by Black women. Sadly, the women who organized the event had no formal organization to maintain the energy of the event. A similar event was organized at Pauli's PWI to address sexual violence. Pauli remembered some Black football players making a video post about "toxic femininity" which prompted Black women to organize a forum. The football players approached the event defensively, accusing Black women organizers of stereotyping them. During the event, Black women testified to be harmed by current and former players. Pauli listened to a Black woman in her senior year talk about being raped by a player and subsequently "completely cut out of the Black community." Pauli marveled at this story because it was the first time they had seen the woman, which was "pretty rare" at an elite PWI where all Black students knew or knew of each other.

Black women connected sexual assault exposure to gendered racial hierarchies they observed within the larger Black community. Alex remembered being on a panel at her PWI discussing Black love, wherein other Black people emphasized the challenges Black men face, including having to "excuse things" to support Black men. Alex pushed back saying:

> Black women have it hard, too. All the stuff that Black men have, we have that, and then we also have this factor of you could be raped. How come we don't have the same empathy for us, as well, even among ourselves?

The lack of discourse within the Black community for the ways state violence, racial violence, and sexual violence harm Black women reminded participants of the lack of care they

experienced during the sexual assault. Several women likened their experiences with Black men not protecting or advocating for their well-being to Megan Thee Stallion. As an outspoken Black woman, Megan Thee Stallion's physical assault by her then romantic partner, Tory Lanez, provided participants with a perfect example of how Black women are not protected. Martha noticed only Black women artists supporting Megan Thee Stallion, while Lanez had overwhelming support from more powerful Black male musicians and Black men online. Martha commented:

> I saw a post where a Black man was like, "Black women are mad at us, but we're not Tory Lanez." What if that entire post would have just been, "It really sucks what happened to her, and I'm here for Black women." Instead, it was just like, "oh, that's not me." That would be great to see from Black men, is solidarity, and just always speaking out, not just for the women that they're attracted to.

Naomie agreed the Megan thee Stallion/Tory Lanez situation reminded her of Black men who "only care about women that are aesthetically pleasing to them, and they don't care about Black women that are just Black women." Black women not only identified the imbalance in support from Black men through Megan Thee Stallion's experience, but also the tendency to feel protective towards certain Black women. Martha and Naomie noticed a selectiveness in what kind of Black woman could possibly be seen as worthy of protection. Naomie specifically called out the tendency of Black men to extend protection to only "cookie cutter Instagram girl(s)" and not ordinary Black women like her. Anna Julia also objected to Black men who place conditions on their support for their daughters or romantic partners as "extremely harmful," as it neglects the "Black woman down the street that you don't love." Sucre also felt her abusive ex and Jake, who sexually assaulted her, saw her as "not the marriageable type" because of her race and gender. Her white ex-boyfriend taunted her and compared her to a white woman he saw as "virginal" and worth respecting.

Athena extended this distinction, discussing how respectability politics within the Black community worked to silence them from discussing relationship abuse. Athena's ex was a leader in a prominent Black sorority, majored in STEM, and presented as a "quote/unquote 'the good black girl.'" As a sex worker and advocate for "deviant" Black women, Athena talked about their experience of sexual assault, not naming Stacey specifically, leading them to enter sex work. Since there were only "like five Black lesbians on campus anyway" people started connecting the dots. Athena started receiving anonymous calls and texts telling them to stop talking about the assault. Athena felt they could not win as the "Black whore who is studying Black whores, who is probably seen as angry" compared to a "sweet little good Black girl" with the backing of Black Greek life. Black women and nonbinary students observed only some Black women experienced limited amounts of protection on campus, respectable and feminine "Instagram girls," leaving ordinary and "deviant" Black women to fend for themselves.

Conclusion

This chapter explored Black women's narratives of sexual assault exposure. Across relational and situational contexts, particularly Black party spaces, Black women's boundaries and sexual agency were disregarded. Black women participants found few spaces where they felt safe and protected from sexual assault. Drawing on intersectionality and the theory of legal consciousness, I found sexual assault changed how participants perceived social relationships and spaces on campus. Many participants connected their experiences of sexual assault to their social position as Black women, highlighting their individual and collective sense of that their personhood was not valued compared to others. This sentiment informed how participants evaluated reporting options, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 Intersections of Identity, Legality, and Black Women's Decisions to Report Sexual Assault

This chapter examines how Black women evaluated reporting options after sexual assault exposure. Participants differed in awareness of university reporting options, but all mentioned the criminal legal system. Black women and non-binary students articulated a complex set of barriers to reporting sexual assault to formal authorities. Harriet, who experienced intimate partner violence, did not report to the police because she did not want to become "another statistic" of Black community deficits. At Spelman, Harriet dedicated herself to analyzing "institutionalized systems of racism" and pursued a graduate degree at a PWI to gain the skills to "dismantle" oppression in her field. After sexual assault, considering reporting to the police was a complete non-starter. Harriet explained:

> I knew that me reporting would have one of two outcomes. 1) No one cared and I wasted my breath because it was "black on black crime," and I was just a young black female that got herself into a bad situation. That was one way it could have been received. Another outcome could have been someone takes it seriously, it goes through the course of reporting up to investigation, and then he gets thrown in jail or some type of penalization for those actions. Or I drag him through the legal system…I guess neither of them would seem as viable options for me.

Harriet articulated multiple, intertwined consequences of reporting sexual assault as a Black woman. Accounting for institutionalized racism in the legal system, Harriet expected her story would be dismissed because her experience of sexual assault involved two Black people. Harriet knew incidents within the Black community are classified as unimportant. Harriet anticipated gendered racism from legal authorities in the form of being blamed for the assault and relationship abuse. Her youth, race and gender were salient, framing how she expected police and prosecutors to minimize the harm she experienced. In another way, Harriet worried reporting would lead to activating legal processes against a Black man. Fearing her report being taken "seriously" did not translate to legal authorities believing her and wanting to protect her. Rather,

Harriet stated “I couldn't fathom seeing myself adding to those statistics that I had pointed out the flaws and discrepancies in for so long. I felt like I was contradicting myself … I saw it as, well, you're contradicting those four years of work that you put in at Spelman. You're hurting your own community.” A Black woman reporting a Black man for sexual assault would present the legal system with an opportunity to incarcerate a Black man, based on his race and racist institutional imperatives to deprive Black people of their freedom for any reason. Knowing this, Harriet felt reporting her assault would “contradict” her commitment to dismantling racial oppression, putting her in the position of unwillingly “dragging” a Black man through a racist legal process.

Harriet specifically named legal processes in her decision not to report, identifying how racism and sexism co-construct the law saying:

> I feel like black women are such unique people in how we have to deal with the intersectionality of being a woman, of being black, and then being a black woman. I feel like as it stands today, there is no system that currently takes all of those three factors into consideration when it involves reporting, investigation, or even prosecuting.

Reporting represented multiple risks 1) dismissal by a white dominated legal system that abandons Black communities when people need help, 2) invalidation through gendered racism that does not take sexual harm against Black women seriously, and 3) furthering a white racist agenda by contributing to incarceration of Black people. Harriet concluded that “no system” existed that would “be inclusive or aware” of her identities and social consciousness as a Black woman to deliver a just outcome.

Most participants in the sample articulated some variation of the intricate patchwork of dilemmas described by Harriet. In fact, Black women and non-binary described a multitude of ways gendered racism worked through legal institutions, higher education institutions, and the

Black community to silence them. I first discuss participants like Harriet (n=34), who did not report their assaults to any formal authority. The barriers identified by participants diverge from reasoning described in the literature on campus sexual assault. Through the social analysis of Black women and non-binary survivors, this chapter argues Black women experience a double bind that pits sexist perceptions of rape victims against the Black women's social consciousness of shielding the Black community from state violence. Gendered racism creates sexual vulnerability, described in chapters 4 and 5, due to the lack of protection afforded to Black women in public and private. On the other end of sexual assault exposure, gendered racism works through legal institutions to further harm Black women by silencing them through shaming and blaming, more state violence, and potential violence to loved ones who may want to "take the law in their own hands" to avenge Black women. Speaking about sexual violence, for Black women, is one of the most dangerous things one can do.

Several participants (n=14) shared experiences of reporting their assaults to municipal police, campus police, medical professionals, campus mandatory reporters, Title IX complaint handlers, faculty members, and campus administrators. These interactions confirmed Black women's fears, as their stories of sexual assault were met with dismissal, judgement and victim blaming, or suspicion and scrutiny. Police interactions went, save for one example, horribly. Title IX procedures were no better, leaving participants feeling unheard, scrutinized, or re-traumatized. This chapter outlines the multiple ways Black women and non-binary students made sense of and interacted with legal and campus systems.

Silencing through the Double Bind

Alex described the double bind as "the two factor" of possibly being "at fault" as a woman for not being vigilant enough and "not wanting to ruin a Black man's life because Black

men have it so hard." Alex had a conversation with another Black woman about the assault. The two shared "cultural things" of not wanting to report on a Black man, because of the racial formation they both recalled growing up Black. Alex struggled for years, blaming herself for not fighting him off. She shared her internal monologue: "You didn't fight. You should have fought more. You should have hurt him…You were complicit in your own assault." Without a venue to process the assault or seek accountability from the assailant, Alex "transferred all the blame" onto herself, echoing myths she now understood as sexist and racist.

After Serena was raped by a close friend and colleague, she reflected on feeling "this need to protect him because he's a Black man, even though he violated me." Serena highlighted various personal, social, and structural barriers to disclosing the assault. Since the former friend who assaulted her was well known and the two had a consensual sexual history, Serena wondered, "If I say this or tell people, are they going to believe me?" Serena worried disclosing would breed "drama and gossip" among people who knew them from college and their current roles as administrators. Further, Serena worried reporting or disclosing the incident would create an adversarial dynamic that could harm her career. She stated, "[I didn't] feel like him alluding to me being a liar because at this point, I'm an administrator." Serena had a strong sense gendered racism in the form of disregard for the assault could multiply the harm.

Black women developed the legal consciousness to center Black men from watching other Black women in the families do the same. Serena explained, "I didn't want to call the cops because I was so afraid of what would happen with him. I wasn't even considering myself." This instinct to shield the assaulter from the police was deeply rooted in Serena's family history and upbringing as a Black woman. She recalled witnessing an incident of domestic violence between her parents when she was 5 years old. Serena elaborated,

> The cops came and escorted us, and they were like, "Do you want to file a report?" My mother said, "No, because I don't want to ruin his career." That's what she said. So, I think that experience just stuck with me, like hey, we can leave a situation to help ourselves, but we can't do too much because we don't want to ruin this man's career.

This moment from her childhood informed how Serena viewed the legal system with a racialized and gendered lens. Her mother took Serena and her siblings to a shelter in response to the domestic violence but involving the legal system through a report would create more harm, in the form of threatening her father's career. Serena remembered her mother also did not view the legal system as a resource to stop or address domestic violence, influencing her decision to also avoid the legal system. Black women had to shoulder the responsibility of not adding to a system they know to be carceral and racist, while also experiencing harm, trauma, and broken trust.

Jade described the double bind as "a feeling of powerlessness." Reporting presented two damaging options. She explained, "women are often victim-blamed, gaslit when it comes to sexual assault [and] that being taught as a black woman that you should protect Black men in American society." For Jade, the imperative to protect black men was not theoretical. During her childhood, she lived briefly in Pulaski, Tennessee, the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan (Parsons, 2016). Growing up listening to her grandmother's stories of racial terrorism gave Jade a strong sense of the "deep-seated, rooted racial prejudice" of the past and present. Attending a PWI in a majority white area amplified Jade's sense of needing to protect her attacker. When Jade connected with a counselor, a white woman, Jade did not mention "the obligation" she felt of protecting the assailant because he was Black. She thought the counselor "wouldn't understand the historical context" and that revealing the assailant was Black would "perpetuate stereotypes." Jade's awareness of needing to "respect my attacker" even in her effort to get support shows the resonance with which Black woman took on the cultural protector role after sexual assault.

The imperative Jade described of having to "protect Black men in American society" reverberated throughout Black women and non-binary students' decision-making process with sexual assault and reporting. In this way, Black women felt "the law" would pursue their claims vigorously only to incarcerate more Black men. This sentiment traveled with the belief that formal authorities would invalidate their experience of sexual harm. Therefore, Black women perceived the law to be simultaneously interested in punishing Black men *and* not in taking Black women's claims of sexual harm seriously.

Origins of the Double Bind in Black Women's Racial Formation

Lorraine did not report or tell many people about the assault. When asked about her reasoning, she responded:

> Yeah, I think one of the major issues for me, besides the fact that it was someone I knew and the roommate of somebody that I liked, was the fact that it was a Black guy, so I didn't want to say who it was, and I didn't want to press charges or seek anything like that because I also knew it would be different for him because he is Black… I think at the time, it was just like me repeating what I was often told of not ruining the reputation of this Black man, like ruining his life. And so that part, that was a lot of why I didn't say anything.

The distinctions Lorraine makes in drilling down to why she did not report or even disclose informally represent a missing narrative from the campus sexual assault literature. For Black women, the implications of reporting carry more identity-based weight. The most important factor for Lorraine was the racial identity of the assailant. Her statement articulates two parts of the legal consciousness of rape within the Black community: Black men accused of rape are treated harshly and the messages Black women receive about protecting the reputation of Black men.

Lorraine spoke further about the origins of the messages she received about race sexual violence.

> I think it's just the way I was taught about race from a young age. Like watching *Roots* and reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, all of these messages of where the Black man is wrongfully accused of assaulting this dear innocent white woman, that was kind of the message I often got. So, when situations in your life occurred where a Black man was being accused of anything related to rape or sexual assault, my instinct was more defensive.

As a young Black woman, Lorraine had been raised to view the problem of sexual violence in the Black community as one centered around Black men, white women, and false allegations. Lorraine recalls these messages about protecting Black men as a part of her personal racial consciousness formation. These messages were not specific to rape or sexual violence but were central to being "taught about race from a young age." Protecting Black men was communicated to Black women and girls as a given, a natural course of action. As Black women and non-binary participants thought through reporting options and possible outcomes, they realized the available schemas of race, rape, and the law did not center or protect them.

Lorraine's description of the prototypical victim as a "dear innocent white woman" shows how the legal consciousness of rape centers Black men as wrongly accused and erases Black women as targets of sexual violence. The dominant schema is of the injustices of false accusations against Black men made by white women. The material consequences of racist false accusations weigh heavily on the entire Black community. The corollary of white men raping Black women is also seen as racist terror (McGuire, 2011), but is less potent in contemporary times as sex (and sexual violence) primarily occurs between people of similar racial backgrounds. The slippage of the narrative that Black men are falsely accused and thus require protection has material consequences for Black women and girls who are raped by Black men (Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 2012).

