Title
The Color of Accusal: Black Men’s Perceptions of Intra-racial Sexual Violence Allegations

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Publication Date
2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Color of Accusal:

Black Men's Perceptions of Intra-racial Sexual Violence Allegations

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Gregory Ashton Pemberton

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Color of Accusal:

Black Men's Perceptions of Intra-racial Sexual Violence Allegations

by

Gregory Ashton Pemberton

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Walter R. Allen, Co-Chair

Professor Jessica Christine Harris, Co-Chair

Sexual violence is an issue every college in America must work to prevent. Critical race scholars such as Derrick Bell may argue sexual violence can be viewed through a lens of race because racism is ordinary and not aberrational (Crewe, 2021).

Historical context can affect the perceptions racialized groups or populations have when discussing sexual violence, like Black students for example. Historically, Black men have been socially connected to hypersexuality and criminality (Baker,1998). This may affect how Black men view peers accused of sexual violence. Black women, however, have a history of being met with skepticism or disbelief when they disclose experiencing sexual violence (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017). Studies show the majority of rapes are intra-racial (Koch, 1995; Wheeler & George, 2001). Thus, how sexual violence impacts Black communities is important to explore.

This study examines the following questions: (1) How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men? (2) What impacts those perceptions? To answer both questions, I conducted a study where participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario. The scenario contained a hypothetical intra-racial occurrence of sexual violence in

which a Black woman alleged a Black man assaulted her. Using inductive coding, I analyzed the interview findings using intersectionality and cultural betrayal trauma theory (CBTT). In analyzing the findings of 14 interviews conducted, I looked for perceptions Black male participants had of sexual assault allegations made against Black men made by Black women. Fourteen participants, who were enrolled in college at the undergraduate level at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in California, were involved in this study. Data was collected via virtual semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

Findings revealed Black men had a myriad of perceptions about intra-racial sexual violence on Black communities. They were supportive of the survivor in the hypothetical scenario and identified key elements of the survivor's dismissal as well as barriers to her disclosure of the assault. Participants also believed their Black male peers would have mixed reactions to the scenario, with some supporting and affirming the survivor, and others dismissing and invalidating the survivor's experience. Participants noted the differences in such responses to scenarios included upbringing, media influences, reputation, lack of institutional trust, and other factors.

Practical suggestions included an institutional change within the university setting to acknowledge elements of consent, coercion, victim-blaming, and other elements of rape culture outside of explicit conversations about sexual violence. This included revising particular Title IX orientations, creating courses to highlight these elements within their curricula, hosting culturally relevant workshops for mandated reporters, as well as Title IX officers and university police departments specifically, as well as implementing taskforces to strategically implement these suggestions. Suggestions also included incorporating newsletters to outline how sexual violence impacts different minoritized groups and incorporating more minoritized group resources into

national sexual violence college prevention reports. Some also suggested incorporating restorative justice models within colleges & universities for students to establish systems of pressure to hold institutions accountable for making requisite changes to address sexual violence concerns on campus.

Suggestions for future research include exploring the relationships between Black men and institutional agents (i.e., Title IX officers and police officers), Black men's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence allegations at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Black men's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence allegations at higher education institutions across the United States beyond just the West Coast, Black women's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence, as well as perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence experienced in other racial/cultural groups.

The dissertation of Gregory Ashton Pemberton is approved.

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2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two heartbeats. To my little brother Keegan, I am so proud to be your older brother. Your maturity and ambition are outstanding to witness. To my mother, Rhonda Sepulveda, you are the reason I am here. You were my introduction to education, and you made me feel like excellence was the norm for and the expectation of me. Thank you for showing me how to live a life dedicated to realizing my dreams!

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This journey has always entailed a faith in God I will carry with me throughout the entirety of my life. I live a spectacular life and I am truly grateful God has allowed me to continue to live out my purpose and realize my dreams. I must acknowledge the ancestors whose sacrifices and courage made this possible. However, the reason I was able to reach this point in my life academically was and remains to be the outstanding confidence in myself my community instilled in me.

To my church family—whether it was Love and Faith Hope Ministries, Stokesdale Church of God, One in Christ, or Calvary Christian Center—I thank you for giving me the spiritual foundation which pushed me to know God fully and intimately. Pastor Kevin and Pastor Vince, thank you for being spiritual examples positively impacting and influencing me to this day.

To the Sepulvedas, thank you for treating my family like your own. Thank you for showing me how strong family ties could and should be. Paul, thank you for treating me like your son and taking care of my family when I cannot.

To the Pemberton's—Arletha, Gracie, Lizzie—thank you all for loving me unconditionally no matter what else was happening in my world. You and your families have never forgotten about me or my family and never hesitated to show me what the true love of God looks like in word and action! To my brother Gary and to my father Gregory Pemberton, I am proud to be a Pemberton and do not take this honor or my name lightly. You both have helped me understand life is a gift not to be taken lightly or tarnished.

To the Greens, you all have been my world ever since I can remember. Virginia and Billy Green, thank you not only creating 10 incredible human beings but also having the love and

fortitude to bring my mother into this world. Grandmother, I will spend my life exemplifying the special essence in me you told my mom you saw. To my nine aunts and uncles, and to my countless brilliant cousins, thank you for supporting me in ways I can never repay you for. Aunt Shirley, cousin Chris's words about work and perseverance still echo in my soul today, and our angel cousin Eddie showed me the confidence a Black man is supposed to carry himself with. Uncle John, your radical love for God and your Blackness has never left my heart or mind and for that I am eternally grateful. Aunt Louise and Aunt Liz, you two have shown a legacy of love not only in your actions but in the actions of your children. Emmanuel, Stephany, Damien, and Jamilia have supported me academically, given me opportunities to further myself financially, travel and conquer the world, and shown me how to persevere throughout hard times with grace, charisma, and a pure heart. Uncle Willie, the lessons you have taught me about life, finances, and God will never cease to amaze me. You are the living embodiment of a life one can be proud of, loving your family tirelessly and boundlessly. Aunt Sarah, you and our angel Uncle Jay helped me navigate life in areas which once caused me anxiety and fear. Aunt Vanessa, you and Uncle William's church gave me some of my fondest childhood memories and will always be at the center of my heart and without the support of Gina and Camille, I would not have found my love of public speaking. Aunt Patty, you, and Uncle Bobby showed me new cultural experiences and made sure I was headed in the right direction with God. And to Nakita and Tamika thank you for showing me what Black love could look like for folks close to my age. I love seeing the happiness of your families and you all thrive in Black love. Auntie, you showing me what business ownership and divine education look like has shaped the foundation for the scholar I am today. You and Uncle Maurice truly exemplify what it means to live in love and laughter! There

is not enough ink on earth to write about the fond memories I have of all of you but know my heart and mind need no ink to cherish what you have meant to me.

To my academic family throughout the years, those I found at GTCC Middle College, Duke University, and Harvard Graduate School of Education, thank you for all the ways you built me up over the years. I needed you all dearly. I want to give a special shoutout to people like Ms. Yvette, Ms. Evainna, Ms. Kitley, Ms. Kimbrough, Maurice (Mo) Green, Dr. Bonilla-Silva, Dr. Reece, Dr. Villareal, Dr. Smith, and others for the lessons about life and the world you were unknowingly teaching me. To Ardisia and Arinze, thank you both for your love and support and for the love of the AAA experience. I love you. To my Just-a- Start Youthbuild family, thank you for showing me what the world outside of academia looks like and what it means to use scholarship to build bridges. Dolores, thanks to you especially for taking care of me and showing me the greatest example of what a thoughtful leader looks like.

To my brothers of AAX, joining not only Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, but being in fellowship with you all has been amazing! You showed me what masculinity can look like, what accountability is, and what it means to navigate with people you love through good and challenging times. You all have been one of the best decisions and parts of my life. My line sisters, I love you all dearly! Dway, thank you for always showing me your heart and support! To my Line Brother Jason, I love you dearly and would never want to experience life without you. You are one of the most brilliant human beings I have ever known and I'm so thankful to be able to witness your greatness!

To my friend Michael, thank you for showing me the beauty of consistency and showing up for the people you love. To my friend EJ, thank you for showing me what genuine kindness and building community looks like. To my L.A. friends—Joe, Jailyn, Ari, Jasmine, Natalie,

Jerek, Jostin, and Amanda—thank you for showing me support and making incredible memories over the years! Danielle, thank you for being my spiritual center and showing me what sweetness personified looks like. To my Duke family, Chelsey, Gabby, Bryce, Jade, you all have shown me what true friendship looks like; we fight for each other and support each other intensely. Blood could not make us closer. I love y'all so much!

To my friends Morgan and Kenny. Morgan, you have been one of the sweetest people to me in the world over the past few years! I am so lucky to have a friend in you and look forward to celebrating your success for a lifetime to come! Thank you for showing me what it means to love your friends wholly! Kenny, what can I say? You are a boss! It is who you have always been. You showed me how to take hold of your dreams and soar higher than the galaxy will allow! I am so inspired by you everyday and you having the courage to live your dreams gives me the faith to pursue my own!