Contemporary Examples of the Double Bind

Black women could easily identify recent events that reinforced the imperative to protect Black men from mass incarceration, despite the harm Black women experienced from the same Black men. Martha did not report the assault because she "didn't want him being incarcerated for it." She likened her situation to an incident involving musician and activist Megan Thee Stallion. In 2020, Megan Thee Stallion was shot by her then partner Tory Lanez. In the arrest, Megan shielded Lanez from prosecution, yet was still bullied and defamed by Lanez and his fans. To Martha, this incident crystalized the thankless imperative to protect Black men saying, "And so I think for myself and just Black women, in general, even though Black men hurt us, often, we still want to protect them from being incarcerated because we just know how bad that system is." Participants mentioned other high-profile cases involving Black men. Hearing friends, loved ones, and other Black people on Twitter defend Bill Cosby and R. Kelly with such ferocity reinforced this legal consciousness. Lorraine described how Black family members discussed the Cosby case, saying, "If you think he did it, you're stupid, and blah, blah, blah. He's a Black man. We need to protect him, and all that stuff." This legal consciousness steeped in gendered racism that erases Black women's sexual harm is what silenced Lorraine and Martha, alongside many participants.

Black women tended to be highly aware of possible legal consequences for their perpetrators if they reported. After Naomie experienced sexual assault by another student of Nigerian descent, she wrestled with wanting to call him out and find support. Reporting felt like a nonstarter because the assailant was an international student. Naomie explained, "I didn't want to ruin his life in a weird way because I kind of felt sorry for him. I'm sympathetic just because my brother is an international student. I'm not." Naomie knew the stakes would be higher if she reported, knowing the vulnerabilities presented by the immigration system through her brother's

experience. Similarly, Danai did not report the multiple sexual assaults she experienced before and during college. Talking about one assailant, Danai mentioned he had two kids and that she "didn't want this to affect that part of his life." Danai did not want to subject him as a Black father or his kids to the child welfare and custody system. Black women feared reporting carried specific punitive outcomes that would punish Black men in ways beyond vaguely "ruining a life." Black women understood social systems, including immigration and family law, as connected and as racist and punitive as the criminal legal system.

Gendered Racism and Experiences of Institutional Betrayal

Black women described personal experiences of being invalidated as survivors by family. Viola did not report the sexual assault exposure from college because of a traumatizing experience in high school. She explained, "My dad is ex-secret service, so if I would have told him -- and my whole family is law enforcement. My brothers are law enforcement, and my uncle is law enforcement, which made it very uncomfortable telling them anything." When she was in high school, Viola was raped by another student in the hallway after school. She told a friend, who disclosed the assault to both Viola's father and her own father, who was a police officer. Viola was pressured to disclose to her principal and her father, against her wishes. Viola's father insisted on taking her to the hospital to report. During the drive over, her father blamed her for the assault saying, "Why do you go to church if you're going to sneak around with boys and do these things?" After undergoing a forensic rape examination, Viola was questioned by police while her father loomed over her. At first, Viola wrote a statement which reflected the truth. However, she noticed her father seemed to be angrier with Viola for making an accusation of rape. Viola reasoned:

> I don't have a choice anymore. I don't have a choice whether I started. The only way out of here is to recant your statement. That's what it was. So, I literally was like, keep in mind I'm a virgin, 'Yeah, I slept with him. But he didn't call me the next day, so I was mad and I made this up.' I signed the papers recanting all my statements. And [her dad] wasn't mad anymore.

The harrowing combination of being raped, shamed, and forced into reporting by her father, and his ensuing relief when she recanted silenced Viola from sharing any incidents of sexual harm.

In another instance, Viola described another sexual assault exposure after her ex-boyfriend "allowed one of his friends to come in the room" as she was getting dressed. When Viola got home, her father was already angry she skipped school. Seeing his reaction and with her previous experience disclosing assault, Viola "never shared anything" about that or subsequent assaults. Being a Black woman in a family of Black men in law enforcement presented a "really sticky relationship when it comes to me and law enforcement feeling like that's a safe place because no one ever gave that to me as a choice." Viola had no agency in deciding whether she wanted to go through a legal process after her high school assaults.

When I broached the topic of reporting her college sexual assault with Mae, she said "it didn't cross my mind." Elaborating, Mae explained her perceptions of reporting originated with an insulting interaction with a health care provider after a sexual assault in high school. The high school student who assaulted Mae did so without a condom, prompting Mae to find a health clinic for testing and possible treatment. The first nurse she talked to about the assault asked Mae whether she abused alcohol before the assault. Mae did not drink and was insulted by the nurse's assumption that Mae was at fault. Mae described feeling:

> Hurt that a healthcare professional and adult would say this to me. At the time, I was 17 and so it really made me realize how people treat survivors, and that is often awfully victim blaming, and so the idea of having to relive such a humiliating and degrading moment to police officers, to lawyers in a court of law, with the first assault, I couldn't imagine anything worse.

Mae also felt “conflicted” after the first assault, saying, “I was like I don't know if I'm ready to ruin this guy's life by having him prosecuted by the criminal system.” Her legal consciousness from the first assault carried over to her not even considering reporting the college assault. Mae also shared that she was a survivor of domestic violence by her, now estranged, father. Mae saw her mother physically abused by her father and go through a contentious divorce. During “court mandated” visit with her father, he strangled Mae, making her pass out. It took two years for her mother to gain full custody to protect Mae and her siblings from abuse. Entanglement with domestic violence and child custody arrangements that made her vulnerable to abuse led Mae to view the legal system as wholly unsupportive of survivors.

Mae’s views on reporting were also shaped by her social position as a Black woman. She explained:

> it’s not related to me having to decide which is worse - sexism or racism. Not that I'm saying one is worse than the other. Obviously, both are awful things that [are] so interconnected that I think it's very difficult to separate the two, especially in being a black woman who experienced both.

Mae experienced both racism and sexism in the harms she described and her interactions with legal and medical services. Each of the Black men who harmed her sexually and physically were people she trusted— she depended on her father, the high school assaulter asked her to be his girlfriend right before the assault, and she had a basic level of trust with college assaulter as another Black student on a small, white dominated campus. The legal system had already failed her as a child and tangentially blamed her as a teen. Mae concluded reporting could not repair the trust or address the trauma she experienced in college. Mae clarified:

> I was upset that I was feeling scared to go to sleep at night because I didn't want to have to close my eyes and reimagine it. And the feelings of having no self-worth and feeling just disgusted with my body. Also, I thought about it. I just felt like [the college assaulter]

> staying in a prison cell, it wouldn't make me feel better. It wouldn't make me feel like I had gotten any justice.

Mae's comment suggests she too faced a double bind of simultaneously fearing personal invalidation and not wanting to "ruin" a Black man's life through criminal prosecution. Mae's double bind was compounded with direct personal experiences with the legal system that left her and the other Black women in her family unprotected from abuse.

Social Consequences of Reporting

Reporting sexual assault could lead to ostracization from the Black community, through members actively protecting the accused Black man and deploying gendered racist stereotypes of Black women's sexuality to negate the harm. Viola described her experience of seeking help after sexual assault exposure as "so many consistent let-downs." Viola was raped by her boyfriend at the time—who was also the Pastor's son at Viola's church. The church community represented the only space of support Viola had while attending a PWI. Wanting to distance herself from the man who assaulted her, Viola stopped attending church. After a few weeks, the pastor started calling her "incessantly," asking why she skipped services and whether "if has something to do with my son." Viola felt threatened by these harassing calls and disclosed the assault to the pastor. In response, Viola learned, "A couple Sundays after that, from what I hear, [the pastor] called a meeting with the church and told them that a 23-year-old woman is accusing his son of rape, but don't believe her. She's a liar." The pastor also called her parents, without her consent, saying Viola lied about being raped by his son and that she "needed to be stopped." Viola was actively shamed by a religious figure she trusted. Since the assailant and his father held more power in the community, Viola was forced out of the only source of support she had in college.

Institutional Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault

Participants named gendered racism within higher education institutions when discussing why they did not report in college. After Taylor was sexually assaulted by a student at a neighboring campus during her first year, she discussed there being "different voices acting upon Black women" when it comes to sexual assault and reporting. Taylor did not report the assault or disclose to anyone. She stated, "the normalization of sexual violence" Black women experience is rarely acknowledged by institutions or messaging around sexual assault. Structurally, Black women's sexual harm is dismissed or deemed less severe compared to white women through lower conviction rates, shorter prison sentences, and the greater availability of stereotypes that portray Black women as hypersexual and unrapable. Taylor observed that much of the resources and advocacy available for survivors at her campus was "very white" with few advocates who could relate to her experience as a Black woman. Taylor cited her institution's "disastrous history of hate crimes targeted at Black women," referencing the hateful threats and harassment against a Black woman student who won the Student Government Presidency. That precedent convinced Taylor reporting sexual assault as a Black woman would not benefit her. Further, Taylor saw a pervasive "lack of relationships" between Black women students and the predominately white faculty, staff, and administrators at her school as severely limiting resources. Pulling those threads together, Taylor surmised:

> recognizing that those are barriers to Black women trying to receive institutional support on a campus that already doesn't have any form of accountability of racial incidences. It's kind of like why would you trust them also for experiences of being sexually assaulted?

Gendered racism in her institutions' lack of response to hate crimes against Black women combined with a "very white" organizational response to sexual assault eviscerated Black

women's trust in their institution to handle their reports of sexual harm with care for their interests.

Taylor also contended with the dilemma of potentially accusing a Black male student of sexual assault, with the added layer of colorism. Growing up mixed race Taylor witnessed systemic racism and the pain of being fetishized for having lighter skin. After the murder of Philando Castile in her home state, Taylor noticed the different ways police behaved, depending on which parent was driving. When her Black stepdad drove her and was pulled over, she witnessed how "police hyper-criminalize Black men." This differed from how police interacted with her white mother in the driver's seat. After sexual assault exposure from a Black male student, Taylor read multiple articles and reflected on her experiences of seeing Black men harassed and brutalized by police. As a Black woman who understood the "historical and current implications of accusing a black man of sexual violence," Taylor reiterated the silencing power of the double bind of not wanting to be a pawn in a racist legal system. Taylor also worried how her mixed-race identity might amplify any possible punishment of the assaulter. Taylor grew up seeing how she was "racialized differently" from her Black friends, based on skin color. Taylor described her enactment of a mixed-race identity as "self-effacing," explaining:

> There's ways in which I try to make myself smaller and not take up space because I understand that there are ways in which me being of a lighter skin tone, me having connections to my white family and how that privileges me in certain ways.

Taylor "subconsciously" knew her identity and presentation could intensify the already racist institutional project of overly punishing Black men for sexual violence.

Taylor uncovered another barrier, unique to campus sexual assault: institutional difference and status. Taylor, an American University student, was assaulted on Georgetown's campus, making it unclear of how reporting through Title IX would work. Taylor cited her lack

of knowledge about the Title IX reporting process at her school to a lack of transparency about "what the actual process looks like. What actually happens?" when students report. This ambiguity compounded when considering initiating a report at different institution. Doing research on the subject, Taylor found "it's actually very, very hard to have some form of accountability for a survivor if the assailant is from another university because their interest is then protecting the person that is accused." She also mentioned institutional status as a factor in not reporting through Title IX, saying to accuse a Black man at Georgetown "just seemed like a lot… a lot bigger that what I would have been able to handle, I guess." Taylor pointed to Georgetown being "more prestigious" and well resourced. Taylor's comments indicate she faced a secondary double bind within the campus context. Accusing a student at a high status PWI would be exponentially more difficult as a Black woman, already unprotected by her own institution, with no expectation of protection from another PWI. Additionally, reporting to a more prestigious PWI signaled the possibility of harsher consequences for a Black man accused of sexual assault. Taylor felt "there's a lot more at stake" to make a report of intraracial sexual violence to a PWI, especially a prestigious one.

Carceral Responses to Campus Sexual Assault

Black women students did not view university Title IX responses as viable alternatives for reporting sexual assault. Participants believed they would encounter the same blaming attitudes from legal authorities in Title IX proceedings. Black women battled assumptions specific to campus sexual assault, such as the presumption of wanting sex based on being in someone's dorm room (Hirsch & Khan, 2020). Yet, when I asked Alex what reporting to the university would have looked like, she feared people involved with the hearing would have "have probably judged me on the fact that I did go to his room willingly." Instead of seeing Title IX as an

alternative to reporting to police, Alex expected administrators and other students to “judge” her and blame her for the assault. Cori, a nonbinary student at MSU, did not report intimate partner violence and sexual assault to the Office of Institutional Equity because they already had a negative experience trying to address discriminatory comments. Cori explained, “I've had to use OIE as a racial thing because I've had racially insensitive comments and ableist comments made towards me. And basically, if a person doesn't respond, they don't have to do anything.” In Cori’s experience of reporting racist and ableist comments, OIE did not offer support and the case did not progress because the person who made the comments disregarded Cori’s complaint. OIE’s failure to address harm in one area of Cori’s college experience destroyed her trust in the institution to address sexual assault.

Black women and nonbinary students distrusted Title IX approaches because they mirrored racist criminal legal processes and outcomes. Pauli, a nonbinary student at an elite Catholic university learned about “patriarchy, and race, and the carceral system” in African American Studies courses. Applying that knowledge, Pauli felt reporting through Title IX contradicted what many Black women who shared their anti-racist consciousness actually wanted. Pauli explained:

> A lot of people don't want people to be expelled. They don't want people to lose their jobs. Maybe that's not what they want. Maybe what they want is just like, "Don't go to these parties if I'm at these parties. Stay away from me," or you want other people to know what happened.

Pauli viewed reporting options on campus as carceral, reinforcing gendered racism and producing unhelpful outcomes for survivors. Black women students conflated campus procedures with the criminal legal system, seeing both as gendered and racist. Sometimes that conflation emerged from institutional connections between campus police and municipal police. Lorraine discovered sexual assault resources on her elite PWI campus were directly working with a municipal police department. She explained. “I haven't personally been in contact with

Public Safety about my assault…But I know that there's a huge relationship with the sexual assault hotline and Public Safety. And there's a relationship with Public Safety and NYPD." Connecting the institutional dots, Lorraine saw this collaboration as proof campus police would likely mirror gendered racist responses of the NYPD. Lorraine wanted a system that prioritized "keeping the survivor safe." For Lorraine and other Black women participants, campus police and Title IX did not provide an alternative to the criminal legal system. By mirroring and collaborating with criminal legal institutions, universities reproduce the harm Black women want to avoid and silence them from telling their stories of assault.

Protecting Black Men on Multiple Fronts

Black women's suspicion and avoidance of the criminal legal system extended beyond reporting their assault, to seeking support from close Black male family and friends. Cam consciously avoided talking to her partner, a Black man, about the assault fearing he would "take actions into his own hands." Cam explained, her partner:

> would be extremely angry and want to know who this person is. He's very protective, very protective, kind of like my father, actually, which is why I never told my dad when things happened when I was younger, just as a way to protect him because if he got caught up with law enforcement, it would be really bad.

Black women did not disclose to Black men close to them to prevent their entanglement with the police and legal system. Cam kept sexually harmful things from men in her life to protect them being tempted to defend her, and thus becoming vulnerable to being prosecuted and brutalized by the legal system. Tessa experienced sexual violence during high school and college and did not report or disclose to anyone at the time. Years later, she discussed these sexual harms with her father, who offered support and added he if she had disclosed earlier, he would have killed the assailant. Tessa understood this response, explaining:

> The thing that I knew about him was also this idea of in the Black community, we can't count on systems to do what they're supposed to do, and we can't count on law enforcement to do what they're supposed to do. If anything, they're doing the wrong thing, and so if we want justice, we have to do it ourselves. That's always been the message I think that I received growing up, so even though [her father] knew that he probably would have gone to jail for killing a teenager, still his gut response was like, "I would have killed him. Not just because he harmed you, but because that's how we bring justice where there won't be justice," basically.

Tessa reflected the sentiments of many Black women participants who believed the legal system could not be relied on to deliver justice or accountability. However, disclosing to a close Black man could mean drawing the legal system in, through the incarceration of a father, brother, partner, or friend who harmed an assailant.

The failure of the legal system to address sexual violence against Black women constructs Black men as avengers who feel responsible to bring "justice" outside of the law. In the case of Tessa and Cam, Black fathers felt responsible to deliver justice, knowing involving the legal system would fail their daughters. The collisions of racism, sexism, and legality continued as Black women understood this dynamic and responded by 1) not reporting to avoid incarceration of the Black assailant and 2) not disclosing to Black men to protect them from potential incarceration for acting outside the law. Knowing Black men would take action against their assailants functioned as another form of silencing. Tessa and Cam felt a responsibility to not disclose to Black men who loved and cared about them out of a responsibility to protect them from fulfilling the avenger role. The legal system neglects and fails to address sexual violence within the Black community *unless* there is an opportunity to incarcerate a Black man as assailant or avenger. Black women feared setting these consequences in motion, knowing as Tessa stated, "justice wasn't really possible in the way that it should be."

Black women also had to discourage Black men from enacting the avenger role. Lorraine shared her experience with her close Black guy friends from home who responded protectively

by wanting to come to her campus and beat up the assailant. Lorraine cautiously appreciated their response, but sensed her friends felt “protective in an ownership way instead of me having my own experience … actually centering what I wanted.” Similarly, Naomie knew her male cousins and friends would “ride for me” if needed, but she discouraged an offer to “beat up” the assaulter. Naomie wanted a response that would center and consider her needs. She surmised, “I feel like Black men need to work harder and listen to the plight of Black women.” In Angie’s case, her friend Chris did beat up the assailant after catching him trying to assault her. Whenever the assault came up, Chris would get visibly angry and seemed to be struggling with guilt for failing to protect Angie. Angie reassured him that he was not at fault, but felt ambivalent about his anger saying, "I don't know if your anger feels supportive or not but thank you for it." The ways race and gender collaborated in constructing Black men as avengers in response to sexual violence against Black women was appreciated but created more responsibilities for Black women to shield Black men from being “caught up” by the criminal legal system.

Gendered Racism in Reporting to Formal Authorities

Students experiences sexual assault in higher education have two reporting routes. The criminal legal system, represented by police departments of various jurisdictions, prosecutors, and courts, involves claiming injury under legal definitions of sexual assault and rape. The criminal legal system is currently intertwined with medical services for survivors, meaning a person seeking medical attention, testing, and treatment after sexual harm can have that treatment coincide with the collection of evidence. Trained medical staff perform forensic medical exams, documenting injury and traces of the assailant on and in the survivor’s body and clothes. Police are dispatched to emergency rooms to get statements from survivors. In this setting, a person may have already described the incident to doctors, nurses, sexual assault nurse

examiners, and hospital staff in addition to police, all documenting the story on different forms and records. Survivors may be waiting for hours with a rotating set of professionals coming in and out, asking questions, conducting exams, and providing treatments for sexual transmitted infections and preventing pregnancy. Legal proceedings re-situate the survivor from the harmed party to a witness asked to provide evidence of crimes committed by the assailant.

The second option for students is the university Title IX procedure. This route defines sexual harm as a violation of a student's civil rights, as sexual harassment and assault are understood as sex discrimination that can deny one's right to an education. The process may start with a student contacting university administrators charged with investigating cases of sexual or gender misconduct. Students may accidentally disclose to a university official with mandatory reporting obligations and be contacted by the Title IX or Equity Office to initiate a complaint process. Universities rely on students to bring complaints, identify the assailant(s), give multiple statements, identify witnesses, and respond to questions in a hearing. Title IX officials may refuse to pursue an investigation, telling students their injury does not rise to the level of a policy violation. If university officials proceed, survivors describe their experiences to multiple investigators and members of a hearing panel, again as a contributing piece of evidence in the university's case against the student who committed harm. Survivors may have an advocate or support person, but the process demands mental and emotional energy from survivors, already dealing with trauma from the assault. The decision of whether the assailant committed a policy violation resides with a hearing panel or university official.

This section reviews the stories of 14 participants, 13 cisgender Black women, one non-binary student, who interacted with legal or university officials after sexual assault exposure. Seven participants had some contact with the legal system, through police, undergoing a forensic

medical exam, or a prosecutor. Eleven participants approached or entered a Title IX or university conduct process. As shown in the table, most of these processes started with compelled disclosure, defined by Holland et al. (2017) as speaking to someone on campus with mandatory reporting obligations, usually by accident. Five participants interfaced with both criminal legal and university Title IX systems. These stories reveal reporting sexual assault is not linear, meaning these stories rarely begin with a student making a straightforward report to a formal authority like a police detective or Title IX coordinator. Rather the legal system has tentacles in other institutions and relationships that catch survivors off guard. Survivors are thrust into legal or Title IX processes through seeking medical care, asking for help after assault, or discussions with supervisors or other students with mandatory reporting obligations. In this way, reporting sexual assault is often not voluntary.

Through narratives of reporting interactions, I observed that once a survivor stumbles into a reporting situation, what they hope to get from it is validation of the harm. As Black women, participants approached reporting with a high level of caution and skepticism. Some Black women sought back up with friends, survivor advocates, or a taped confession from the assailant. In most cases, police officers behaved exactly how Black women anticipated they would. Nonetheless, these direct attacks on their character and credibility hurt, multiplying the harm of the assault. Being believed outweighed Black women's desire to see a report result in punishment. At the same time, Black women puzzled over how unwilling police or university officials were to do anything when alerted to an assault. I often asked participants to identify the racial identities of the legal, medical, and university professionals. Many times, Black women described their interactions with white male cops, white women nurses, and white women Title IX officers. Even in narratives where I did not get racial background information of the

professionals, Black women still described gendered racism as the dominant reaction to their report. I also identify the universities by name in this section because they are elite, wealthy institutions. It is imperative for readers to see how these processes do not work for Black women at most well-resourced institutions. If Black women survivors face gendered racism when reporting at UCLA and Howard University, stories at less resourced universities are likely worse.

Gendered Racist Police Interactions

In the middle of sharing her story, Kerry commented, “I don't have some awesome survivor story of how I coped and came through the other side.” After a random Black male student found her sleeping and raped her at a party during Homecoming, Kerry’s friend convinced her to go the hospital. Kerry’s friend instructed her not to shower and they went to Howard University hospital for her to have a forensic medical exam. After waiting for several hours, the pair learned HU hospital did not perform rape kits and they would be transported to another hospital. Kerry remembered, “I feel like they should have told me in the beginning that they don't do rape kits….so they kind of kept me waiting for hours kind of sitting in a room feeling dirty and kind of sitting in my -- you know.” At the second hospital, Kerry received a full exam. The nurses told her, “Your cervix is bruised and abraded. You're torn up. Obviously, this comes from sex that was rough and unwilling." She also had visible bruises on her neck from being held down. After the exam, the police arrived in her hospital room. Kerry and her friend had not expected any police involvement; they only wanted Kerry to get medical care and treatment for any possible STIs. Kerry said, “I think the hospital called them. I didn't. I think when my friend told the front desk what had happened, they called them automatically.”

The cops (race unknown) approached Kerry in a manner that was “aggressive.” Instead of taking her statement, they interrogated her along a set of questions based on gendered racist

assumptions. Kerry told them she was asleep during the attack, she did not drink that night, and the police had her clothing. She found out the assailant's name from friends and knew people at the party could identify him. With all this possible information to investigate, Kerry had to repeatedly prove to the cops she was not to blame for her assault. Instead of a trauma informed interview, the cops pounced on Kerry using a litany of rape myths and excuses. Kerry explained:

> I really felt attacked. You don't even know me, and you already know that this is my fault somehow. This person assaults me and they get the benefit of the doubt, and I'm automatically a liar. Having to reiterate, "No, I'm not drunk. I wasn't drinking. I didn't do any drugs. I did not ask this person to have sex. I didn't say yes. I wasn't flirting with them. I didn't talk to them first" …But the cops were very -- it was all about, "And that's what you were wearing." You know, I wasn't dressed skimpily. It was October. It was cold. I think I had on jeans, a sweater, and some boots. It wasn't like I was dressed all crazy… "You're sure you didn't know him? You sure you didn't maybe say yes and then change your mind?" I'm like, "Yeah, I'm sure." It seemed pretty cut and dry to me that this was assault.

The cops continued through the entire interaction to push a false narrative, digging at Kerry for some way to turn the blame on her. The cops' reaction was destabilizing, not because she wanted to open a criminal case, but because the police vehemently and violently discarded the truth of the situation. Kerry was hurt and needed help. Up until that point, everyone had agreed with that truth: her friend, the nurses, and Kerry herself. After all the waiting, swabbing, and probing of her most intimate areas, and being examined like a crime victim; Kerry knew this was an assault. She reflected:

> I'd been in some situations when I was younger in high school and stuff where even if I felt I was uncomfortable, the way the pressure was set up, or the fact that it was somebody that I was dating or talking to…This was like the first time that I couldn't find any grey area to excuse it. This is the first time I was like, 'No, I'm hurt. I have physical stuff that's happened to me.'

Comparing other sexual situations when she felt coerced or did not fully consent to sex, this situation was a "cut and dry" rape and it did not make sense why the cops behaved so aggressively to contradict the truth. The cops "yelled" at Kerry saying there was "no point" in

making a report, the cops were certainly not going to do anything for her. Kerry felt, “I just really didn't think that they cared about what happened to me.”

The day after sexual assault exposure for Jennifer was incredibly disorienting. She was at a different campus and away from her support system. Jennifer went to the university hospital when she woke up. A woman she met the previous day accompanied her throughout the visit. Jennifer remembers the process of interacting with medical and legal professionals at the hospital as “the worst part of the whole situation.” She was there all day, from 9 am and until 10 pm. During the forensic medical exam when Jennifer received pills to prevent STIs and pregnancy a nurse commented, “you don’t have to take it.” Jennifer was insulted this person choose the exam as an opportunity to “impose” their anti-abortion stance on her. During her long wait, she received a “Crime Alert” email from Princeton describing her assault. It was “terrifying” and “bizarre” because the university officials did not tell her that an alert would go out nor that she would receive it, since she did not attend Princeton.

Throughout the day, Jennifer felt like a checklist to all the people revolving in and out of the exam room. Sometimes a person would show sympathy, but it felt perfunctory, only a lead in to doing a task. Jennifer shared, “all these questions, people coming in and out. People would say like, ‘I'm so sorry. Okay, now we've got to do this thing.’ Clearly, they just do this every day and don't necessarily see it as a human that's there.” Jennifer estimated having to repeat the story a half dozen times to multiple people: university officials, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and police detectives. Later in the summer she had to rehash everything again for a prosecutor. She wondered why the process wasn’t more streamlined—where all these people could listen to a recording of her story and move on with their work She said, “I felt more like I was getting

accused." Jennifer wondered if reporting was designed to "find holes" in her story, instead of believing her.

Another strange aspect of reporting the assault came up when Jennifer told the officials about the assailant dragging her in and out of multiple campus buildings to find a place to assault her. She remembered "it was a lot of walking" and Jennifer figured multiple security cameras, in and around the buildings, would corroborate her experience. Still baffled, Jennifer told me:

> They straight up said to me, "Princeton University does not have any surveillance cameras on their campus." I don't know if it's because they don't want to be liable for stuff like this or something, but I can't imagine that a campus of that profile, with that kind of endowment doesn't have any cameras on their public property, but that's what they said. They said that they couldn't admit any of that as evidence because it doesn't exist which was the craziest thing I had ever heard in my life. That would have been the thing that could have exonerated me. I don't know if that's the right word, but whatever.

In using the word "exonerated" Jennifer communicated the extent to which she felt accused by the process of reporting. No one took her side or offered her any assurance that they believed her story. The lack of surveillance footage also struck a chord with her. Jennifer's disbelief stemmed from knowledge of and experiences on predominantly white campuses and their investment in protecting the institution. For Princeton to not have any security cameras anywhere on campus seemed implausible to her. The elite-ness, whiteness, and extreme wealth of the campus naturally prompted Jennifer to believe there would be a high level of surveillance of that wealth and property. Speaking of Ivy League institutions Jennifer added:

> They still have buildings of white supremacists all over their campuses… They don't want to have negative press or anything like this, and so I think those universities are dependent on the rich old white men that give money. That also doesn't work in the favor of Black women. They don't really care what happens to Black women.

Whether or not footage existed, Jennifer got the impression from Princeton officials that they did not want to reveal any information that might compromise the institution. Considering the large

amount of alcohol provided by the university for the commencement celebrations and reunions, Princeton seemed invested in "appearing" helpful without doing much to actually help Jennifer.

The refrain of "he said/she said" haunted Black women and non-binary students' experiences reporting sexual assault. After all the stress, multiple conversations with police officers and two meetings with prosecutors, nothing happened with Jennifer's case. The police identified the assailant, tested his semen, and recorded a statement. Jennifer was told by the prosecutor that it was a "he said/she said situation" and they were dropping her case. In the end, Jennifer was frustrated because "people kept telling me to report when I sort of knew that it [punishing the assailant] wasn't going to happen." Going through the whole process contradicted every message she received about sexual assault and reporting. She completed all the steps survivors are told, "tell your story, be empowered in your story" and she received no compassion or acknowledgment during the process. Jennifer was not invested in seeing the assailant punished but wanted some kind of accountability to prevent him from harming other Black women. She likened her experience to society's absolute refusal to believe Black women, adding:

> Believe women. Believe black woman. That should be the name of the dissertation. I mean that's the thing. We don't believe Black women ever, like outside of this context. Like when they're giving birth, when they say they're in pain - anything. It's like we're not ever listening to Black women.

In interactions with police or campus administrators, Black women could not isolate the source of resistance to their stories of sexual assault. The various options: 1) living in a rape culture that excuses sexual assault by men, regardless of race, 2) gendered racist stereotypes of Black women as hypersexual, or a 3) double shot of nonchalance because both parties were Black all presented potent possibilities all seemed plausible options, but participants struggled to find an explanation.