To my UCLA family—Gene, Michael, Tr'Vel, Elliot, Michael, Matthew, Taylor, Bineh, Chelsea, Landy, Prince, Emma, and Gloria,—I thank you immensely for your impact on how I view scholarship and community. Melissa and Nunu, thank you for your incredible feedback and insight on my research. To Michael and Trisden, thank you for showing me how to be an upstanding Black man who is seeded in Black love, both communally and personally.

To my BGSA crew, Elda, Izzy, Audrey, Leon, Christina, Jerikka, and Sonya, thank you for the time you put in making UCLA incredible for all Black Graduate students. Your legacy and impact on Black Bruins is timeless and untouchable. Thank you for being a part of my journey of growth as a leader and always having my back as well as being a covering for Black Graduate students all over UCLA.

Sonya, you have always been a superstar to me! I have no idea where all of your energy and ability to execute so flawlessly comes from but to say you have been an inspiration to me would be a gross understatement. Thank you for showing me how to dominate life and to be fearless, positive, and powerful with so much grace. I love you and am so thankful God allowed me to witness your greatness.

Much love to my HEOC family, whether it was Julio, Justin, Kat, Annie, Ana, Daisy, Julia, Noel, Trevor, Passion, Fernando, Reuben, Amrik, Cynthia, Chantra, Nick, Michelle, Daniel, Channel, Chantal, Daniel, or Dr. Johnson. All of you exhibited amazing critical thought and pushed me to new bounds in the classroom. To my Shady 7 crew, Daniela, Shan, Cymone, Tim, Bernard, and Kiana—you all loved me and were a support system for me when I was at war with myself. Thank you all for pushing me beyond my bounds and showing me what family within a program can look like. Kiana, thank you for being one of the best friends someone could ever ask for. Thank you for understanding me completely and for all of your support during the dissertation process. Thank you for all the honest feedback and for pushing me and letting me vent to you when I did not have the capacity to face all this world of academia threw at me. I would not want to do this journey without you!

To my cohort mates Alex, Gabi, Nadeeka, and Audrey, you all have been with me since the genesis of the journey! We have watched each other grow and blossom through all the trials and tribulations of life and academia and we are all emerging as champions. Thank you all for raising the bar for me on what love, scholarship, professionalism, and humility look like. Thank you for being my irons.

Audrey, what can I say! You are my day one. You have been through the fire and the storm with me these whole 5 years! We have been through so much together and you have treated me

like a sister. You have held me accountable as a scholar and as your brother and I am truly a better Black man because of your existence. Every day I interact with you I see what it looks like for Black scholars to make their ancestors proud. I love you dearly and wouldn't trade our time together for the world!

Dr. Allen, Dr. Harris, Dr. Howard, and Dr. Brown I want to acknowledge you all as my incredible committee for all of your support over the years and for being my academic inspirations! I am proud to be a part of your legacy and hope my work will make you proud. Thank you for seeing me, hearing me, and sharpening me.

This is only a fraction of the people who have contributed to my journey in academia, but I do thank everyone mentioned here and remembered in my heart for your contribution to my growth, my success, and this degree.

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Chapter One: Introduction & Theoretical Framework

Background

According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), only 230 of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police, meaning about three of four go unreported. According to RAINN the chance of becoming a rape survivor is three times as likely for an 18- to 24-year-old college female student, compared to all women. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, rape is defined as, "the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with anybody part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim." Rape is also discussed via the use of phrases such as 'rape culture' and 'rape myths,' both of which are important terms to understand as sexual violence is discussed in greater detail.

Scholars define rape culture as, "environments that support beliefs conducive to rape and increase risk factors related to sexual violence" (Burnett, et al., 2009). Rape myths are a crucial component of rape culture, as they are somewhat commonly held or occurring social beliefs which "deny or minimize victim injury or blame the victims for their own victimization" (Carmody & Washington, 2001). Examples of rape myths include, "rape is about sex," "victims of rape deserve to be raped because of their appearance or their neglect of safety issues," "individuals often make false reports based on revenge," and "only strangers lurking in dark alleys commit sexual assaults" (Lee & Jordan, 2014). Studies show when undergraduate students hold a higher belief in rape myths, if sexually violated or assaulted, they are more likely to place blame on themselves than on the perpetrator for assaulting them (Zinzow & Thompson, 2011). This could explain why as little as two percent of collegiate women who experience rape report those instances to law enforcement (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003). While these

concepts and statistics regarding rape for all collegiate women are important, this project explicitly focuses on how these elements impact Black communities.

Problem Statement

According to the organization, End Rape on Campus's official website, white women who account for 80 percent of rapes reported and have lower rates of rape prevalence compared to women of color—including Black, mixed-race, and American Indian/Alaska Native women (Cantor et al., 2015). Research has also shown significant societal bias against Black women who survive sexual assault. In one study, researchers asked collegiate students their beliefs regarding a hypothetical scenario regarding rape. When the survivor of the hypothetical rape was a Black woman, participants were less likely to, "define the incident as date rape, to believe the survivor should report the crime to the police, or to hold the perpetrator accountable" (Foley, et al., 1995). In addition, the same study found Black survivors were judged as less trustworthy and more to blame for their victimization than their white counterparts, regardless of the race of the perpetrator. Thus, Black collegiate women have a unique experience of navigating rape and rape culture.

Studies have also confirmed when presenting Black men with rape myths, some Black male participants believed the myths. These myths include rape only happening as an impulsive act instead of being premeditated criminal behavior, the idea women cannot be forced to experience sexual activity against their will, and women often falsely accuse males of rape. (Giacopassi & Dull, 1986). Research also shows both Black men and Black women are more likely to subscribe to victim-blaming narratives than their white counterparts. Studies have shown Black women are more often blamed for the rapes they endure compared to white women (Foley & Varelas, 1998). Well-known historical narratives, such as the death of Emmett Till (a

young Black man falsely accused of addressing a white woman and who was viciously murdered by white men) may still echo in their minds (Tyson & Wood, 2018). Even more recent and well-publicized stories like those of the Central Park Five (five young Black men wrongly accused of raping a white woman) may linger in people's thought processes and make them defensive about believing rape allegations made against other Black men (Beardsley & Teresa, 2017). Sexual assault has differing and distinctive effects on Black men and Black women (and their relationship to one another) than it does in other ethnic groups, as seen by Black women being scrutinized as rape survivors and Black men being wrongfully, yet commonly, accused of rape.

Significance

Studies show the majority of rapes are intra-racial (Koch, 1995; Wheeler & George, 2001). Research suggests some Black men believe women falsely accuse men of rape (Giacopassi & Dull, 1986). This puts Black women at risk of not being believed by members of their own racial groups when they disclose being raped. However, it has been decades since Black men have been formally surveyed about their perceptions of rape culture and how those perceptions impact Black women specifically (Giacopassi & Dull, 1986). This study presents a snapshot of Black men's perceptions concerning rape allegations made by Black women against other Black men and gives higher education institutions insight for policies and practices which can be put in place. Furthermore, perceptions Black men have about rape allegations ultimately impact Black women, so findings from this study can inform policies and practices which shape Black women's disclosure of rape on a college campus. This study forces higher education institutions to consider rape allegations and disclosures as entities which are not race-neutral and figure out ways to address how sexual violence impacts specific racially minoritized groups, specifically Black students. Next, the theories used to frame this research will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality Overview

One effective way to approach this issue is through the lens of intersectionality. Intersectionality represents the ways oppressions of one's multiple identities simultaneously impact them. Legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) coined the term. Intersectionality is one tenant of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which Crenshaw is also one of the founders of, and explores the multiple ways race is embedded in society. CRT, however, originally focused on the numerous ways race was embedded in legal studies. This is because CRT started as an expansion of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which examines how the legal system, as well as the field of legal studies, does not take class into account in its discussions regarding the law. This led Crenshaw and her peers to consider how race was also missing from conversations and scholarship in legal studies. Today, CRT has also been adopted in the field of higher education, and its enets are used to unpack the ways race are embedded in education (Culp, Harris, McCristal-Culp, & Valdes, 2011). What CLS and CRT have in common is their focus on unveiling, complicating, and invalidating neutrality in laws by highlighting underlying concepts such as race and class. Whether addressing race or class, both CRT and CLS challenge scholars to look deeper than literature to find evidence of injustice which is not always explicitly mentioned. Although the theories intersectionality come from have been established, it is important to consider the ways the work of intersectionality existed even before the formation of CLS or CRT.

When Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, she centered Black women in her use of the phrase and in practical examples of intersectionality. Her scholarship also illuminates the Combahee River Collective, which consisted of Black feminists who, in 1977, outlined what intersectionality was and how it played a role in the liberation, or lack thereof, of Black women.

The Combahee River Collective centered their Black womanhood, since it was often erased from or forced into the margins of justice based on race and sex. Members of the collective discuss how feminism in America prioritizes the emancipation of white women while erasing Black women, and how racial justice in America really revolves around the freedom of Black males at the expense of Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1977).