Neglect and Disrespect from Law Enforcement

Some reporting accounts revealed how little effort police dedicate to investigating sexual assault. Olivia prefaced her experience with reporting saying “I don't know how to phrase it. It was a very strange, terrible, unhelpful experience reporting it through UCLA PD.” The day after a man pretending to be her Uber driver raped Olivia while she was unconscious, Olivia felt confused, knowing something off happened. Olivia called a confidential crisis hotline for students through UCLA. She recalled viewing the hotline as her only option because she had not established a close network of friends that early into starting graduate school. The operator listened to her story and told Olivia, "I don't think this should have happened to you. I'm fairly certain this is rape, and if you want to contact someone, I can put you in contact with UCPD." Within 30 minutes, four campus police officers (three men and one woman, all white) were at Olivia’s apartment, crowding in her kitchenette. The male officers asked all the questions and it seemed to Olivia the woman officer was there for “moral support.” UCLA PD transported her to a health clinic for a forensic medical exam. With a touch of sarcasm, Olivia stated, “I went in the back of a police car. Which was great.”

After the exam, Olivia commented “it was basically a shit show after that.” The UCLA police department informed Olivia that even though they handle student cases (no matter where incidents occur), she needed to contact municipal police in Culver to handle the case. When Olivia went to the municipal police department, as instructed, Culver PD told her the jurisdiction was UCLA PD. For two weeks, Olivia felt caught in the “strange back and forth” between police jurisdictions “arguing about who is doing what.” UCLA PD contacted Olivia again saying the case was joint with Culver PD, but the municipal police department would be her primary contact. UCLA PD also asked Olivia to sign “forms about anonymity and whether I want this case to be public or private.” She was told if she failed to sign the form, her name would be listed

publicly alongside a rape complaint. Olivia shared, “I had no idea what they were talking about. Basically, I signed the form which I don't even know what I signed at this point.” Her last point of contact with UCLA PD was getting assigned an investigator from Culver PD. It took two weeks after her initial call to finally know and get in contact with someone in charge of her case.

The detective at Culver PD (a white man) insisted Olivia identify the house prior to the interview. He drove her around for over four hours through two unfamiliar neighborhoods to locate the house. This was nonsensical because 1) Olivia was incapacitated and unconscious, 2) she did not know where she was from the Uber app because the driver was fraudulent, 3) and Olivia had no knowledge of the Greater Los Angeles area. She said:

> I was really frustrated with them continuously driving me through Culver City and all these neighborhoods where I clearly was not going to be able to find this place… I was like, "I don't know where this place is...These houses all look the same - huge and expensive.

After the ride along concluded, the cop brought Olivia back to the station and said, "I need an interview to go over your statement and your story and see if stuff changes." Even though the Culver cops already had her statement from UCLA PD and the rape clinic, she retold her story. Olivia explained what happened next:

> At the end he told me, "Well, I don't know. You look pretty strong. If I were him, I would have been afraid." I was kind of confused, and he was like, "Are you sure this happened? Are you really sure? I mean you look pretty strong. Are you sure that this happened because this is pretty life changing if you file a complaint against this guy?” … So, I'm looking at him and I'm like, "Yeah, I'm really sure I want to file the complaint. Here is the guy's number," because he had been calling me persistently.

The cops showed Olivia a photo array of IDs, yet most of the pictures were of the men when they were 15 or 16, because the state did not mandate updated photos. Olivia asked if she could see photos aged appropriately to make a positive ID. Olivia even offered the cop more information about a tattoo she remembered seeing on the assailant. The cops concluded the interaction with,

"Well, you couldn't make a positive identification. This is a he said/she said. I'll get back to you when I need further information." It was baffling because Olivia had provided the police with a phone number, which connected to a name, with an additional physical description of a tattoo.

Olivia sensed the cops had no training on sexual assault investigations or victim interviewing. Their questions "definitely were clearly things they had come up with on the fly" and not related to a standard protocol. Throughout the interaction, the cops seemed to be questioning Olivia's validity as a victim, rather than the details of her case. She recalled, "I felt like the comments seemed to sound kind of like, "Couldn't he have picked a smaller person to assault? You look like you'd put up a fight." To two white, middle aged stereotypical TV looking cops who, "looked like they wouldn't survive running a mile" Olivia sensed their questions were based on gendered racist assumptions. For one thing, the surrounding area of Culver was affluent and the fraudulent Uber driver appeared white passing (Olivia thought he was Persian). A Black woman reporting sexual assault must have appeared implausible in this white wealthy context.

Interacting with police proved to Black women they were unprotected by the law. Seeing a Black woman did not compute in the minds of police as a believable victim. The white male cops fixated on Olivia's body, saying "Oh, you look big and kind of threatening" and "I'd be scared if I were him" (not accounting for her being unconscious). She explained, "I just felt insulted. I was so angry. I also think I kind of wondered would my experience had been different if I wasn't a brown person who had walked in and was claiming these things or do they treat all women like this?" As a thicker, Afro-Latina woman, Olivia did not fit what these white men police officers imagined a rape victim would appear. Despite having enough to continue an investigation, they brushed her off and never contacted her again.

Athena, who uses they/them pronouns, reported the sexual assault exposure they experienced with two football players from another institution. Athena told two friends and received support with them responding, “if you want to report this, we’re here. We’ve got your back.” Athena worried the police would not believe them, so with a friend, Athena called 911 over speakerphone while the friend recorded the call. The friend wanted to have a record because she suspected the police would “say that you said things that you didn’t.” Athena had to repeat the story “two or three times just the first time I called.” Athena remembered the officers “being super skeptical of me” and questioning every aspect of their story. Many of the questions fixated on “really small details” like the room number of the apartment. A few days later, a different police officer called and made Athena repeat everything again. In the second call, it seemed like they were trying to confuse Athena. At the same time, the players who assaulted Athena launched a smear campaign on social media, leading to students from multiple campuses to harass Athena online.

The police claimed there was “no solid proof” and outrightly showed disbelief by asking questions like: "Are you sure this happened? Did he really say that?” Athena likened the police response to making a report of sexual assault to being criminalized. Athena named various systems of power in how the police approached the report. As a fat Black woman, Athena inhabited a body labeled “deviant,” therefore unworthy of protection and credibility. Discussing the embedded gendered racism in the police interaction Athena explained, “I’m pretty sure they don't say that to cute little white girls, but they were definitely saying it to me.” Athena noticed how their identity presentation did not fit the image of a sexual assault victim these cops would accept. Further, the assailants being football players increased the police officers’ unwillingness

to believe Athena. The town was “so tied to football” and Athena felt the cops “didn’t want to believe me” to protect the players.

Trauma Informed Practice in Police Investigations

The most surprising aspect of data collection happened with Rebecca, a Black woman who had a positive experience reporting sexual assault to the police. When Rebecca got home following sexual assault exposure, she really had no time to process the previous night. She bunched the clothes she wore that night into a ball in the corner, thinking “I can't wear those again.” Rebecca did not have time to shower, she had a final to take that morning. Rebecca did not know how she made it through finals and end of semester assignments. She explained, “I just remember laying around feeling depressed. I wasn't eating anything. I tried to avoid the building. Really wasn't talking to anybody because I was like I don't know what to do about this.” A friend in her program suggested going to Traverse City for the weekend, which worried Rebecca because Blake, the white, advanced graduate student who assaulted her, was from the town. When Rebecca checked with the other student, a woman of color, if Blake was going, she responded, "He did something to you, too?” Hearing that, Rebecca started to wonder if Blake had assaulted other Black women and women of color as well. Rebecca started digging and found out Blake targeted Black women, in the program and in Lansing, which alarmed her. Seeing the pattern, Rebecca started to ponder reporting.

Trusting the police to act on her behalf was far from Rebecca’s legal consciousness. She said, “I was born and raised in a metropolitan area, and we didn't always, specifically as Black people, we didn't always get help from the police, so I was not thinking that they were going to help me in this situation, especially since my assailant was a white guy.” Rebecca’s mother would frequently point the intersection where Rodney King was brutally beaten. Like many

Black women, Rebecca had a distrustful view of police and the legal system based on seeing past and current incidents of police violence against Black people. She considered MSUs reporting process but heard from numerous people the Institutional Equity office would be worse than the police. Nassar victims and other survivors were still coming forward, telling their stories of institutional harm by the university.

Rebecca anticipated not being believed by the police and "didn't want to report emptyhanded because I just didn't have any faith that anything good was going to happen anyway, but especially if I had no evidence." One week after the assault, she called Blake to talk about the incident. She said things like, "You kept doing this when I pushed your hand away" and other "facts" to prompt him to respond. During a 30-minute conversation, Blake "finally broke down and apologized" saying, "You're right. I kept touching you, and you said that you didn't want that." Rebecca admitted making the tape (which wasn't admissible) was a "crazy move, but it helped." Specifically, the refrain of "he said/she said" echoed in her head and prompted her to get the confession. Rebecca explained, "The Tuesday right after I was driving probably back from my fiancé's house crying and thinking no one will ever believe me. 'It's he said/she said.' Something clicked and I was like what if it was like 'he said/he said' because he did it?"

Rebecca also called a local rape crisis center (not trusting MSUs resources) and got in touch with a survivor advocate to find out how to report the assault. She wanted someone else to "witness" how bad the police interview would go, thinking a support person "can help advocate for my rights a little bit so that I'm treated like a human being." Rebecca and her advocate went to the police station and were placed in an interview room. Rebecca felt terrified, expecting the interaction to go horribly, and questioning why she did this. When an older white male cop

walked in, Rebecca was certain, “this guy's not going to get it. He's not going to believe me.” To her and her advocate’s surprise, the cop said he was trained in listening to reports of sexual violence. He said, “I consider you to be a hero to me because you're willing to talk about your story like this." The police detective also disclosed he had experienced abuse and he used his police role to “defend others” going through a “horrible situation.” This white cop that he was going to fight for Rebecca, and that he thought she was a hero for reporting. Rebecca was beyond shocked and I was floored by her account. It is important to note this positive interaction occurred in the same local area as Dr. Rebecca Campbell, professor of Psychology at Michigan State University and a national expert on the neurobiology of trauma, who frequently trains police officers on how to approach sexual assault reports (ICOS UMICH, 2018; National Institute of Justice, 2012).

There were several things about the police officer’s approach that showed he did have trauma interviewing and training in sexual assault dynamics. Whenever Rebecca needed a break or to talk to her advocate, the detective would leave or bring her a beverage. When she told the story, Rebecca was shaking, “It was almost like reliving the fear except physiologically.” Contrary to the research Rebecca did to prepare for the police interview, the cop did not view her discomfort “as a sign of like this person’s not credible.” When it was time to describe intimate details of the assault, the detective gave Rebecca a note pad to write out what happened to her with her advocate while the detective left the room. Rebecca never had to “say” how she was harmed; the detective used her written statement alongside her interview. The empathy and trauma informed practices helped Rebecca feel more comfortable telling her story. The detective assured Rebecca he was going to fight for her and to her overwhelming surprise, he did. Rebecca explained this white male detective “was serious that he was going to fight for me, and he

actually did, and did due diligence in his interviewing. I brought the clothes with me that I hadn't washed and just left in the corner, and he made sure that they were sent to a DNA and everything. Actually, got tested… I wasn't expecting this to go anywhere, for any charges to show up, or whatever, so for me I was shocked." The detective found evidence of Blake's "sketchy" behavior and targeting of Black women going back five years. The case was brought to a prosecutor and they had announced charges of assault and battery against Blake. Wanting to avoid a trial, Blake pled guilty and was sentenced, including a restraining order.

Gendered Racism in Reporting to University Officials

Rebecca also went through a Title IX process at Michigan State University. Comparing the two processes, Rebecca described the criminal legal process as "I think less traumatizing than the school process just because I had to keep following up with people to do their job." Rebecca mentioned the assault to another graduate student during a STEM mentoring chat. He turned out to be a mandatory reporter, "We didn't know grad students reported on each other, but now we do. [laughing] Oh gosh." Rebecca was already engaged in a legal process and figured she might as well follow through with the university process. Rebecca gave an interview to two OIE investigators. Comparing it to her police interview, Rebecca thought the university staff were more cold, bureaucratic, and mechanical. She set the scene saying, "it was like a totally different atmosphere. I walk in. There's two investigators in two desks and two chairs in the middle - one for me and my school-appointed advocate." Rebecca noted her community-based advocate was better than the one from MSU, who seemed more motivated by "the paycheck" than helping survivors. The investigators would take turns asking "rapid fire" questions, diligently typing her responses. Rebecca remembered the "clack, clack, clack" of the keys and feeling "very uncomfortable" from their approach. She commented, "Maybe you're impartial, but it definitely

appeared cold." Rebecca learned MSU had contracted their sexual assault investigations to Kroll Investigations, a private law firm.

While her criminal case was heading to trial, the OIE process languished. Rebecca said she constantly had to check in, ask about delays, and badger the office for answers. With advice from another student, Rebecca started calling OIE every two weeks. At some point, OIE lost her original interview transcript, so Rebecca had to re-tell the story a second time. Rebecca believed her advocacy alone led to an investigation by OIE. She stated, "If I hadn't followed up with them, they would have just cut the case. They would have been like, 'Well, we haven't heard from her in the allotted time, so case closed.' Disproportionate systems." The school did find Blake responsible and confirmed it on an appeal, but the first sanction seemed nonsensical. OIE declared he could not re-enroll for another degree program, which didn't make sense because he already finished his PhD. Rebecca lobbied OIE for something that could actually protect her: banning him from campus, at least until she graduated. They first decided he would be banned for 1 year. This sanction was "useless" because Rebecca would be in her degree for at least two more years. After more advocacy, she got OIE to extend the ban. Compared to the legal process, Rebecca had no one at her university fighting for her. She had to advocate and badger MSU to do everything, reasoning with their staff for a sanction that would protect her from Blake. Rebecca reflected, "every step of the way I had to advocate for being treated as an equal to him. I don't think they ever saw that." All the headaches with the university process prompted Rebecca to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, alongside other MSU students, to say the school violated their civil rights as survivors. The OCR process was "the most hands off" with Rebecca simply filling out paperwork and sending it off.

Compelled Disclosure

Rebecca was an exception in my data collection of Black women's treatment by police. When it came to her negative experience with MSU's Title IX process, this story was representative of other Black women's experiences with university systems. Five of the 11 university reporting stories started with disclosure to a person they did not know had mandatory reporting obligations. Several participants worked in student affairs as resident assistants or leadership programs, so most of the people they interacted with were mandatory reporters. CJ, who did not report being assaulted at a Black fraternity party, chose her words carefully to avoid triggering a compelled disclosure. During an RA training module on sexual assault, CJ could feel her trauma response activate. She needed to get out, but knew she had to be careful because everyone there had mandatory reporting obligations. CJ explained, "I didn't give them any specifics… I explained it in a way that I wouldn't arouse [anything]." Black women's proximity to student affairs increased the likelihood they would encounter a compelled disclosure or have to silence themselves, like CJ, from possible support from colleagues.

Some Black women were forced into participating in a Title IX process. Athena accidentally disclosed to their supervisor in student affairs, forgetting mandatory reporting policies. Athena had a relatively positive interaction with the Title IX coordinator, saying:

> I sat down and I told her everything. She was super affirming. She was like, "That has to suck. That's definitely assault. I can't believe they did that." Just overall all affirming, even as her being an older white woman. She was affirming in that way.

The Title IX coordinator gave her several options. Athena could report to the assailant's school and Athena's Title IX staff would provide support and "represent" Athena as one of their students. The Title IX coordinator asked if Athena wanted to talk to the police. Athena explained the cops were unhelpful and the Title IX officer empathized, "That's not surprising. If you don't want to talk to the police, I will not blame you… I can speak for you on your behalf so you don't

have to talk if it's too triggering." Athena wanted no further interaction with the police but thought it "was super nice" of the officer to suggest it. The coordinator also connected Athena to support groups and expedited access to counseling, which was a resource available to students who sought resources through Title IX. After reviewing the options Athena reported the assault to the assailants' school, initiating a Title IX process.

Letitia came to work in a rage thinking about the person who assaulted her. Her supervisor took her aside to check in and Letitia revealed she was a survivor. The supervisor forwarded the report to Title IX and Letitia talked with a representative. In reviewing her options (police, university process, or "dropping it") Letitia decided to go forward with the Title IX process. She shared:

> I was like I feel like I need to do something so I can get some control back, and finally have a hold on my emotions, and feel better. But I was like, he's an international student, as well. I don't want to ruin his-- I don't know, I feel like getting the police involved would have affected him somehow.

Similar to the stories of Black women who did not report, Letitia chose the university process, in part, to protect the Black male assailant from the legal system. Letitia filed the complaint and provided names of friends to serve as witnesses. After handing over the names, Letitia never heard back from the Title IX office. Plus, she was battling people in the Nigerian group chat gossiping and bullying her. Letitia shared:

> People were like, "Oh, do you know that you're ruining his life by reporting? It's going to be on his record," and things like that. [The university] not following through with the process just discouraged me. It was like I don't want to do this anymore. You've not created a community where I can constantly come to you to ask questions and follow up. You just sent out a no contact order, and that was it. I was very angry that my school did nothing.

Letitia felt doubly betrayed, let down by her school and ostracized from her Black community on an HBCU campus.

Dismissive Title IX Complaint Handlers

Black women interacted with Title IX complaint handlers who seemed uninterested in responding to sexual assault and harassment. Anna Julia referenced being sexually harassed to a faculty member, who suggested she report it. Anna Julia was afraid of reporting because his role as a financial aid administrator made it more likely he could retaliate against her. The harasser already had access to her personal information, schedule, and financial information. The faculty member suggested they both talk to the Title IX office. In the meeting, Anna Julia told the Title IX director she wanted to make an anonymous report, explaining her fears of retaliation. The director insisted Anna Julia had to "be named" and said the university would restrict the financial aid officer's access to her accounts. Anna Julia pointed out, "he's already been calling and emailing me. He clearly has my information. I don't want to put myself in any more jeopardy." The director wasn't swayed, saying that unless Anna Julia initiated a formal report, naming herself as a complainant, there was nothing the Title IX director would do. Anna Julia shared, "I remember feeling silenced. I remember feeling small. I remember feeling unprotected. I made a vow to myself at that point whether the institution protected me or not, I will protect myself."

Sucre attempted to report her ex-partner through his school's Title IX process. At the time, Sucre's memories of the trauma and abuse were top of mind from media coverage of the Nassar victims. Also, she remembered having an emotional reaction to a training module on sexual assault as part of MSU's prevention programing. Sucre met with a compliance officer and described instances of abuse and sexual violence. The officer wasn't empathetic and asked Sucre a series of details about dates, times of day, locations, and whether someone witnessed the abuse. The officer also required Sucre prepare a written statement, again fixating on minutia. Sucre said, "She had all these things that I was like are you kidding me? How do I even document that? How would I have known who could have heard me scream?" When Sucre met with the officer

again, after reporting and sending a written statement, the officer told her there wasn't sufficient evidence to prove the student committed a violation. The officer used odd legal reasoning, saying "you can't call it rape if it's a domestic partnership… it implies that you want to have sex with your partner." By this time, in the 2010s, martial rape laws were overturned in every state.

The officer also said Sucre was "inconsistent" in her accounts, saying the written statement was different than the notes from their first meeting. The compliance officer implied because Sucre did not want to report the intimate partner violence to the police ("But I know what happens when you go to cops. Nothing happens. They never take the side of the victim."), that Sucre was lying. Sucre felt annoyed and misunderstood, saying she wanted to work through the school because they could require her ex go through some educational programming or training on consent and sexual assault. At least with training, he could, perhaps, understand his actions and learn better practices. Sucre asked the compliance officer to consider ""What would you do if this happened to your daughter or happened to you?" The officer rebuffed Sucre, saying, "We're not talking about me." Sucre felt the interaction "was very gross" and disappointing.

Re-traumatization and Blaming in University Hearing Processes

Reporting sexual assault exposure was not completely voluntary for Black women participants. Gabrielle's story demonstrates how Black women suffer when they protect Black male assailants from other Black men seeking to avenge them. The student who assaulted Gabrielle left early for class, but his roommate agreed to take her back to campus. Gabrielle was in a daze, "I kind of zombie-walked to the car. And then when I got in the front seat and his roommate's driving me, I just start quietly crying." Walking to her apartment crying, Gabrielle went to her ex-boyfriend's apartment. They were neighbors and still friendly. She disclosed the

assault to her ex and his roommate, two Black men friends of hers. Even then, she debated saying anything, wanting to let it go and move on. Gabrielle set the scene of the conversation; she was sitting on their couch in a crouched position as they stood, pacing around the room. As she talked her male friends got "very animated, and elevated, and upset" and began hyping each other up about physically harming the assaulter. Gabrielle shared:

> I was going to let it go and just deal with it. The only reason I reported it is because my ex-boyfriend and his roommate threatened to go physically harm him, and they were serious. I believed that they were serious. I really did. Honestly, in hindsight, I really didn't have a choice in telling my story or not because if I didn't tell, they were going to go whoop his ass…They were like, "Gabby, if you don't say something, we're going to go right now. We're calling the police and we're going to go whoop his ass right now." So, I reported it.

Deciding to go to the hospital and make a report was what eventually calmed them down.

Gabrielle admitted that reporting the assault was not her choice. She feared the prospect of her friends, two Black men, committing serious physical harm to the assaulter and subsequent police involvement. Gabrielle understood her friends' reaction, but she did not feel supported or heard in her disclosure. She explained:

> I felt very alone, actually. I remember watching them pace, and circle, and hype each other up. And I'm sitting here on the couch feeling really kind of like a black hole. I just remember sitting there, and I was trying to calm them down, and trying to tell them that I didn't want to do this… After I tried a little bit, and they were pretty much ignoring me, not listening,

Gabrielle reported to the local police first, who referred her to the campus police department. She went to the hospital and received a forensic medical exam. Gabrielle added, "I remember crying a lot during the swabbing and the rape kit." She remembered having to repeat the story at least four times.

Conflation of Hearings with Criminal Legal Approaches

As Black women students described going through university investigations and hearing procedures, they used language from the criminal legal system. University sexual misconduct policies use an assemblage of alternative terms and phrases to differentiate the procedures from the criminal legal system. Universities handle complaints, not crimes. The accused student is the "respondent," not a defendant. Cases are deliberated in hearings (not trials) with faculty and staff serving on hearing boards (not juries). The result of the adjudication process is a "finding of responsibility," eschewing the legal terms of guilty and not guilty. Even though university policies and officials have created this separate vocabulary for their procedures, participants felt criminal legal terms of judges, juries, trails, and guilty were more apt to describe these processes.

Gabrielle's report advanced to a judicial hearing at her school. Russell, the assailant, hired a lawyer, even though the school administrators advised against it. Gabrielle was accompanied by her rape crisis counselor, who helped her prepare for the hearing. The witnesses for his side all made comments about Gabrielle flirting with Russell in her first year, over two years ago at the time of the hearing. As Gabrielle described the hearing, she corrected herself saying, "I try not to call it a trial." All the Black women who went through a university hearing process commented on the process resembling a criminal trial. Gabrielle explained:

> There was a board that was listening. There was a chair of the board, so like a judge-type thing. And there was a podium where people stood up and talked. And there were witnesses. It definitely felt like a trial.

Gabrielle also said the hearing focused more on her actions than Russell's. The comments from witnesses to make Gabrielle seem like she wanted to have sex with him dominated the proceeding. Gabrielle commented, "Yeah, I did feel like I was on trial because we talked about me more than we talked about him in that trial, for sure." Gabrielle was "shocked" when the school found Russell responsible and expelled him.

Gloria went through a hearing process at UVa that she thought resembled a criminal trial. After the second assault at the party, Gloria decided to make a formal report and go through the adjudication process. The day after the incident, Gloria filled out a report using an online portal. Gloria received help from a lawyer at a local legal clinic working with the university. The lawyer helped Gloria submit her statements and supported her through the hearing. The hearing lasted for eight hours. Gloria described the experience of the hearing as "more traumatizing than the actual event" of the sexual assault. The hearing board comprised of faculty members from different departments, posing questions.

Gloria thought the hearing was set up "like a courtroom." Gloria remembered most of the questions during the hearing being directed at her. Gloria shared:

> And I remember during the hearing, one of the professors was like, "Well, I just need you to clarify, because you said that day that your pants had a zipper on them, but now you're saying they had a button on them. So, what is the truth?"

This and other questions seemed "dumb" and as though the faculty members were acting like TV prosecutors. Gloria explained, "I think the faculty that were on the adjudicating board (I don't know what the actual terminology is, but that's basically what they were —like a jury), they definitely had a sense of self-importance." Even though the university hearing was supposed to be different from the criminal legal system, institutional actors derived their sense of the process from legal actors. The "sense of self-importance" from faculty members acting as jurors and attorneys looking for insignificant inconsistencies between zippers and buttons re-traumatized Gloria.

Title IX procedures are intended to minimize re-traumatization by keeping the student parties separate from each other during the hearing. Gloria remembered UVa having that policy and despaired when her rights were violated. She encountered the accused student twice when

hearing officials were shuttling them between rooms. When Gloria walked pass him, he looked her “dead in my face” to intimidate her. She also had to hear his testimony, where he dismissed the assault as her “regretting it.” After hearing his words, she recalled, “I was taken back to my waiting room upstairs, and I threw up. I threw up immediately. On the way upstairs on the elevator, I was crying hysterically.” The failure of university officials to follow their own rules further re-traumatized Gloria. The structure of the hearing, behaviors of the university actors, and lack of attention to protecting survivors’ stated Title IX rights all contributed to Black women participants conflating university procedures with criminal legal processes.

The student who assaulted Gloria used his statement and witnesses to attest to his character. Gloria recalled he said, “Oh, this girl just regretted it. I'm a stand-up member of the community. I'm involved in this club and that club. I'm an Upward Bound tutor." He avoided blame by appealing to his respectability as a volunteer. Gloria remembered the hearing panel members addressing most of their questions to her, meaning panelists did not use the same degree of skepticism towards the assailant. Also, everyone involved with the hearing process, except for Gloria and the accused student, were white. The racial dynamics made Gloria feel no one on the panel could empathize with her and that she was “treated like I was less fragile than I was.” Gloria monitored how she presented herself, trying to avoid being “that angry Black girl” during the hearing. For instance, when the hearing members discussed the assault— forced oral sex— a hearing board member asked Gloria "At what point did you recognize you were being assaulted?" Gloria responded, through her lawyer, "When his penis was in my mouth. That's when I realized that I was being assaulted.” As the day wore on, Gloria became “more sardonic in my answers” because she suspected the hearing panel would rule against her. The hearing process drained Gloria emotionally and she just wished it would end.

Gloria was shocked when they decided to suspend the other student for a year because the panel seemed more judgmental towards her. Despite the proceeding ending “in her favor” Gloria did not feel protected or like the process contributed to her healing. She reflected, “I don't know what restitution I was looking for, but what they were putting me through was not what I wanted.” Gloria would have appreciated receiving counseling support from her institution or something more practical like “taking off the pressure of having to worry about finances” through covering her meal plan or housing for a semester while she focused on mental health. Additionally, Gloria saw the assailant at her graduation. He returned and was an usher at the Black graduation ceremony, which was an uncomfortable end to Gloria’s college career. The consolation of him being removed from the school was short lived.

As mentioned earlier, after a compelled disclosure and conference with the Title IX office, Athena reported the assault to the assailant’s school. Athena did not have a car so they had to participate in the hearing over the phone. The Title IX coordinator from Athena’s school also joined for support. From the gendered racist interaction with police, Athena believed the panelists would react similarly. Athena thought:

> Now is the time to put on my ‘white girl voice’ because I know that they probably care about white girls more than they care about me. Now is the time to sound as quote/unquote "educated" as possible… but I knew for a fact that if I showed my Blackness too much in that sense that they definitely wouldn't have cared.

Athena took time to read a prepared statement, giving “every detail” from what they wore, the building location, and the time of the assault. The football players put no effort in their statements, saying Athena was lying and contradicting the facts of the case. The school ruled in favor of the players, which increased the harassment Athena received from their supporters.

After Josephine graduated, she decided to report the assault to her school. Josephine only reported sexual assault exposure out of a sense of altruism, wanting to prevent the assailant from

hurting another Black woman. Starting with the campus police and then talking with the Title IX office, she learned her only option was to file a report with the assailant's school. She told the other school's Title IX officers what happened, leading to an investigation and hearing. Josephine had moved back home, so she participated in interviews and the hearing process over the phone. During the hearing process, both students had the opportunity to read an opening and closing statement. Josephine remembered putting a lot of time and energy into her statement, typing both and checking it several times before the hearing. Nate (the assailant) approached the hearing differently. Even over the phone, it sounded like Nate had not prepared a statement, seemed annoyed to be there, and did not take what Josephine experienced seriously. She summarized his statement saying:

> his [statement] was "I don't even know why I'm here. I don't know why I've been accused of this. I think personally I'm the victim in this situation. I volunteer here. I have 'x' amount of sisters," … "I am a good guy. I don't see why I should be in this situation because I'm a good guy."

His approach to the hearing reinforced for Josephine how arrogant and entitled Nate was. Josephine noted Nate lied about what happened, saying after he penetrated her without a condom, he later got a condom and they continued to have sex. Josephine never consented to the sex without a condom and made him sleep on the floor. When he got into her bed again, Josephine left the room. Nate leveraged the narrative of "a dude who was caught in the crossfires of something" during the panel and refused to engage with how his actions harmed Josephine.