Scholars Jessica Harris and Lori Patton (2018) note scholars and researchers do not use or apply intersectionality in the ways it was intended. One of the biggest examples they offer is scholars and researchers fail to explicitly mention the type of intersectionality used and cited in their work (Harris & Patton, 2018). This is problematic given Crenshaw uses three types of intersectionality to explain the specific experiences of Black women because of their unique positionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality explores how the location of Black women at the intersection of race and gender makes their actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different from white women. Political intersectionality examines how both feminist and antiracist politics have, paradoxically, often helped to marginalize the issue of violence against Black women. Finally, representational intersectionality is centered around the cultural construction of Black women through media (Crenshaw 1989, 1991).

All three forms of intersectionality are relevant to this study. Structural intersectionality exists for Black women because there are no popularized national policies which address sexual violence through the lens of race and sex (McMahon & Stapleton, 2018). This means there are limited resources in higher education policies and support services, like counseling, which address how sexual assault allegations uniquely impact Black women (Mays & Ghavami, 2018). Political intersectionality is relevant because Black women could be pressured to not believe in

allegations against Black men who are accused of sexual violence to uphold a positive image of the Black community. Crenshaw notes the political intersectionality illuminates how the legal system, as well as anti-racist movements, create this tension for Black women through which they are forced to center their efforts of liberation on causes which prioritize the plights of Black men (Crenshaw 1989, 1991). Representational intersectionality is also applicable because while Black men's narrative of being falsely accused of rape has been popularized and disseminated over time, Black women's history of not being "believable" survivors of sexual assault has been erased or invalidated (King, 2018). While intersectionality gives a broad view of the implications Black women face in trying to find justice for themselves as it relates to sexual violence, Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory explains the potential repercussions of Black men's doubt of rape allegations on Black women.

Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory Overview

Dr. Jennifer M. Gomez asserts Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory (CBTT), "proposes intra-racial trauma in ethnic minority populations includes a cultural betrayal, which contributes to outcomes, such as symptoms of PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder; posttraumatic stress symptoms [PTSS]), dissociation, and (intra)cultural pressure (Gomez, 2019)." (2019). This theory states people belonging to similar groups (e.g., same racial group), develop a sense of trust and solidarity amongst each other based on the shared understanding and meanings within that group. Therefore, people within this group are supposed to be able to lean on each other for support to buffer the external societal trauma they experience due to discrimination toward their culture. For example, a Black woman who experiences racism might confide in a Black man about the experience because the shared, cultural belief is since the man belongs to the same racial group, he will understand and validate the racial discrimination experienced by the

woman. However, if a Black woman tells a Black man she has been sexually assaulted and is dismissed or invalidated by him cultural betrayal has taken place. This is because if Black men can understand the pain Black women deal with on a racial level, they should also be able to understand the plight Black women face as a woman. When the oppression Black women face due to any part of their identity is ignored, it stops their Black womanhood from being fairly seen and understood.

When betrayals happen within a cultural group, CBTT is activated. Studies show within-group sexual trauma has had a disproportionate impact on minorities, leading to outcomes like depression (Bent-Goodley, 2001). The disproportionate impact is due to survivors of sexual trauma also feeling they have been betrayed by someone in their culture, thus adding to the trauma they face from society and the trauma of the act of sexual violence. Furthermore, Gomez (2019) also mentions intracultural pressure, which has similar elements to racial loyalty. She describes it as a process of intentional self-sacrificing for the benefit of the larger minority group (Bent-Goodley, 2001). She also references how this phenomenon has immediate results for Black women as it relates to sexual violence. In her article explaining what CBTT is, Gomez discusses how in 2014 the president of an HBCU demanded Black women who experienced sexual assault stay quiet about it to protect the image of Black men (Savali, 2014).

These theories—intersectionality and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory, help unravel the deeper meaning behind Black collegiate men's perceptions of rape allegations in general as well as those made by Black women accusing Black men. Intersectionality allows for an analysis of Black men's perceptions of rape allegations against Black men and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory explores the potential consequences of those perceptions on Black women. The hope is

occurrence of a dual centering, with one focal point being Black men as victims of criminalization and another being Black women as survivors of sexual violence.

Figure 1

Intra-racial Rape Allegation Analyses

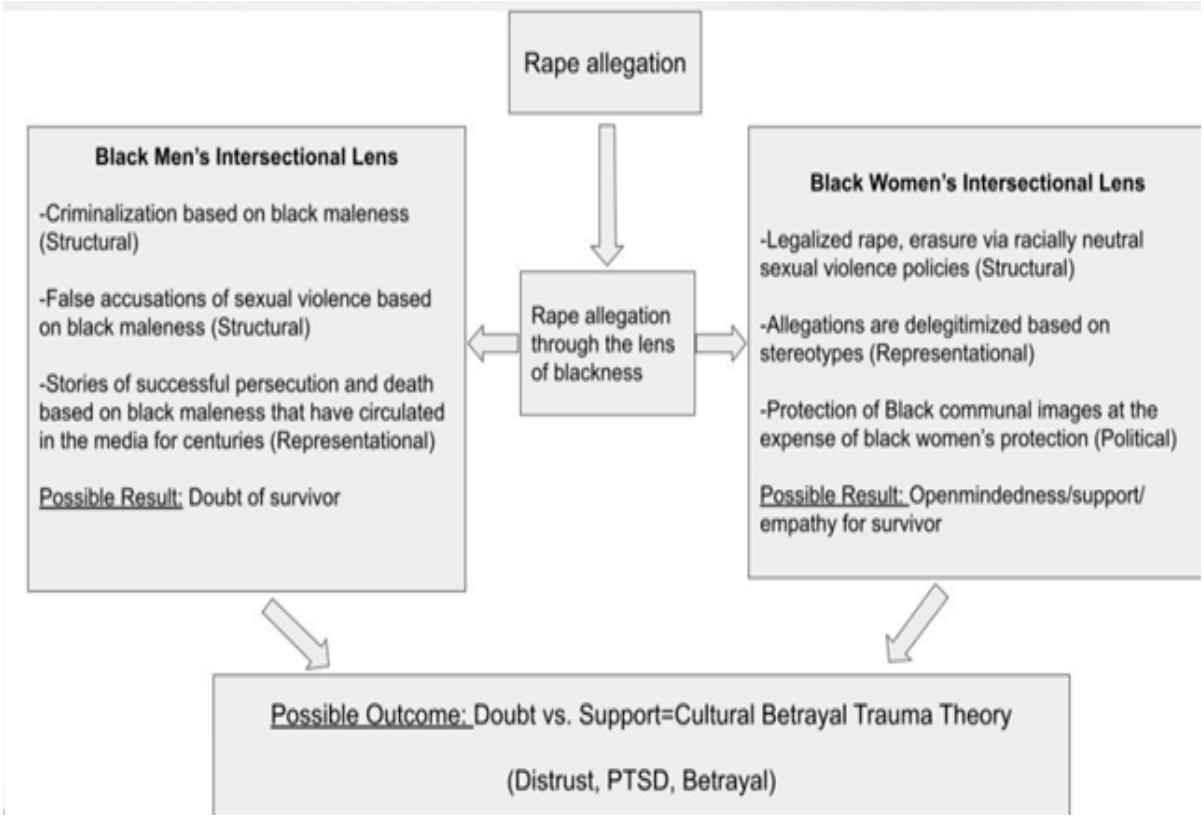


Figure 1 is a visual representation of the interconnected frameworks of intersectionality and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory. For Black men and women, there is a lens of intersectionality they may view rape allegations through. Some Black men may consider the history of false claims made against them as a population, how they are constantly criminalized without sound reason, and the dangers of being unjustly accused but successfully persecuted. If any of these occurs, it could cause Black men to delegitimize claims of rape made against other Black men. However, Black women are also going through an intersectional experience,

understanding their disclosure of rape is not always validated because of a history of sanctioned sexual violence against them, as well as a historical experience of being dismissed communally and institutionally when violence is enacted upon them. Therefore, Black men may doubt rape allegations are legitimate and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory may be the result for Black women when such allegations are made by other Black women. This combined theory model is useful for understanding Black men's possible perceptions of rape allegations made against Black men as well as the consequences those perceptions may have on Black women. Figure 1 represents how Black men's perceptions are shaped via a history of being hyper-sexualized and criminalized.

Summary

Intersectionality and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory are the foundations framing the perceptions of participants for this study. Intersectionality shows how Black men and Black women are impacted by sexual violence based on the intersections of their racialized and gendered oppression. Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory explores the possibility of Black men's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence being harmful to Black women. Understanding both intersectionality and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory allows the analyses of Black men's perceptions to be explored through race and sex. The theories will thoroughly examine why these perceptions exist as well as their implications in nuanced entirety.