The hearing panel decided Nate was "not responsible" of any violation of the school honor code. Josephine felt frustrated, but not surprised. She explained:

> I kind of felt, I guess you could say, failed. I felt let down. Not necessarily betrayed because I was expecting it to happen. I was expecting him not to be found guilty of anything, but I think the final realization that this was happening hit me pretty hard.

Going through the hearing process detracted from Josephine moving on with her life and applying to graduate schools. During the process, she did not share anything with her parents, even though they saw her taking calls in and out of her room. From their earlier comments and especially after the school ruled against her, she felt telling them would "be proving my parents right." She eventually shared the result with her mother and received better support that time. The whole experience left Josephine feeling "frustrated, annoyed, and pissed off" because she had built up "the courage to report" and invested time and energy into the process for it just to end without any accountability. Josephine worried the result would further embolden Nate to commit assault again. Josephine wondered if the school's decision would put "some other Black girl in trouble or in danger" from him.

Conclusion

Black women who did not report felt silenced by a double bind that threatened to invalidate their experience of sexual assault or use a report to overly punish a Black man. Black women received this message from other Black women, Black community conversations about high profile Black men accused of sexual assault, and their earliest memories of learning about racism and rape. Black women participants identified a legal consciousness of sexual assault in the Black community that centered Black men. This raised the specter of specific identity-related consequences for reporting sexual assault: ostracization from already small Black communities on campus, gendered racist gossip about their sexuality, and feeling responsible for protecting Black men who took no responsibility for the harm they created. Black women participants were aware (through personal and collective experiences) of institutional racism within the legal system and on campus. At the structural level, Black women feared reporting would result in

harsh consequences for assailants and other Black men who might take action to avenge the harm.

For Black women who did report, those fears of being blamed and invalidated were realized. Police and university officials reacted with anger, showed no sympathy, and refused to believe Black women. In reporting, only one aspect of the double bind held true, participants did experience invalidation by friends, family, and legal authorities. Black women could not figure out if sexism, racism, or gendered racism was the reason they were not believed and championed. Black men assailants, particularly those with higher status than Black women survivors, were protected by their friends and used gendered racist tropes to discredit participants. In university hearings, Black men leveraged the stereotype of Black women's sexuality by insisting survivors wanted to have sex and only reported because of regret. These strategies had varying success in adjudication processes, but invariably hurt Black women participants. All the legal narratives of sexual assault were unavailable to Black women participants.

Reporting, in most cases, intensified the harm of the assault. In Gabrielle's case, even though the hearing ended in Gabrielle's favor, her reporting came with significant social and emotional consequences. The Black community at her PWI was small, but tightly networked. Everyone knew about the hearing and took sides. Gabrielle described one instance after making her report:

> I mean, there was a party I was at, and I think it was at his roommate's apartment. Maybe his apartment, but he wasn't there. The roommate stopped everything and asked me to leave in front of everybody, literally. He was mad at me. Didn't want me there, and literally stopped the party, and wanted me to leave. So, I got my coat, and got my shit in my car, and drove off. And it was just shit like that that a couple of his friends were very, very angry, and were just super brutal.

Gabrielle found some support in the Black community, especially when other Black women shared online they were also abused by Russell. However, the exhaustion from the hearing and the bullying from some Black male students, Gabrielle admitted she "barely" got through her last year of college. Even when we talked, Gabrielle was still struggling with her feelings about her alma mater. She said:

> I still have a love for my school, even though I had a bad experience. It just makes it hard to go back, and it makes it hard to relate to friends that I made … it was very public and honestly, just really traumatizing.

Gabrielle's story demonstrates the validity of Black women's fears being ostracized by the Black community if they report. Also, the stress and re-traumatization of reporting impeded Gabrielle's healing process after the assault. Gabrielle's story reveals the consequences of reporting mostly fell on Black women survivors. Even when the legal and university processes sided with them, the legal consciousness of sexual assault within the Black community that silenced participants that did not report, isolated and punished the participants that did.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Based on my analysis of 46 Black women and nonbinary survivors' narratives, I found participants evaluated reporting options for sexual assault through an intersectional lens. Awareness of their social location as Black women framed how participants anticipated making a report would "go" for them. As women and femme identified persons, participants feared they would be blamed for the assault by legal authorities relying on sexist and racist myths of sexual violence. Further, Black women students did not trust legal authorities with their stories, anticipating anti-Black institutions would use their sexual harm as a catalyst for continued state violence against the Black community. Black women feared a report would lead directly to overly punitive measures against a Black man, not because of the severity of the harm to or justice due to Black women, but because of anti-Black institutional imperatives to punish Black bodies. This double bind worked to silence Black women from reporting and disclosing assaults.

Black women's distrust of police and university resources existed prior to sexual assault exposure. Many participants talked about growing up in all Black or BIPOC communities and experiencing a paradox of a lack of protection from law enforcement and violent incursions by police into their neighborhoods (B. E. Richie, 2012). Black women were taught about institutional racism through family members' narratives of racial terror (P. H. Collins, 1998, 2000). Widely publicized cases police brutality against Black people (mostly men) also informed how Black women viewed reporting options (Alexander, 2012; Butler, 2017). On campus, Black women saw campus and local police target Black party spaces more frequently that white student parties. Institutions failed to protect Black women from gendered racist harassment in their

classes and social activities. Black women described racialized sexual harassment, in the form of unwanted sexual advances with the deployment of harmful controlling images of Black women's sexuality (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; P. H. Collins, 2000). Seeing the failings of police and institutions to address racism and/or sexism, Black women had multiple reasons to believe reporting would be harmful for them as individuals as well as to the Black men who assaulted them and the broader Black community.

For Black women who reported, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, their fears were realized. Encounters with police and Title IX officers were defined by suspicion and (especially with police) outward disdain. Police officers were often aggressively disbelieving, deploying racist and sexist myths to turn the blame on to participants. Title IX administrators often questioned Black women's accounts, dismissed legitimate complaints (Ahmed, 2021), and exposed survivors to re-traumatizing and unhelpful adjudication procedures. Except for one participant, none of the intake processes for reporting sexual assault appeared trauma aware (Campbell et al., 2001). In their interactions with police and Title IX officials, Black women participants could not figure out why officials were so unwilling to believe their accounts. They suspected that 1) institutional sexism structured disbelief of all survivors, regardless of race 2) racism devalued the harm of all Black students, regardless of gender, or 3) Black women were subjected to a double dose of disbelief and institutional neglect due to gendered racism. These findings have implications for theory, research, and practice.

Contributions to Theory

This dissertation was based on an intersectional approach to the theory of legal consciousness. Intersectionality proved to be the most useful analytical framework to account for Black women's experiences of sexual assault in higher education. The theory allowed me to

analyze how Black women's experiences of sexual assault were shaped by gendered racism on campus. This finding highlights the importance of context and social structure in diagnosing the problem of sexual assault and working towards prevention. In evaluating reporting options, Black women articulated a double bind that pitted their gender against their racial consciousness. They expected authorities to invalidate their sexual harm as women, and particularly as Black women (B. E. Richie, 2000). The multiplicative effects of avoiding personal invalidation and the responsibility for shielding Black men silenced Black women from reporting or even disclosing their experiences. Future campus sexual assault research should highlight how gendered racism influences the reporting barriers women of color, rooted in the specific sexualized stereotypes and community histories of racist treatment by legal authorities.

From legal consciousness, the most useful concept for my analysis and findings was legality. Legality captures how people use legal concepts and meanings to interpret their experiences and shape their social action (Marshall, 2003; Marshall & Barclay, 2003). I found Black women contended with legality that largely erased their harm. As Black women, most of the schemas used to interpret sexual assault centered Black men who needed protection from false allegations (especially those made by white women). Drawing on this schema, most participants viewed turning to law enforcement as a non-starter. Black women and nonbinary students did not view university Title IX processes as alternatives to the legal system. Instead, participants conflated university responses with anti-Black, carceral logics they wanted to avoid. Racial profiling by campus police and collaboration between sexual assault resources and local police departments reinforced those conflations. Entering a reporting process increased Black women's distrust of legal and campus authorities. Participants' expectations for justice were

further limited by legal and university authorities' refusal to believe them when they did interact with these authorities.

Legal Cynicism

Though the theory of legal consciousness formed the basis of this study, my findings have implications for another body of socio-legal research: legal cynicism. Legal cynicism is a "cultural frame" or orientation held by marginalized groups who view the law and legal authorities—especially law enforcement—as "illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety" (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011, p. 447). Legal cynicism is a consequence of policing approaches in economically disenfranchised communities of color where the police are both absent when residents need protection from crime and oppressively present through police brutality, hyper-surveillance, and escalation to lethal force in police encounters (Bell, 2017; Hitchens et al., 2018). Police prove themselves ineffective and non-responsive to crime in disadvantaged communities, with delayed response times or not showing up to resident calls. Protecting communities of color seems to be a lower priority in policing. What emerges as the more central strategy is the "management and control of disfavored groups such as African Americans, Latin Americans, the poor, certain immigrant groups, and groups who exist at the intersection of those identities" (Bell, 2017, p. 2061). Policing techniques of investigatory stops, over-prosecution of low-level crimes, and mass incarceration of people of color are indicative of the social control function of the law. Defined as "anomie about the law," legal cynicism captures the "sense of social estrangement, meaninglessness, and powerlessness" produced by extreme social disenfranchisement, exclusion, and violence (Bell, 2017, p. 2084).

Bell (2017) argued three socio-legal processes contribute to legal cynicism among communities of color: procedural injustice, vicarious marginalization, and structural exclusion.

Direct experiences of police disregarding the rights of people of color incites and reinforces the cultural frame that the authority vested in police is illegitimate. Police reforms to address procedural injustices through training officers or self-surveillance through body cameras has not decreased police misconduct toward communities of color, instead providing more harrowing video evidence of that misconduct. Researchers have found people who have had no contact with police or experienced a positive interaction with individual officers still endorse legal cynicism. People formulate their perceptions of police through accounts of police misconduct from close ties and neighbors, resulting in vicarious marginalization. In the Black community the view of policing as illegitimate also comes from the victimization and murder of Black people who were not disobeying the law. Social media posts comparing police treatment of white men who commit mass shootings with the murders of unarmed Black people stopped for unproven minor legal violations effectively convey dangerous biases in policing practice. These stories become "sites for collective memory and collective identity construction" for groups targeted by police violence, entrenching legal cynicism. Legal cynicism is also produced by economic, political, and protective disenfranchisement at the structural level (Bell, 2017). Feeling forgotten and neglected by the protective aspects of policing produces total estrangement from legal authorities.

Black Women and Legal Cynicism

Legal cynicism has been used to understand why people from marginalized groups rarely call or cooperate with the police. When examining legal cynicism across gender and age, researchers have identified nuanced approaches to using the police for help in disadvantaged communities. Based on a national sample of victims of crime, Zaykowski et al. (2019) found Black women from lower income neighborhoods most often called the police, when compared

with affuent white women and similarly disadvantaged Black men. Research that examines economically disadvantaged Black women shows they held cynical views of the law and used the police in certain situations to resolve personal issues (Bell, 2016). When Black women did engage the police for help, they worried about the consequences of bringing police into their home and neighborhoods. Black mothers viewed police as marginally effective at resolving family problems and low-level issues in their neighborhoods, like noise complaints. Black women also used police calls to mobilize social services for domestic abuse and mental health issues in their families (Bell, 2016). Police calls produced varying results for Black mothers, sometimes triggering punitive responses instead of the social assistance they hoped to get.

Black women still avoided law enforcement in relation to violent crime in their neighborhoods, because they feared violent retaliation from being labeled a snitch (Bell, 2016). Disadvantaged Black women relied on police more because their multiply subjugated social position limited their access to alternative sources of help (Zaykowski et al., 2019). In relation to age, studies of youth of color in high crime areas have negative orientations towards law enforcement (Carr et al., 2007). Carr et al. (2007) found when asked for solutions to crime, Black and Latinx youth suggested "augmenting law enforcement" through tougher enforcement, more patrolling officers, reducing access to drugs, and gun control laws. Even though youth held a negative cultural orientation to police and the law, they saw the most plausible remedies for crime in the legal system. Black people who endorse greater police presence and enforcement do not want more of the same injustice, but rather want to experience "policing as a protective benefit" (Bell, 2017, p. 2149), like police treatment of white individuals and privileged communities. In the context of Black Lives Matter, youth today may be less interested in

increasing law enforcement, in favor of more liberatory and anti-carceral approaches that remedy social injustice and exclusion.

Contributions to Legal Cynicism Research

In line with research on legal cynicism, Black women participants from under-protected and over-policed neighborhoods already held cynical or estranged attitudes about the law. As Tessa described:

> [I]n the Black community, we can't count on systems to do what they're supposed to do, and we can't count on law enforcement to do what they're supposed to do. If anything, they're doing the wrong thing, and so if we want justice, we have to do it ourselves.

Tessa's comment perfectly captures how many Black women participants viewed law enforcement as both unreliable (not doing what "they're supposed to do") and causes of direct harm in their communities. Olivia grew up in a culturally diverse area of first- and second-generation Asian immigrants, Black, and Latinx families. Describing her neighborhood, Olivia shared, "In general, we don't call the police… If you can deal with it yourself, you're not going to engage law enforcement." Like Tessa, Olivia grew up learning the police were ineffective in response to community issues and the better strategy was to "deal with it yourself." Olivia did enter a reporting process through her university's campus police. The negative treatment from local police after reporting sexual assault reaffirmed Olivia's legal cynicism. When asked how she would advise another Black woman survivor, Olivia suggested they access university counseling resources and not engage reporting options. Legal cynicism is useful for explaining why Black women participants were suspicious of police and did not turn to law enforcement after assault.

Participants' legal cynicism also translated to their evaluation of campus responses to sexual assault. Black women conflated legal and university processes, seeing both as ineffective

for responding to their sexual harm based on gendered racism. Unlike Black women in Bell's (2016) study, Black women students in my study could mobilize other helpful services on their campuses, in the form of counseling, academic accommodations, and social support. After sexual assault exposure by two football players, Athena connected with a Title IX coordinator through a mandatory reporter. Athena received "some really good resources so I didn't fall off the deep end." Being associated with higher education institutions helped some Black women access academic accommodations and counseling services. Many participants who did not report spoke of accessing counseling at or through their institution. Dania received a referral from a campus counselor to a local nonprofit that connected sexual assault and abuse survivors with trauma informed therapists doing work pro bono. This allowed Dania to access long term therapy for no charge, which she said was a "game changer" for her recovery. In my sample, legal cynicism among Black women students did not prevent them from seeking other resources on campus. Also, being college and graduate students may have normalized the value of therapy, distinguishing it from other university resources participants viewed as carceral.