Exploration of literature strengthens the foundation of these theories. Analysis of the literature will demonstrate historical development of the classification of Black men as sexual misfits as well as the resulting legal repercussions. The literature will also explore how the historical mislabeling of Black men as sexual deviants has created a stigma around Black women who experience sexual violence and look for support when they disclose information.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature illuminates the international and domestic history of Black men being perceived as sexually superior beings when compared to other races of men, and how this stereotype evolved into Black men being labeled as sexual deviants in the American South. It also presents multiple instances in history when this labeling led to false accusations of Black men and their persecution/prosecution for rape. Second, it examines the multiple ways Black women's experiences of sexual assault have been and continue to be erased and invalidated by policies, collegiate counselors/therapist, law enforcement, and Black communities based on their Blackness and their womanhood. By exploring historical perceptions of Black men as sexual deviants alongside the reality of Black women's de-legitimization as victims of rape, I illuminated the relevance and necessity of this study.

Black men's History with Sexual Violence

Black Men's History of Sexual Violence Criminalization

Black men have been relentlessly linked to sensuality and sexuality for centuries (Baker,1998). Scholars suggest one of the ways this linking began occurred in Ancient Rome. Africans, usually Ethiopians, were called upon by Egyptians to have sex with their virgin brides. They were requested for this act because in those times there were widespread taboos which associated blood with danger and Egyptians believed having sex with their virgin brides would produce blood. This ritual created a belief Black men possessed incredible sexual powers. The reputation of these Africans, also known as "Keys" spread to Rome when they conquered Egypt and North Africa, and then spread to Europe when Rome fell, before ultimately finding its way to parts of the American South during chattel slavery (Braxton, 1973). Before discussing the

implications of Black men's perceived sexual prowess in America, it is important to understand how these perceptions were rationalized in Europe.

The term "race" was used as a form of classification, interchangeable with words like nation, variety, stock, or type. This concept of human categorization was based on the belief biological differences between groups of people were real and scientific. By the 17th century, the English elite had imposed the term "savage" on the Irish. This term was used to paint the Irish as lazy, wicked, drawn to crime, wild, and much worse. By labeling Irish people this way, the English elite could effectively dehumanize them and justify any form of discrimination they chose to inflict on them. These same tactics and terms were used to describe Black and Native American people as well, especially the term savage (Baker, 1998).

Popularized use of the term "savages" was just one piece of a complicated phenomenon known as sexualized racism. This racism uses sexualization as another tool of oppression to subjugate a minoritized group to violence. Black men in America were labeled savages to align with the economic and social arrangements of the privileged white class (Krisberg, 1975). These notions were used to uphold oppressive legal structures which were invaluable to the hegemony of the white ruling class (Quinney, 1973). Some scholars believe whites have a fascination with Black men as sexual warriors with large genitalia because of their own self-inducted sexual anxieties and fantasies (Hernton, 1965; Sagarin, 1974).

However, some scholars believe the portrayal of the Black man as an overly aggressive sexual being was an effort to make him seem undesirable. Both beliefs aid in the justification of oppressive practices against Black men (Montagu, 1945). Another element of sexualized racism against the Black man involved the white southern woman. Scholars suggest white slave-owning men created a myth of the southern white woman as pure and someone to be idolized. A

mentality known as the "mind of the South" was in effect (Cash, 1941). This equated the white woman with the South, considering them as precious as jewels and as heavenly as goddesses. Therefore, any attack on her was perceived as an attack on the entire Southern region itself (Friedman, 1970). Unfortunately, this image of Southern white women as purity personified became more popularized, and the assumption held since white men perceived white women in this way, they inferred those Black men exalted white women to an even higher level of sexual desire than Black women. However, whites believed Black men could not appreciate a white woman on an intellectual or spiritual level, but could only admire her sexually, which reaffirmed Black men's projected savage-like persona (Baughman, 1966).

White women were socialized with this mindset of self-purity and grew to accept it as reality. The culture of the South ingrained in white women the idea of Black men as sexually superior to white men (Hernton, 1965). This created an interesting dilemma for white men because they had to learn how to control Black men's perceived sexual prowess and the white woman's chastity and sexual curiosity. They feared white women would find themselves attracted to Black men because of the latter's perceived sexual superiority (Braxton, 1973; Wood, 1969). One scholar describes the results of this phenomenon brilliantly: "from slavery onward, the Black man's fortune was inextricably and historically linked to the white woman's reputation for chastity (Brownmiller, 1975)." This mentality was not only actualized in the lived experiences of Black people during slavery but was also adapted for the big screen decades after chattel slavery had ended. This mentality had real-life consequences as white women—in the South and across the country—normalized lying about being raped by Black men. In some cases, white women would willingly sleep with Black men and then accuse them of rape out of social embarrassment (Wells-Barnett, 2019).

The U.S. mentality about the savagery of Black men and the purity of white women was adapted for the big screen through the movie, *Birth of a Nation*. Scholars have written about the cultural impact the film unleashed when it was shown in 1915. It paints the Ku Klux Klan as a group of heroes that save a "pure" white southern woman from the clutches of a Black man (who was a white actor dressed in Black face) who is portrayed as a hyper-sexual, dangerous savage who cannot control his impulses. Then President Woodrow Wilson infamously stated, "It's like writing history with lightning. My only regret is that it is all so terribly true (Benbow, 2010)." Even though *Birth of a Nation* was not the first film to be shown in theaters, it was comprised of many other film industry firsts. It was the first movie to be shown to the judges for the Supreme Court, members of Congress, and millions of Americans. The promotion style used to advertise this movie is standard for how the movie industry operates today. In many ways, it was a blockbuster— one of the nation's first. This film, as well as influencers like President Wilson, normalized the perceived notion of Black men as savages trying to sexually terrorize white women (Stokes, 2007).

Black Men's Criminal Injustice Narratives

Unfortunately, *Birth of a Nation* is not where Black men being normalized as violent and hyper-sexualized savages stopped. Throughout the decades since the film's release, there have been numerous cases of Black men being portrayed as criminals and wrongly prosecuted for it in real life beyond the movie screen. A handful of these stories will be discussed to contextualize the national habit of Black men being falsely accused of committing rape.

George Stinney, Jr.: George Stinney, Jr. was an 11-year-old boy falsely charged with the murders of eleven-year-old Betty June Binnicker and eight-year-old Mary Emma Thames. The bodies of Binnicker and Thames were found on March 25, 1944, in Alcolu, South Carolina. Both

appeared to have been bludgeoned to death by their attacker, leaving their skulls caved in from several crushing blows by an unknown instrument. They had asked George Stinney Jr.'s family earlier that day if they knew of places to pick wildflowers. This interaction was used to wrongfully incriminate Stinney and on April 24th of the same year, he was rushed into court and a jury of 12 local white men found him guilty of murdering Binnicker and Thames after less than 20 minutes of deliberation. He was rushed to trial quickly to avoid interference from advocacy groups like the NAACP. His defense attorney, Charles Plowden, called no witnesses on Stinney's behalf, decided an appeal was not necessary, and refused to cross-examine witnesses for the prosecution. Furthermore, Plowden was a tax attorney. On Friday, June 16, 1944, Stinney was executed via electrocution, as 2,400 volts of electricity surged through his 95-pound body. His case was vacated by South Carolina Judge Carmen Mullen on December 17, 2014 (Morse, 2015). Stinney is the youngest person to be executed on death row. Furthermore, he was part of a systemic southern culture of lynching which allowed for the murder of Black people, primarily men, to be facilitated through racist court processes whichwere performative in seeking justice. His story is one of many but is an early symbol of Black men being attached to hyper-criminality even when they are innocent.

Emmett Till: Till, a 14-year-old Black boy accused of talking to a white woman was then viciously murdered in Mississippi in 1955. Till allegedly flirted with Roy Bryant's wife Carolyn at a small grocery store which he and J.W. Milam owned. Bryant and Milam attacked Till, shot him, and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie River. Till's body was beaten so viciously his mother held an open casket public funeral and allowed the Black press to publish photographs of Till's corpse to showcase the impact of the brutality of racism being placed upon Black people for the rest of the United States and the world. These photos added a spark to the Civil Rights

Movement. However, Bryant and Milam were tried and acquitted for the murder (Wood & Tyson, 2018). Six decades later, Carolyn recanted her story, proving Emmett Till was innocent (Pérez-Peña, 2017).

The Exonerated 5*:* Another case of Black males being falsely accused involves the Exonerated 5. On April 19, 1989, Trisha Meil—a 28-year-old white woman—was brutally beaten, raped, and left for dead while going for a nighttime jog in New York City's Central Park. Five teenagers, four Black and one Latino—Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Yusef Salaam, Raymond Santana, and Korey Wise—were arrested and interrogated even though there were no witnesses or physical evidence to link them to the crime. McCray, Salaam, and Santana were tried together in August 1990. Richardson and Wise were tried together in December 1990. They were all found guilty of myriad charges which included rape, attempted murder, assault, robbery, and rioting. In 2002, a confession from the actual perpetrator, Matias Reyes, supported by DNA evidence, convinced the State to set aside the convictions of the original five defendants (Beardsley & Teresa, 2017).

Scottsboro Boys: There is also the story of the Scottsboro boys, nine Black men in Alabama who were wrongfully accused by white women of gang rape (Linder, 2007). On March 25, 1931, a stone-throwing fight between Black and white youths on a train to Memphis resulted in nine Black men being falsely accused of raping two white women. Even though one of the women admitted the two had never been attacked or spoken to the men and only made up the charge to avoid moral charges of adultery, juries still chose to convict the boys of murder. Years later, only four out of the nine boys were released from prison after serving time (Linder, 1999).

Youngest Murderers: The Huffington Post detailed how Elijah Henderson (age eight) and Romar Gipson (age seven) were coerced to confess to the murder of an 11-year-old girl named

Ryan Harris in Chicago in 1998. A month after the arrest of the two boys, the Illinois crime lab reported finding semen on Harris's undergarments. However, Henderson and Gipson could not have produced the semen because they were prepubescent boys. Eventually the evidence was linked to a serial rapist who was 29 years old. (Warden, 2011).

Katie Robb and Four Black Men: One might argue the stories detailed above did not happen recently enough to have merit in the 21st century. Unfortunately, there are 21st-century stories about Black men on college campuses being falsely accused of sexual assault. One study focused on student reactions to a woman known as Katie Robb lying about how she had been kidnapped and raped by four Black men at Iowa State University on August 28, 2001. Authorities had very high suspicions Robb's story was incorrect but still allowed this false story about four Black male rapists to be circulated in *Iowa State Daily*, *Ames Tribune*, and regional television news and radio programming (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007). Merely two days later on August 30, 2001, Robb admitted she had lied about the sexual assault.

These stories all took place in different states and decades, but they all share the on-trend perception of Black men as inherent sexual predators and deviants. The stories give a publicized and documented account of Black men being falsely accused and persecuted for sexual violence because of their Blackness. This phenomenon shows how often Black men are the scapegoats for crimes of violence, so much so there have been multiple cases of white people accusing Black men of murders and rapes the accusers themselves or another white person committed (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007). If Black communities are witnessing these stories of unwarranted persecution of Black boys and men as rapists happening across different decades and states (and they have been and are), rape allegations from any woman, may be met with doubt. This may in

turn disproportionately impact Black women who survive sexual assault due to most acts of sexual violence taking place within the same race (Koch, 1995; Wheeler & George, 2001).

Gaps in Literature

The impact these publicized narratives have on Black collegiate men's perception of sexual violence has been studied. A 2019 article was published detailing how Black college males attending predominantly white colleges viewed sexual violence through a racial and cultural lens. Black men feel they are perceived as inherently dangerous or sexually deviant, just as their ancestors were. They cite not only America's wrongful portrayal of Black men as a proverbial sexual menace, but also Black men's assumed criminality and guilt as the motivators behind their beliefs (Zounlome, Wong, Klann, & David, 2019).

One study, examining the experiences of 36 Black male students attending seven 'elite' historically White Research I institutions revealed Black collegiate men feel they are victims of hypervisibility and hyper surveillance. These men reported "stereotyping and increased surveillance by police on and off-campus." They also reported "fitting the description' of illegitimate members of the campus community" (Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry & Allen, 2016). These feelings led to psychological stress responses and racial battle fatigue. The aforementioned study, while centering Black men's experiences and perceptions, does little to center the impact of those perceptions on Black women. This study allowed Black men to consider their doubt as a two-edged sword, as something they have a right to wield but also a weapon which can cause harm to Black women who also have a uniquely devasting history regarding rape allegations.

Black Women's History with Sexual Violence

Enslaved Black Women: A Historical Analysis

Black women have a very specific and documented history with rape. Raping an enslaved adult was not considered a crime until 1861when a Georgia statute expanded the definition of rape to include victims both enslaved and free (Bardaglio, 1965). Furthermore, in some states, white women were specifically centered as legitimate victims of sexual violence. For example, the revised statutes of Kentucky, approved and adopted by the General Assembly, 1851 and 1852, and in force from July 1, 1852 stated, "whoever shall unlawfully and carnally know any white woman [emphasis added], against her will or consent, or by force, or whilst she is insensible, shall be guilty of rape" (Stanton, 1867). Historians believe at least 58 percent of enslaved Black women between the ages of 15 and 30 were sexually assaulted by White men (Sommerville, 2004). This history is only one part of Black women being viewed as incapable of victimhood as it relates to sexual violence. There are, however, other ways they were viewed as incapable of being victims of violence in general, much less sexual violence.

Black Womanhood Dismissed

Black enslaved women were not viewed as legitimate victims of violence but even Black women who were not enslaved were treated differently than their white women counterparts. In 20th-century Georgia, Black women and white women were given drastically different punishments for crimes. Usually men in "lower ranking groups" would perform hard physical labor in fields like agriculture, construction, and mining. Conversely, women were funneled into domestic service, performing "caring" labor for their social superiors." However, incarcerated Black women were not seen as women, but "beings" built to endure hard labor. This is reflected in the differences in labor between incarcerated Black women and incarcerated white women. Between the years of 1908 and 1938 only four white women were sentenced to Georgia's misdemeanor chain gangs, compared with nearly 2,000 Black women (Hayley, 2013). These

structures continued to emphasize the idea of Black women being seen as beings who are tougher, and more tolerant of pain and painful conditions than their white counterparts. Such constructs allow space for the delegitimization of violence against Black women and sets the stage for their dismissal when they disclose instances of brutality against them.

Higher Education's Betrayal of Black Women

Higher education institutions have a troubled history as it relates to Black women and sexual violence. Unfortunately, many male students during the 19th century, presumably white, raped the enslaved women, presumably Black women, who catered to their everyday needs. Sexual violence was routine but not age specific; girls as young as 12 were violently attacked and sexually assaulted (Zehmer, Sewell, & Johnston, 2019). The University of Virginia for example, which former United States President Thomas Jefferson prided himself in creating/founding, was expensive and many students could only afford to attend the school because they were the kids of wealthy plantation owners. Unfortunately, this meant young men who were used to terrorizing and assaulting slaves brought this mentality to campus and enslaved people who lived and/or worked on the grounds of the institution and in the local surrounding areas suffered for it. These acts of terror would often go unchecked, thus setting a precedent for Black women to distrust institutions, fearing their attackers would face no repercussions for heinous acts against them (Natanson, 2019).

Disclosure, Doubt, and the Trust of Black Women

While Black men's perceptions about sexual violence are important for this study, it is also critical to understand the literature regarding the results concerning Black women's disclosure of being raped. Studies show traditionally the medical and criminal justice communities, as well as victim advocacy organizations, independently serve sexual assault

survivors as opposed to coordinating with one another (Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith & Marks 2010). However, because these organizations were working independently from one another, it led to Black women receiving disjointed responses and services (Martin, 2005). Studies also show Black women dealt with secondary revictimization by mental health professionals and law enforcement when they did report instances of sexual assault. Secondary revictimization in this case signifies, ‘‘victim-blaming attitudes, behaviors, and practices engaged in by community service providers, which result in additional trauma for the rape survivor’’ (Campbell & Raja, 1999). Being on the receiving end of these practices causes Black women to distrust the institutions which are supposed to be resources for them to navigate instances of sexual assault. This reveals how issues within structural strategies to help Black women, discourage and displace Black women.

Examples of erasure also occur on the national level when it comes to strategies to help reduce rape and rape culture. For example, in 2014 the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault released its first report titled *Not Alone*. Its ultimate goals were to address the ineffective institutional responses to sexual assault on college campuses (Wooten, 2016). A key detail of this report is centered around people on college campuses who are trained to counsel women who have been assaulted not engaging in behavior which blames the victim for being sexually assaulted. While victim-blaming is mentioned in the report and strongly discouraged, there is no explicit discussion of victim-blaming rooted in racism. In other words, even trained professionals may unknowingly blame Black women for being sexually assaulted or abused based on their preconceived notions about Black women (Wooten, 2016). Furthermore, this policy-based suggestion (of not victim-blaming) erases Black collegiate women from the strategies regarding rape and rape culture due to their Black womanhood. This leads to students

who are also Black women having concerns over mandatory reporting policies due to a lack of trust mandatory reporters will be able to evaluate a situation without negatively judging Black women based on conscious or unconscious bias (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017).

Black women may still find it challenging to report their rape experiences in higher education, as seen by the controversy surrounding a documentary at Harvard Law School. In *Hunting Ground*, a Black Harvard law school student named Brandon Winston is accused of raping a Black woman, Kamilah Willingham. Many Harvard law professors signed a statement condemning the film which was shaming Brandon Winston, although he was convicted of another charge in a related case for which Willingham testified and was subsequently allowed to reenroll and complete law school at Harvard. Janet Halloway, one of the Harvard professors who signed off on the statement stated, "We know that many times the person who gets the false or the inaccurate accusation of sexual wrongdoing will be a person of color, a man of color" (King 2018). This statement prioritizes the social image of this Black male student over the Black woman who accused him, sending a message to Black women they are not survivors who should be believed over Black men at predominantly white institutions. However, the difficulties facing Black women's disclosure are also present at colleges meant to intentionally uplift Black women, such as Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) (Lindquist, Crosby, Barrick, Krebs, & Settles-Reaves, 2016).