My research also centers an understudied population in legal cynicism research: highly educated Black women. Most studies on legal cynicism focus on adults with low educational attainment or pre-college youth (Bell, 2017; Carr et al., 2007; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Black women students in my study were resolutely "against the law" in their rejection of police involvement in their families, friendships, and Black communities on campus. Also, participants differed from youths in Carr et al. (2007) in their orientation towards abolishing the police and relying less on carceral approaches to sexual assault (A. Y. Davis et al., 2022). Black women participants used their educational access to critique gendered racist social structures, including

the legal system. My dissertation contributes further nuance to understanding Black women's legal cynicism.

Future Research on Legality and Black Women's Experiences

Future analysis and research will focus on ways Black women survivors resisted gendered racist legality through activism. During my data collection, several campuses started Twitter accounts posting tweets from survivors exposing assaulters. Through my interviews, conversations with Black practitioners, and digging through the tweets, I discovered that this effort was led by Black women at many of the campuses. Naomie submitted the name of the person who assaulted her to a Twitter account. She described going to extreme lengths to disguise her identity, including creating a "burner email," posting from a separate Twitter account, and using an incognito browser. Through the Twitter campaign, Naomie discovered four other Black women who identified the same person as their assailant. Knowing she was not alone provided some solace but fell short from the accountability she wanted. In my interviews with participants from Georgetown, they shared with me an activism campaign started by Black women and nonbinary students called the Black Survivors Coalition (BSC). The effort included compiling a list of Black men who committed assault and forming demands to the university to improve sexual assault response. The BSC were able to get four additional Black women trauma specialists hired, but only for that semester. Pauli shared the BSC "got co-opted by white people" and "watered down," which alienated Black women and nonbinary students. In a future paper, I plan to focus on stories of activism to show how Black women resisted gendered racist legality, but also how difficult it was to sustain these efforts in institutions shaped by gendered racism.

Methodological Contributions

My methodology stemmed from combining approaches to conducting research with sexual assault survivors in clinical settings and community psychology with narrative methods from the humanities and social sciences. Sensitized further by my experience as a rape victim advocate and researcher, I was able to conduct interviews that elicited multi-layered narratives and, according to participants, contributed to their healing journeys. Future papers can develop the validity and usefulness of trauma informed narrative inquiry. In the beginning of my interviews, I asked participants to reflect on what they hoped to get out of participating in my research and we discussed their motivations again at the conclusion of the interview. This data needs to be analyzed more systematically, but my early reflections suggest several ways my methodological approach helped participants. Several participants wanted confirmation their experiences were indeed sexual assault and harmful. After describing her experience with sexual assault, Crystal explained she signed up for my research study to get a "different perspective" because a close friend adamantly told her she was not raped because she continued to date the assailant. Tessa wanted "to feel validated" in her experience because past disclosures led to blaming responses. With these participants, I could offer support and research insights to normalize their emotional reactions. In many interviews I said something similar to this, from Tessa's interview:

> Interviewer: Yeah, I think you know what I'm going to say. It was assault. It was not your fault. Just to respond. Actually, this was a very powerful conversation. I'm so grateful to you to hear your story and to be with you in this moment.

Delving deeper into these moments of affirming participant experiences and their reflections on our conversations can add to the literature.

Another common motivation among participants was getting the opportunity to talk with another Black women who wanted to understand the racial dynamics of sexual assault. Previous

chapters have explored the lack of holistic support for Black women survivors on campuses. Some Black women had to separate their identities, compartmentalizing race from sexual assault discussions, and separating sexual assault from racial justice issues. Lorraine reflected this saying:

> So, at the beginning, I was thinking more about I just wanted a space where I could tell the entirety of my story. And I think for the most part that was fulfilled, again, just because I always-- I'm someone that talks about race, and I'm someone that talks about sexual assault, but I never really talk about both of them together. So that was really nice to do.

The interview allowed Lorraine and other participants to unite these themes, feeling like they could share their entire story without being judged or damaging the Black community. Some participants revealed their level of candor was directly related to my identity as a Black woman. Anna Julia stated, "Truthfully, if you didn't identify as a Black woman, I wouldn't have had this conversation, so there is power in Black women being in community. It made it feel easier." Having a shared social identity allowed some participants to share the ways gendered racism shaped their experiences more directly.

In many interviews, I could tell participants felt comfortable and free to speak. We shared cultural references, talked about current events, and even made jokes. My transcriber recorded over 288 instances of "[LAUGHING]" when participants made themselves laugh or we shared something funny. Talking with Jade, she compared a former Black woman teacher to "Joe Clark without the bat [laughing]," referencing Morgan Freeman's character in the film *Lean on Me*. I remember bursting out laughing, because it was the perfect reference to a film that shaped us both as Black youth. Black women brought many aspects of their identity and social consciousness to the interviews. When Sharee said her campus gave "Harry Potter vibes" she quickly added that JK Rowling "ruined it," referring to the author's recent comments against the

Trans community. I agreed with her and I think that shared moment encouraged Sharee to disclose more about her sexuality. In several interviews, especially the ones with students from Howard University, participants and I mourned the loss of Chadwick Boseman, who died during my data collection. Adding the context of having these conversations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the closeness I shared with participants during these moments helped them and me as a person in isolation. Writing about the methodological affordances of trauma informed narrative inquiry and my social position as a Black woman will contribute to the literature and my own development as a researcher.

Contributions to Campus Sexual Assault Research

To date, research on reporting campus sexual assault has not accounted for why Black women rarely report or the invalidation they experience during reporting processes (Carr et al., 2007). This dissertation shows that gendered racism in higher education means there are few protected spaces for Black women on campus, increasing their likelihood to experience harassment and assault. It also outlines the range of risks Black women face when considering reporting: personal invalidation, loss of intra-cultural trust, isolation from already small Black communities, institutional harm and blaming, and increased mental and physical health struggles. Future research from this project will explore these risks in depth for Black women survivors. I plan to explore the role of Black Student Unions, Black Greek Organizations, and churches in Black women's narratives of sexual assault exposure. In some cases, these organizations promoted Black women's silence and isolation after assault. Exploring these connections can aid in prevention and education efforts.

This project can also deepen our understanding of Black women's mental health and recovery after sexual assault. Some participants struggled to find supportive resources that could

address the racial dynamics of the assault. Black women also battled expectations of their social identity to be self-sufficient, strong, and vigilant, preventing or delaying them from seeking support (McGuffey, 2013; Washington, 2001). Black women felt alienated from supportive resources on campuses, finding white service providers inadequate (Gómez & Gobin, 2020; Washington, 2001). Institutional resources for racial justice centered mainly on Black men's needs, classifying Black women as "doing just fine." In their own families, participants were often trailblazers as first-generation college students, matriculating through elite institutions, balancing work, academic, and family commitments with aplomb. Participants had to navigate these barriers and forge their own healing journeys. Creating community with other Black women survivors, creative arts, and activism were ways Black women in my sample coped. Participants discussed characteristics of supportive persons and helpful disclosures, which can inform readers on how to receive disclosures in formal and informal settings.

Participants also discussed how their religious backgrounds, sexual identities, and past experiences with sexual abuse influenced their sexual assault exposure in college. Growing up in sexually conservative religious groups limited some participants' access to knowledge about sexual autonomy. Internal and external pressures from religious involvement added feelings of shame, distance from religious communities, and personal struggles with spirituality. Sexual assault exposure hindered some participants' journeys to accepting queer identities and initiating healthy sexual relationships. Childhood sexual abuse thwarted some participants from recognizing sexual coercion in college. Subsequent papers will explore these nuances. Since this project consists of 60 narrative interviews with survivors, future papers can explore similar questions across racial backgrounds, sexual identities, and institutional types. I have five interviews with Latina students, 2 with Asian or Asian American women, 1 Middle eastern

woman, and 5 white women. These additional interviews can form the basis of more papers on campus sexual assault and barriers to reporting.

My dissertation can inform how higher education institutions and associations design campus climate surveys. In my literature review I outlined limitations of survey research examining reasons why survivors do not report. Black women's narratives revealed that shame, embarrassment, and minimizing the harm were not salient reasons. Rather, the double bind of being invalidated by police or fearing anti-Black state violence were the primary barriers. Researchers should separate their measures of how survivors felt about the assault from how they expected legal or university authorities to respond. Surveys must allow participants to explain their reticence to use reporting options and university resources, including what they anticipate happening if they report. I suspect survivors and survey designers conceptualize "reporting" as a single, agentic act that leads to a full legal process. My research shows that reporting happens in multiple ways, rarely leading to a full legal or institutional process. Sometimes survivors do not report voluntarily and sometimes they are blocked from participating in a legal process by police and university officials. I believe some of my participants would select "no" on a question asking, "Did you report sexual assault exposure?" because their interactions did not lead to a legal process. Climate surveys should use more behavioral language (e.g., did you talk with a legal official?) to capture wider reporting patterns. Follow up questions can assess whether survivors were discouraged, blamed, or believed in conversations with formal authorities. Disaggregating this data by race, gender, and class could reveal whether formal authorities treat campus survivors differently across identities and highlight problematic practices.

Implications for Title IX Policy

This dissertation has several implications for Title IX regulations issued by the Department of Education. Black women in my study found mandatory reporting policies prohibitive to seeking support. They were either drawn into engagement with Title IX offices—including formal adjudication processes—against their wishes or censored themselves in conversations with friends and supervisors. Ending wide-net mandatory reporting policies for adult students in higher education would prevent further harm through compelled disclosure (Holland et al., 2018). As shown in my study, compelled disclosure is particularly dangerous for Black women students who feared—with good reason—that reporting sexual assault would lead to more gendered racist treatment from authorities, retraumatizing adjudication procedures, and social exclusion from vital support networks. Nearly 30% of the Black women and nonbinary students in my study worked in student life, through residence life, multicultural affairs, or as higher education professionals during graduate school. This proximity to student life increased the likelihood of accidental disclosure to a mandatory reporter, which happened in 5 out of 11 reports to university officials in my study. Almost half of those I interviewed whose cases where investigated would have ideally preferred that they not be. And only 1 of the 11, including 1 of 5 of those reported on, felt that engagement with Title IX was helpful. Black women working in on-campus positions in higher education may also be forced into reporting on other Black women who disclose to them for support. West (2020) demonstrated that Black women make up the largest historically marginalized group of employees in educational services in higher education. As individuals marginalized in the academy are both more likely to be victimized and more likely to be disclosed to, mandatory reporter policies may be seen as discriminatory—disproportionately involving vulnerable populations on campus in surveilling and punitive systems. Mandatory reporting policies thus limit the ability of Black women students, staff, and

faculty to disclose freely, listen, and support each other without fear of starting a potentially damaging reporting process. Further, Title IX regulations should prioritize confidential resources on campuses and support capacity building among university staff to compassionately hear survivors' stories and knowledgably respond with university and community resources (Holland et al., 2022).

During the data collection period for this dissertation the Department of Education, under former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, instituted Title IX regulations in 2020 that bolstered the rights of students accused of sexual assault (Porter et al., 2022). The most egregious change in the 2020 Title IX regulations required cross-examination in university adjudication procedures, forcing a survivor to be questioned by a representative of the person who assaulted them—often a defense attorney. Some participants in my study mentioned these changes as a reason they did not report. Naomie explained:

> I would say my thought of [Title IX] was it was a safe space for people to report and get justice, but over time and with the work of Betsy DeVos, who I think is despicable, it kind of went downhill, especially with her recent changes, such as one being your assaulter is allowed to cross-examine you.

Although Naomie considered the Title IX office somewhat safe, the DeVos 2020 regulations and the requirement of cross examination (discussed then as direct questioning by the accused student) specifically discouraged her from reporting her sexual assault exposure to her HBCU. Even participants who did not mention Title IX expressed that fear of cross examination discouraging them from reporting. Viola stated, "I could never have a prosecutor, or something try to ask me anything or cross-examine [me]. I'll cry." Cross examination makes university sexual misconduct processes more criminalized, which worried several participants in my study, like Viola who distrusted and avoided the criminal legal system after sexual assault. Future Title

IX regulations should prohibit cross examination in university procedures (Armstrong et al., 2020; Porter et al., 2022).

Implications for Practice

This dissertation demonstrates multiple intersectional failures within higher education environments to protect Black women and address their sexual harm. Participants found most spaces on campus inattentive and hostile to their academic and professional projects. Gendered racism in their interactions with roommates, other students, faculty members, and student affairs staff made Black women feel invisible and excluded. Racialized sexual harassment and sexual assault exposure were produced through environments where Black women were multiply disadvantaged. Further, Black women encountered barriers to needed support and unhelpful reporting processes that increased the harm of the assault. Black women struggled to stay in school and maintain their academic and professional achievements. They lost social support ties within the Black community, which were already limited at predominantly white campuses.

Even though my research examines why Black women do not report, my goal is not to increase reporting within this population. Instead, by pinpointing gendered racism within Black women's experiences on campus, this research aims to identify 1) protective measures to decrease racialized sexual harassment and sexual assault exposure and to 2) envision supportive measures to ensure Black women survivors stay in school. Black women, including nonbinary and trans women, need spaces where they can share knowledge, organize, and provide each other community support. Black women expressed frustrations with PWIs and HBCUs lack of support and reticence to invest in them. Anna Julia captured this saying, "Black women need our own space because *we need our own damn space*. Not because Black men have one or because we think we all-- no, it's just that we literally just deserve our own shit sometimes." Gendered

racism in higher education erases Black women's needs, in addition to obscuring the harm they experience. Without having to justify or provide a "comparison group," universities should invest and provide these spaces for Black women to decide what they need.

When I asked participants what support would have been useful after sexual assault exposure, many wished for support group of all Black women survivors. Gabrielle wished she could have had a "female support group amongst Black women when they come in at the freshman level" to know if anything happened, she and other Black women would have someone to listen. Having a space to disclose confidentially with another Black woman, who has greater capacity to understand the racialized aspects of sexual assault exposure, would have helped participants on their recovery journey. Some Black women formed informal networks of support with friends or colleagues who disclosed to them. Other participants struggled to find support and became isolated. A standing support group for Black women would be useful for survivors in need of support post-assault.

Another protective measure is to educate faculty and administrators about gendered racism and racialized sexual harassment. Practices of tokenizing Black women students during discussions of race or suspecting them of cheating should be framed as forms of gendered racist harassment and discouraged. In trainings about gender and sexual harassment, the materials and facilitators should discuss interconnections between race, sexuality, and class (among other systems of power) to raise awareness and prevent harm to Black women. Colleges and universities can build capacity for researching, preventing, and responding to gendered racism and racialized sexual harassment through institutional investments. For instance, Black women seeking therapy struggled to find or schedule appointments with trauma informed Black women providers. To address this shortage universities can create academic programs with curriculum

that integrates research on gendered racism with culturally responsive therapy practices sensitive to cultural betrayal trauma and racial trauma (Gómez, 2018). Black women, and others, interested in this course of study can both learn these skills and practice on campuses, providing support to Black women needing culturally responsive therapy. Beyond making statements or convening panels, universities can demonstrate a real commitment to supporting Black women by acting within our core mission of education and credentialing.