Policy Erasure of Black Women

Jessica Harris and Chris Linder discuss erasure in analyzing sexual assault policies at numerous Historically Black Colleges and Universities. They state these policies do not explicitly mention race and how race plays a role in experiences of sexual assault (Harris & Linder, 2017). For example, they mention the implications of Black women reporting a Black

man to the police for sexual assault and the concern Black men will be perceived as violent by the police, or how when Black women experience assault, sometimes the myths and stereotypes about them decrease how significant their assault is assumed to be in the eyes of others (Crenshaw, 1991; Dupont & Sokoloff, 2005). Failing to explicitly mention race serves as another example of how Black women are essentially erased from the sexual assault policies because their specific experiences are not being centered.

The consequences of HBCUs not specifically mentioning Black womanhood in their sexual assault policies become more apparent when solutions are suggested. One HBCU report on sexual assault concluded rape prevention strategies should include components such as more programming dedicated to educating students about alcohol consumption since many cases of reported assault on HBCU campuses were instances of incapacitated rape due to drinking (Krebs, Lindquist, & Barrick, K. 2010). However, while these statistical reports may find this helpful, it does not address the biases which impact Black women. These biases include the history of Black women being portrayed as Jezebels, which are hyper-sexualized deviants who are seen as unrapable because they allegedly always want intimacy, within genres such as hip hop and even within movies and television shows (West, 1995). One women only HBCU even sent out an email discussing a fictional character student/seductress named “Lisa” who tempted the male students at an all-male HBCU nearby (Badejo, 2016). This email discourages this type of behavior. By sending this email the school sends the message if Black women are raped, it is because they are too tempting to male students. These messages alleviate male students from any guilt, or consequence at the expense of the Black women students.

Solidarity

Dr. bell-hooks suggests Black men have learned a certain type of masculinity from white men. Namely, they learned men are the dominant decision-makers in a family and men should have financial and political power over women. She suggests even though there are other ways to express masculinity, Black, enslaved men were socialized to believe freedom of Black people was synonymous to freedom for Black men. This came with the expectation women were to accept this reality and submit to their husbands. However, many Black women activists, such as Anna Julia Cooper and Amy Jacques Garvey, spoke out about equity and solidarity amongst Black men and women during the 1800s. They desired a world where Black women had access to all rights and liberties Black men wanted (hooks, 2004).

Black Women Viewed as Sexual Objects

Unfortunately, Black men have had trouble viewing Black women through an equitable lens. One study focusing on the formation of masculinity at Historically Black Colleges and Universities for students found many Morehouse men used the institutional reputations of the schools around them to stratify the value of women students at those respective schools. One participant stated, “Building a hierarchy among the women in the AUC (Atlanta University Center), with Spelman being your sister, your wife, and then Clark women being, I don’t know, your girlfriend, and then Morris Brown women being at the bottom of the totem pole—being like your jump-off, your object, your sexual play-thing” (Grundy, 2012). Describing women as sexual objects reinforces the stereotype of Black women as Jezebels. The term Jezebel represents the proverbial “seductive, sexually irresponsible, promiscuous” woman (West, 1995). Women who are seen as Jezebels are perceived as either less trustworthy rape survivors or incapable of being raped because of their sexual exploits. Perpetuating this stereotype of Black women as

Jezebels diminishes the legitimacy of rapes Black women have survived. Studies show Black women are feeling the intracultural pressure to not press charges against Black men who assaulted them so much that even non-Black sexual assault advocates can tell there is a trend in Black communities to protect Black men by silencing and discouraging disclosure from Black women. So while Black women protect Black men from legal harm, they simultaneously are being harmed by the very group of people they are protecting. In one study examining rape victim advocates' understanding of rape victims' responses to rape within a cultural context, a social worker even had a client (who identified as a Black woman) say she is just waiting to be assaulted because so many of her family members have experienced sexual assault (Maier, 2008). Intra-community solidarity between Black men and Black women cannot exist if Black women do not trust their own communities enough to disclose to them when they are raped. Even worse, how can Black women approach or trust Black men when Black men rank them on illegitimate value systems, using labels like "jump-off, or plaything"?

Respectability Politics

The results of the study regarding rape victim advocates illuminate respectability politics' role in this issue. Respectability politics, "describes a self-presentation strategy historically adopted by African American women to reject white stereotypes by promoting morality while de-emphasizing sexuality" (Pitcan, Marwick, & Boyd 2018). Respectability politics has been criticized by Black womanists due to a belief promoting morality and de-emphasizing sexuality are not effective ways to prevent racism. Activists such as historical figure Ida B. Wells-Barnett believed anti-Black racism was due to a disdain for Blackness itself and upholding certain "respectable" behaviors would not dissipate the racism which disdain with Blackness produces Hayley, 2016). Furthermore, as it relates to this study, respectability politics can cause Black

communities to only protect and uphold Black men and women who align with socially standard or respectable behaviors. For example, if a Black woman is seen as too sexually expressive, she might be considered unrespectable and therefore of less inherent value than a woman who is conservative and sexually non-expressive. This is problematic because if Black women who are sexually expressive are sexually assaulted, their disclosures of sexual violence may not be believed or even welcomed. Furthermore, even if a woman is not sexually expressive, if she interacts with a man in any way that is not "respectable" (e.g., going over his house at a late hour, having multiple alcoholic drinks with him, etc.) and is raped, her "unrespectable & dishonorable actions" can be used to invalidate her assault. Therefore, respectability politics is a form of harm against Black women and gives them rigid guidelines on how to act, speak, dress, and think in order to be considered valuable.

Gaps in Literature

These studies illuminate the difficulties Black women have and continue to endure around rape disclosure. They show Black women's unique experiences are not understood on a national, communal, or academic level. Furthermore, Black women's disclosures of rape are usually mishandled and not believed. The research suggests it has been quite some time since Black men have been asked to think about how they perceive rape allegations and how they perceive them when issue by Black women. This study sought to engage Black men in those conversations and analyze the implications of their responses.

Summary

Sexual violence has made a unique impact on Black men and Black women. Black men have been connected to hypersexuality for centuries and their racialization, especially in the American South, gave way to American society viewing them as deviants to society. This led to

Black men not only being falsely accused of crimes such as sexual violence but also their wrongful imprisonment and brutalization, and in some cases even murder. Unfortunately, Black men have continued to face these unjust realities and allegations, even in the 21st century.

Black women's history of sexual violence is also unjust and cruel. They were seen and treated as objects, and it was impossible for them to be acknowledged by law as rape survivors for more than 200 years after they were brought as enslaved captives to these lands known as the United States. Higher education has only fortified this reality as Black women were still unprotected as enslaved laborers on college campuses. Even after the Civil Rights Movement, Black women are not seen as legitimate rape survivors or people whose liberation, in some instances, should be accounted for before the safety of Black men. Black women's racialized and gendered experiences with being viewed as valid survivors of assault have been thoroughly diminished at best and erased at worst from policies, even at institutions explicitly created and designed for the success of Black students.

The study is an important contribution to the literature because it afforded Black men an opportunity to critically reflect on how Black women's rape allegations have a unique context and how disbelief in their allegations can be another form of trauma for Black women. It allows the history of false allegations against Black men to be discussed in tandem with the disbelief Black women face when disclosing their instances of sexual violence. Research has shown Black men are aware of society seeing them as sexual deviants and Black women are aware of society seeing them as illegitimate survivors of rape who should not be affirmed. However, the research has not uncovered Black men's thoughts about intra-racial sexual violence in Black communities between Black men and Black women. Research has not unveiled how Black men make sense of sexual assault allegations made between Black people in Black communities and what the

potential reasoning behind those thoughts could be. Research has also not afforded Black men the opportunity to grapple with the implications of their thoughts about intra-racial allegations of sexual violence from Black women. This study seeks to engage these aforementioned topics in hopes to further the conversations, practices, and research on this subject. The details of how this study was conducted are discussed next.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I will be using the qualitative research method. This method is used to understand and explore the meanings individuals assign to human or social problems. This study's research process includes elements such as emerging procedures and questions data which is usually collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from specific to general themes, and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data. The final report of the qualitative method has a less rigid structure. Researchers who engage in this form of inquiry honor a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the nuances of a situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Why Qualitative Methods

Quantitative methods are different from qualitative approaches since they usually test the relationships among variables using instruments such as statistical procedures. This study, however, is only analyzing interview data and simple demographic survey data without using statistical procedures or statistical analysis programming. The goal of this study is to understand the nuances of Black men's perceptions of intra-racial rape allegations issued against Black men by Black women. Due to the researcher's desire to find and explore the complexities of the potential answers to the study's research questions the qualitative research design was the best methodology to secure answers. Therefore, the quantitative research method is not being utilized (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Methodological Approach

This study will utilize the phenomenological approach which uses the experiences of participants to ultimately give the detailed and rich context of a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This differs from the narrative inquiry approach in which researchers utilize

first-person participant accounts to understand how they make sense of their experiences and know the world around them (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Even though the lived experiences of my participants could have impacted their perceptions about intra-racial and sexual violence, the ultimate focus of the study illuminates what impacts these perceptions as opposed to how they manifested.

Instrumentation, Questions, and Context

This study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research interviews pose open-ended and follow-up questions designed to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants'' perceptions, experiences, feelings, opinions, and knowledge (Rosenthal, 2016).

It is crucial to highlight the kind of question sequencing I used for my work and the reasons behind it. I engaged a sequencing method which delays exposing questions concerning sensitive topics being explored in the research (Lune & Berg, 2017). This entailed asking participants questions which help disarm them and make them more comfortable with me as a researcher, followed by questions which gave me the answers I need for my research questions, then followed by a chance for participants to reflect which helped disarm them once more after they answered the research questions.(Grinnell & Unrau, 2005; Trochim, 2005). The interview began by asking students about why they chose to attend Rodan University and their values. This was done to disarm participants and help them develop comfort with me as the interviewer before the other questions were asked. Participants were then asked about their positive and challenging experiences of being Black men on campus as well as their relationship with Black women on campus. These questions served to capture their relationship to Black women and Rodan University at large. The participants were then given a fictional scenario they read to themselves. The hypothetical scenario involves two Black students, one named Myra and one

named Miles. It breaks down what happens when Myra tells Title IX and her university's police department Miles sexually assaulted her. This scenario includes the Title IX office's reactions to Myra's claim as well as how the police ended up categorizing what she reported to them.

After reading the interview participants were then asked their initial feelings concerning any/all aspects of the case, how they felt Title IX staff and the university's police department handled the situation, what restorative justice might look like in handling this case, other Black men's perceptions of the case, and how they believe the race and sex of Miles and Myra impacted the case from their perspective, the perspective of other Black men concerning the case, and of the administration the crime was disclosed to. These questions aimed to illuminate what Black men's perceptions are of rape allegations made against Black men by Black women and what impacts those perceptions.

Locations

Given the very mature and sensitive topics this research explores, I chose to conduct my study on a university campus. Rodan University (a pseudonym) is where I recruited the participants for this study. This university is a white public university on the West Coast of the United States of America.

Recruitment

The recruitment strategy consisted of teaming up with the African American Resource Center at Rodan University. I also teamed up with faculty and staff as well as different professional schools and student organizations. These entities have student access and trust which accelerated my recruitment process. Next, I created virtual and physical flyers for this study using the graphics website Canva. The virtual flyers called for Black male student participants and offered to compensate them for one to 1.5 hours of their time to be interviewed.

The summarized information on the flyers stated the study was seeking Black men who are interested in talking about perceptions of Black men. I worded the blurb this way to make potential participants more comfortable taking part in the interview given the delicate nature of the topic. Given the aforementioned history of Black men being associated with sexual violence, I anticipated potential participants having reservations about signing up for a study which explicitly mentions sexual violence as the focus of the interview. I also sat in on and recruited participants from an undergraduate class which is centered around the experiences of Black men entitled *Black Theory*. This course is designed for and centers on Black men, and I visited a session, during which I informed the students of my research; they were discussing Black men and sexual violence that day. These methods were used to secure the most diverse pool of Black men available at Rodan University. Following this detailing of my recruitment methods, I will break down my recruitment goals for this study and demographic information of the participants.

Participants Recruitment Goals

I designed my study to feature 14 undergraduate participants—all Black men attending Rodan University. I determined 14 participants would give me a sample size which would allow for a more thorough analysis. The participant pool was also capped at 14 due to a lack of resources to properly compensate participants for their participation and having a limited amount of time to conduct in-depth qualitative research. I hoped to recruit Black men with a variety of experiences for this study. For example, including Black men who are activists, athletes, members of Greek letter organizations (Greeks), politically involved, artistically inclined, in different classifications (i.e., freshmen to seniors), from different hometowns, and who consider themselves allies to women and Black women in particular. The reasoning is Black men are not a monolith and the context of who they are and how they spend their time would inevitably color

their perceptions about any part of life, including sexual violence. My survey asks what student organizations potential participants are a part of. I ask this because I hypothesized some Black men believe Black males with institutional capital (those considered star academics, athletes, Greeks, politicians, etc.) are protected from punishments of sexual violence allegations more than those do not hold institutional capital. A method I used in previous research to understand the various differences between my participants was creating a Qualtrics survey which asked them questions about their undergraduate classification (freshman, senior, etc.), major, hometown, religious and political affiliation, and other factors. This method allowed me to analyze data through a more detailed lens which helped complicate the research's findings. Demographic data from the survey will be discussed next, first via individual participant bios followed by a summary of the collective of participants.

Participant Bios

Participant bios are being provided to give context of who each participant is beyond the substance of their answers to research project questions. By providing more information about each participant, the answers gathered from this research project can be analyzed and understood more thoroughly.

Lance: At the time of data collection Lance was a 19-year-old Nigerian student from Carson, California with middle-class parents. One parent’s highest educational attainment was completing some college and the other one earned a high school diploma. Lance is an undeclared humanities major who identifies as an Anglican Christian and Democrat and is unaffiliated with any student organization on campus.

Derrick: At the time of data collection, Derrick was a 22-year-old African American senior from Los Angeles from a middle-class household, whose parents both received a

bachelor's degree or equivalent. He is a linguistics major, identifies as a Christian, identifies as an independent politically, and is affiliated with community service-based organizations.

Robert: At the time of data collection Robert was a 22-year-old African American senior from Ontario California from a middle-class household. One of his parents obtained a high school credential while another completed some college. He is a public affairs major who identifies as a Christian, is liberal politically, and is affiliated with political and Greek-letter organizations.

Lucas: At the time of his interview Lucas was an 18-year-old African American freshman from Eastvale, California coming from an upper-middle-class household. One of his parents obtained a terminal degree or equivalent while the other received an Associate's degree or equivalent. He is a neuroscience major who identifies as a Christian, a Democrat, and not affiliated with campus organizations.

Austin: At the time of the interview Austin was a 21-year-old African American senior from San Bernadino, California from a middle-class household. One of his parents obtained a Bachelor's degree or equivalent while the other completed some college. Austin is a sociology major who identifies as liberal politically and has affiliations with cultural organizations.

Louis: At the time of his interview Louis was a 23-year-old African American sophomore hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, from a low-income household. Both of his parents completed some high school. Louis is a business and economics major, identifies as a Christian religiously, is politically moderate, and is affiliated with ROTC, cultural, and political organizations.

Augustus: At the time of the interview Augustus was a 19-year-old African American sophomore from Palmdale, California and a middle-class household. One of his parents received a master's/professional degree or equivalent while the other received a bachelor's degree or

equivalent. Augustus is a biochemistry major who identifies as Catholic and is affiliated with community service-based organizations.

Tevin: At the time of his interview Tevin was a 20-year-old African American and Salvadorian junior, from Pasadena, California, and raised in a low-income household. Both parents received a high school credential. Tevin is a sociology and African American major who identifies with Black spirituality religiously and is affiliated with political and cultural organizations.

Peter: At the time of his interview Peter was a 19-year-old African American and Filipino sophomore from a lower middle-class household in San Diego, California. One parent received a high school credential while his other parent completed some college. Peter is an undeclared major who religiously identifies as agnostic, has no political affiliations, but is affiliated with Black Greek-letter organizations.

Eli: At the time of the interview Eli was an 18-year-old African American freshman from an upper middle-class household in Carson, California. One of his parents received a master's degree or equivalent while the other completed some college. Eli is a biology major affiliated with community service-based organizations.

Randall: He was a 21-year-old African American senior from a middle-class household in Pasadena, California at the time of his interview. One parent received a bachelor's degree or equivalent while his other parent earned an associate's degree or equivalent. Randall is an International Development Studies major who identifies as a Christian and is affiliated with Greek letter organizations.

Ernest: At the time of his interview Ernest was an 18-year-old Eritrean freshman from Inglewood, California and a lower-middle-class household. Both of his parents completed some

high school. Ernest is an undeclared major who religiously identifies as a Christian and is affiliated with research programs.

Keith: At the time of the interview Keith was a 22-year-old Ethiopian senior from a low-income household in Los Angeles, California. Both parents received a high school credential. Keith is a psychobiology major who identifies as an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religiously, a Democrat politically, and is affiliated with community service-based organizations.

Matthew: At the time of his interview Matthew was a 24-year-old African American from a middle-class household in Los Angeles, California. One of his parents received a master's degree or equivalent while the other received a high school credential. Matthew is an African American studies major. I will now turn to discussing a summary of the survey information.