Participants in my study had varying levels of knowledge about Title IX and associated institutional policies on their campuses. Martha mentioned hearing a presentation from the Title IX office during her First Year Orientation, but added "the details of what was spoken about was something that I haven't been able to remember." After sexual assault exposure late in her college career, Martha felt she had to "start from scratch in my research" about what to do and university resources. Martha wished the Title IX office at her HBCU was more present with "more regular communication of support resources" that she and other students could quickly reference. Universities must do more to integrate Title IX equity measures into the everyday lives of students. Having Title IX resource professionals integrated into academic units and providing student groups with current information about sexual assault resources could bridge the gap between a first-year orientation program and when a student needs resources after sexual assault exposure. Taylor thought her PWI needed to give students, especially first- year students, clear and detailed explanations about what the reporting process "actually" entails. As a survivor of sexual assault exposure in her first year, Taylor elaborated,

> I think, and even that's statistically proven, that the likelihood of sexual assault during your first semester of freshman year is very high…They can put up as many stickers as they want for the information, but what the actual process looks like. What actually happens? Kind of having some sort of transparency with what would happen should you choose to report, or should you choose to not report, or should you choose not to go get a rape kit, or all of those things. I think would be helpful.

Beyond an institution's written policy, students need a full understanding of what will happen during a reporting process, including the time commitment, possible outcomes, who will learn about their case, and how to access resources without reporting to the institution or the police.

Some participants were critical of how their universities handled sexual assault. Carceral approaches and simplistic views of restorative justice increased Black women's lack of trust (E. Collins, 2015). Pauli viewed the restorative justice approach at their university as "protecting abusers" from official complaints. Pauli elaborated, "One of my friends was told that she needed to forgive the person. She was like, 'Oh, at transformative justice you need to forgive.' I'm like, 'What the hell?'...There's just such a big misunderstanding about it." Pauli's story of their friend's experience illustrates need for training in higher education about what restorative and/or transformative justice approaches require. Davis et al.(2022) argue for analyzing and developing restorative practices using a Black feminist abolitionist perspective. Without such a framework, based on the dual goal of ending both gender-based violence and carceral logics in higher education, restorative practices may also be adversarial or reduced to trite recommendations to "forgive" the assailant without truly addressing the harm. Participants in this study also wanted to see more educational programming around consent and intersecting social inequities. They wanted prevention programming to discuss pervasive disrespect for Black women's bodies and sexual autonomy from slavery to their daily experiences (P. H. Collins, 2000). Identity neutral approaches to educating students about sexual assault do not serve Black women.

To ensure Black women survivors stay in school, universities must broaden their approach to Title IX beyond adjudication procedures. Survivors should be able to access counseling, academic accommodations, and other supportive measures without having to formally report incidents, which means that the Title IX office cannot be the unit through which

accommodations are arranged. Academic accommodations for survivors unable to attend classes for fear of seeing the assailant or being in campus spaces should include virtual and asynchronous options. Universities should adopt Equity Leave policies for survivors who need to pause their studies for reasons related to sexual assault exposure on campus. Several participants had to use medical leave policies, which required them to disclose their assault to staff and faculty members. Kerry explained the process of finalizing her medical withdrawal saying:

> I had to take a paper to all of my classes at the time. I explained what was going on and had to get them to sign off to give me the medical -- I don't know if it's like a grade or designation. I don't know what the word is, but to give me an "M" for that class so that I wouldn't fail it, but I got an "M". That was something that I had to go to each teacher and do and get them to sign off on.

Kerry also had to enter an impatient facility to satisfy the medical leave policy, even though she did not want to be hospitalized. To date, she has been unable to re-enroll because there was no designated administrator to handle students returning after taking leave. An Equity Leave policy could allow survivors to take time away and receive support through transitions. Such a policy could help survivors access mental health resources and perhaps even their housing on campus, allowing them to choose treatments. Kerry could have also benefited from academic accommodations to take courses online or asynchronously. Working with survivors to continue their education should be a priority for institutions. My research findings identified bureaucratic gaps and institutional barriers that also violate Black women's Title IX rights. I hope my research can inform practitioners to create responsive policies. Most importantly, I want to share my research with Black women students and their allies to support their activism for institutional, cultural, and social change.

Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Characteristics and Reporting Status

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics and Reporting Status

Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Student status	Race/Ethnicity	Institution Type	Assailant Race	Reporting Status	Report Type
Audrey	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Tru	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Alex	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Rebecca	Woman	Grad School	Black	PWI	White	Yes	Title IX Police, OCR
Jada	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Nadia	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Olivia	Woman	Grad School	Afro-Latina	PWI	Persian, white presenting	Yes	Title IX Police, Uber
Cam	Woman	Grad School	Black	PWI	Multiple Assaults, Black	No report	
Jay	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Danai	Woman	Undergrad	Black/African	PWI	Multiple Assaults, Black	No report	
Jade	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Sucre	Woman	Grad School	Afro Indigenous	PWI	Multiple Assaults, White	Yes	Title IX
Athena	Nonbinary	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Multiple Assaults, Black	Yes	Title IX Police
Giselle	Nonbinary	Undergrad	Black	PWI	White	No report	
Taylor	Woman	Undergrad	Mixed (Black/White)	PWI	Black	No report	
Molly	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Tessa	Woman	Undergrad	Mixed (Black/White)	PWI	Black	No report	
Kerry	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	Yes	Police
Alexa	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Naimia	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Multiple Assaults, Black	No report	
Jennifer	Woman	Grad School	Mixed (Black/White)	PWI	Black	Yes	Title IX Police
Josephine	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	Yes	Title IX Police
Viola	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Angie	Woman	Undergrad	Mixed (Black/Asian)	HBCU	Black	No report	
Mae	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Harriet	Woman	Grad School	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Ashleigh	Woman	Grad School	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Gloria	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Multiple Assaults, Black	Yes	Title IX

Gabrielle	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	Yes	Title IX
Avery	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Pauli	Nonbinary	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
CJ	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Lorraine	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Naomie	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Multiple assaults, Black	No report	
Letitia	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Multiple Assaults, Black	Yes	Title IX
Martha	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Zora	Woman	undergrad	Black	PWI	Black	No report	
Sharee	Woman	undergrad	Black	PWI	White	No report	
Anna Julia	Woman	Grad School	Black	HBCU	Multiple Assaults, Black	Yes	Title IX
Serena	Woman	Grad School	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Crystal	Woman	Undergrad	Black	HBCU	Black	No report	
Cori	Nonbinary	Undergrad	Black	PWI	White	No report	
Ariana	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	White	No report	
Lauryn	Woman	Undergrad	Mixed (Black/White)	PWI	Multiple Assaults, White and Black	No report	
Dania	Woman	Grad School	Afro-Latina	PWI	White	Yes	Title IX
Ruth	Woman	Undergrad	Black	PWI	Multiple Assaults, White; Latino (mixed)	No report	

Appendix B: Consent Form

Q1 **Consent to be Part of a Research Study**

My name is Kamaria Porter and I am a doctoral student studying higher education at the University of Michigan. You are invited to participate in a research study about women's experience with unwanted sex during higher education. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

In order to participate you should meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a woman including cisgender women, trans women, non-binary individuals who are perceived as female. (any and all sexual orientations welcome!)
- Currently or recently (within 5 yrs) enrolled in college or graduate school
- Identify your racial identity as Black, African American, Black Multiracial, Afro-Latina, African
- Experienced a form of unwanted sex or assault while in college or graduate school.

What will I be requested to do if I participate?

The purpose of the study is to understand how women's experiences of unwanted sex during higher education. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in **at least one interview through video conferencing**. Before the interview, you will select a pseudonym that we will use in the interview. You will be given the space and time to tell your story of unwanted sex and how you responded. I will follow up with questions about sources of support you found helpful or unhelpful.

The interview will take approximately 1 hour. The audio from this interview will be digitally recorded, saved, and transcribed. Any personal identifying information (your name, hometown, undergraduate institution, leadership positions) will be removed or obscured in the writing to protect your identity. I may request an additional follow up interviews for clarity or relevant updates. This will also occur through video conferencing. This should take 30 minutes to an hour. Any additional interview requests are completely optional. **After transcripts are finalized, the audio files will be destroyed.**

What are the risks of participating in this study?

Sexual violence is not an easy topic to research or discuss. You may experience distress, discomfort, and/or emotional fatigue from discussing sexual violence and reporting. As a former sexual violence survivor advocate, I will try to make sure you feel supported and heard. At any point in the interview or study, you can pause for a break, reschedule, or end your participation in the study. **Withdrawing from the study will not harm you, me, or the research project.** You will also be provided with resources, local and national, if you need additional support. Also, I will make sure before we talk you are 1) in a safe private space, 2) do not have any important events or deadlines right after the interview, 3) have water or other things to sustain you.

What are the potential benefits of this study?

In this study we will discuss issues related to sexual violence and reporting. Unlike other people you may have talked to, **I am not trying to investigate your story, trick you, treat you, or tell you what you should or shouldn't do.** I want to hear your story and the stories of other women who have similar experiences to advance research and action on this issue. With that in mind, your interactions with this study may have potential positive effects, such as telling your story, being validated, and discussing issues related to your experience that could help other survivors.

How will I protect your information?

This research will be used for my dissertation and I plan to present and publish findings in academic forums, as well other public and community venues to raise awareness about these issues. To protect your

privacy, you will select a pseudonym that I will use to refer to you in the interview and any research notes. I will not include any information that could directly identify you (such as your name, details of your assault, or unique attributes that could identify you) in presentations or writings.
The audio from your interview will be transcribed, using your pseudonym. After the transcripts are finalized, the audio files will be destroyed. Only myself, members of my committee, transcribers, and research collaborators will have access to data collected for the project. Before collaborating, I will make sure no information that could identify you is included in data.

How will I compensate you for being part of the study?
You will receive a $30 gift card after completing the interview.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?
There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary
It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, **you may change your mind and stop at any time.** You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no consequence if you choose to not participate or decide to withdraw later.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research
The University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board has determined that this research is exempt from IRB oversight. If you want a copy of this form, you can print it from your browser or contact me for a copy via email.
If you have questions about this research, you may contact me, Kamaria Porter:
speakingin2silence@gmail.com

Q2 Please click “I agree to participate” to consent to participate.

○ I agree to participate (1)

Q4 Please Enter Today's Date

(mm/dd/yyyy)

_____

Appendix C: Narrative Interview Protocol

Consent Form Link: https://umich.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a4TyJYmTYX1fpzL

Opening: Thank you again for your interest in participating in this research study. Before we begin, I want to go over the consent form and an overview of the topics we'll cover. This consent form [make sure participant has it open] outlines the study, potential risks and benefits, and most importantly, your rights to confidentiality and to join or withdraw from the study. Do you have any questions about the consent form? At the conclusion of the interview, we will revisit this form and your comfort with participating in the study. [Have participant sign the consent form].

Thank you. Are you ok with me starting the recording? [Turn on recording]

I: Thank you again for agreeing to participate. The interview today will cover three broad topics, so first topic is your journey through higher education, so wherever that starts for you and what you're doing right now, any experiences of unwanted sex or assault during that time or any time in your life because everything is connected, and then sources of support that you've found helpful.

Before we get really into the asking questions, I'd just like for you to reflect to yourself on this question, and maybe you jot down a few thoughts or type them into your phone. The question is: "What do I want or hope to get out of participating in this interview?" I'll just give you a minute to think about that. You don't have to tell me now. We'll talk about it at the end.
Ok, let's begin with some background questions.

Journey Through Higher Education
Thanks for reflecting on that. Like I said, there are three broad topics, so I guess we could start with your journey through higher ed. Yeah, I'm really interested in hearing your story. This is a narrative interview, so I want to hear things from your perspective, how you processed it, and you're the main character, but if there are other characters that come up, I'll change their names, as well, to protect your privacy.

Potential Probes

1. How did you pick [institution name] for college? What factors did you consider?
2. What are you studying?
3. What are you involved in on campus?

Survivor Narrative
I'm going to transition to the second big topic - any experiences of unwanted sex, or harassment, or assault during higher education or your life. If at any time you do want to stop, or pause, or reschedule, we could totally do that. Like I said, this is a narrative interview, so I want to listen to your story and your words. I will have follow-up questions, but I'm not trying to investigate or give you advice. I just want to hear from your perspective what happened and how you made sense of it.

Mid-Interview Check in
I will ask some follow-up questions and questions related to my research, but I want to pause and ask, how are you feeling right now, now that you've told me your story?

Sources of Support
So we're jumping into the last broad topic, sources of support, and I want to return to the incident(s) you described. Were you able to tell anyone, share what happened?
If no reporting option

- Did you consider reporting the assault?
- What is your thoughts on reporting sexual assault as a Black woman?
- How do you think the assailant's racial identity kind of played into what happened?
- What about your identity as a Black woman, how do you think that played into your experience?
- [if mentions legal consciousness of protecting Black men], I'm just wondering if you could say more about where that comes from for you personally?
- How would you advise a black woman student? If a student came to you, what would you tell her to do?
- Another big part of my focus is sources of support. What were those groups or people that came through for you?

If any formal reporting option

- Can you describe your interactions with [formal authority]?
- Thinking about all the people you talked to, who were the most helpful? Who were the least?
- Describe the process you experienced?
- Did any of the comments or questions stick out to you during the process?
- How, if at all, do you think your identity as a Black woman influenced your experience of reporting?
- How do you think that the man who assaulted you, his racial identity kind of plays into what he did?
- [if mentions legal consciousness of protecting Black men], I'm just wondering if you could say more about where that comes from for you personally?
- Another big part of my focus is sources of support. What were those areas, people, places, things that came through for you?
- What sources were there or not there for you?

Theme Related Questions

- One of the goals of my project is to hear from you and other participants that I've talked to, what could a system or a process, a space of accountability look like? A space of justice for Black women (however you would define justice), what would that look like and what would you want to see?
- What do campus administrators not understand around this issue of unwanted sex, assault, or harassment that your story could really illuminate?

Post-interview and Debrief

- So that concludes the content-related questions. I'm just going to do a debrief with us so we reflect on the conversation we had, and try to transition out of talking about these very difficult things into the rest of our day. So just to start the debrief, what was it like for you to speak with me today, just reflecting on how we communicated?
- As I keep going with this project, is there anything I should do differently or topics I should include?
- To conclude, reflecting on what you wrote before we started the interview, did this experience live up to your expectations? How did it not?

So yes, that really concludes our interview. I'm going to send you two emails. One will be a $30 gift card for participating. I can get it from Target, or Starbucks, or Amazon. Those are easy. Which would you prefer?

And then the second email will be my resources page. It's a link to resources, and this is just meant to supplement things you're already using. I'm always updating it, so it's more of a living document. Make use of it or share it with others. I think it will be in good hands with you.

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