Survey Summary Information

More than half of the 14 participants were from families classified as coming from middle class ($53,413 - $106,827 household income) and upper middle class ($106,827 - $373,894 household income) households. The biggest group of students in this study are seniors, with six participating. Overall, the academic majors of participants vary. Academic majors included linguistics, neuroscience, sociology, business economics, biochemistry, sociology, African American studies, Biology, International Development Studies, psychobiology, and undeclared. The Christian faith had the biggest representation of the participant pool with eight of the fourteen identifying with some form of Christianity. A substantial portion of the participants did not identify with any political group with six out of 14 claiming their political affiliation was not applicable. Most participants are involved in student organizations with 11 participants confirming involvement with community-based, political, Black Greek-letter,

student government-based, and other types of organizations. Income, academic majors, political affiliation, and student organization involvement offer thorough context for the ultimate findings of this study which are discussed in Chapter 4. Following the summaries of the participant bios, the demographic survey data trends were discussed, and research methods were discussed. Since recruitment goals were also mentioned, it is important to specify what recruitment practices I utilized. Participants were issued $25 via a money transferring service (Venmo, Cashapp, Zelle, etc.) for participating in the survey. Coding instruments will now be discussed.

Coding Instrumentation

This project used inductive coding instead of deductive coding. Inductive coding involves reading data and creating codes as data is analyzed (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2020). Deductive coding involves applying a predetermined set of codes to data (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). This project focused on inductive coding to allow for the emergence of codes from my participant's answers to the protocols (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021).

Dedoose is the analytical tool used for this research project. It is a multi-platform application using text, audio, video, spreadsheet data, images, and more to analyze research. It contains encryption technology to keep the research data secure, operates through a cloud-based system to maintain accessibility to research data at all times, and has a user-friendly interface, making navigation of its functionalities seamless.

All participant answers were analyzed via Dedoose and inductive coding. Dedoose's organizing system efficiently identifies trends. For example, their 3D and packed code clouds find the most prevalent trends within my different codes. It is also very useful in efficiently creating codes and sub-codes from transcript data. Dedoose's other features, such as code application, were also helpful in finding the trends in codes among my different participants.

Coding Cycles

My first round of coding consisted of using Dedoose and engaging in open coding. Open coding includes labeling concepts and developing and defining categories based on their properties and dimensions. This method is often used as one of the initial steps in analyzing data in qualitative research (Khandkar, 2009). My goal was to see what trends arose from the answers my participants gave to the targeted set of protocol questions.

This study's second round of coding consisted of axial coding. Axial coding is needed to investigate the relationships between categories and concepts developed in the open coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I conducted axial coding on Google Sheets, selecting individual words which stood out from the answers to the protocol questions. Using the one-word codes from the answers to the interview questions, I identified themes which connected the different one-word codes. Affective methods of coding— specifically emotional—and evaluation coding were used for this round of coding. Affective coding examines the subjective aspects of human experience (such as conflicts, values, emotions, and judgments). This method was used because participants were asked to discuss their feelings about the hypothetical scenario and give judgements about it. Emotion coding illuminates any feelings participants possibly express and evaluation coding deals with analyzing data focused on judging policies and or programs (Saldaña, 2009). I specifically used these two types of codes because my participants relayed their emotions about the case and stated their evaluations of how the case went, as well as giving their reactions, and predictions of how other Black men would evaluate this case.

Peer Debriefing

I used peer debriefing as a method in this study. In peer debriefing, "a researcher and an impartial peer preplan and conduct extensive discussions about the findings and progress of an

investigation" (Spall, 1998). Peer debriefing supports the credibility and overall trustworthiness of data qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I applied it this research to further address and explain the implications of the findings. Next the concerns and limitations are examined.

Concerns/Limitations

The limitations of this study include regional bias. The study is only taking place at an institution in California so the results from the study may be heavily biased based on regional experiences. Furthermore, 14 participants are not a large enough sample to make conclusive generalizable statements. Another limitation is this study only focuses on Black men; including Black women in the study would have added a valuable perspective. However, as someone who identifies as a Black man, there was a comfort in participants speaking to me which might not be as salient with researchers of other identities who asked them questions of this study's nature. This study is also heteronormative and deals with sexual violence in which men assault women. However, there is a call for research suggestions which address these concerns.

More concerns include how asking a student to think about a hypothetical rape may invoke feelings of severe discomfort or disgust. Furthermore, the hypothetical rape scenario posed during the interviews could have been triggering if the men are survivors of sexual harassment or assault or knew of other people, especially women, who were. To mediate these concerns at the end of the interviews, I offered participants a trigger warning before the interview's start and resources to assist themselves or other students who have experienced these forms of violence after the interview.

Another potential issue here is intersectionality. I am aware intersectionality's origins are centered on addressing the intersecting oppressions of Black women. By using intersectionality in the framework of a study focusing on Black men, I risk not centering the Black women

intersectionality was built to focus on. This is a valid concern. I mediate this by using intersectionality as a necessary theory to most accurately describe the injustices Black women face when they are raped and seek justice. Furthermore, this study is centered around Black men being critically reflective about how their perceptions contribute to the intersectional injustice which Black women who have been raped face. In this way, this study hopes to honor its use of intersectionality, while also acknowledging Black women are the originators and focal point of the theory.

In illuminating how Black men think about rape, some views may have arisen which show or indicate a lack of participants' knowledge about certain aspects of sexual violence. Unfortunately, some readers may read this research and believe Black men are more misinformed about certain aspects of rape than men of other races. This is not the aim of the study or even an idea I as a researcher support or affirm. However, given the historical association society has made between Black men and violent, devious sexual predators and predation, the findings of the study could lead to readers looking at these Black men as supportive of rape (due to any lack of knowledge which may arise in the study from participants). This perception could then possibly serve to frame Black men as more likely to uphold misconceptions about rape. Keeping this risk in mind was and remains critical in acknowledging the communal safety of participants and the marginalized groups they represent. I mitigated this by emphasizing the centuries-old historical patterns of Black men being falsely accused of and punished for rapes. I emphasize the patterns to signify Black men have a history of rape allegations unique to their experience. Therefore, any lack of knowledge about rape myths and rape culture which may appear in this study do not mean Black men are inherently more dangerous than other races or populations of men. Rather, it shows Black men may be

navigating through a different set of considerations regarding rape allegations their other racial counterparts are not. Since the ways the research was conducted have been discussed, it is important to now detail why this research is important to me and how I centered the research.

Positionality

I am a Black man in America who believes race and many other forms of oppression (sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.) are permanent parts of society and can be found in all aspects of society. This includes higher education. I remember hearing about the brutal murders of young Black children like Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice who had done nothing wrong when I was in college and likening it to the murders of innocent Black boys like Emmitt Till. I was angry, sad, fearful, and numb. I chose to apply qualitative research methods because I wanted to center the voices of Black collegiate men who might feel the same way about Black men's safety I did in college: helpless.

However, I also watched Black women support Black men, rally with and for them, and affirm their feelings of fear and anger toward systems which were killing them. I simultaneously witnessed Black men dismiss Black women's concerns about sexual violence happening within Black communities as well. I chose to focus on Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory because I have witnessed the dismissal of Black women's collective pain regarding sexual violence in person. And even though I was a Black man who grew up in a Black community, my introduction to sexual violence did not center on Black women; it centered on white women on major networks like Lifetime Movie Network. Countless stories of white women being survivors were broadcast and it was as if Black women's stories were not relevant. So, I use intersectionality to acknowledge Black women's experiences of being dismissed in Black communities and not acknowledged in women's stories of sexual violence. This negligent form of injustice happens because of the racialized and gendered identities of Black women. Although some may believe it

is not my place to, as a man or male, study sexual violence committed against women, I believe and assert I have a duty as an ally towards women and pro-Black scholar to study and contribute knowledge to topics which have a major impact on the Black community. Conducting research on Black men and women's relationships as they relate to sexual violence may lead to better research and practices which benefit Black women in particular. Finally, as a Black man, it is my responsibility to constantly hold myself and other Black men accountable for any perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence claims. There is always room for our perceptions as Black men to evolve and it should not be the duty of Black women to engage in this work for Black men. Black men should want do to this work to make the world a safer and more affirming place for Black women. This is why my positionality as a Black man leads me to this work.

Summary

This chapter discussed the use of qualitative methods to center the voice of participants. The first set of data collected was survey data which provided the study's demographic information. The survey data revealed most of the participants came from a middle-class economic background, had varying undergraduate majors, had no predominant political background, and were heavily involved in student organizations. Inductive coding was used because codes emerged from the data instead of being made before it was analyzed. The study also utilized a phenomenological approach to illuminate why these perceptions participants have concerning Black intra-racial sexual assault allegations exist. Dedoose was employed as a powerful user-friendly analytical tool to engage research data. Virtual one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 undergraduate participants from a university on the West Coast of the United States called Rodan University. Participants were recruited via social media and email campaigns, my visits to departments and classrooms, and snowball sampling. Before the start of the interview, participants were required to fill out a pre-survey with their

demographic data. During the interview, they were asked to react to a hypothetical scenario. Once data was collected, three rounds of coding commenced. The first round of coding consisted of open coding and the second round was axial coding, using emotional and evaluation elements of affective coding. Once the data was coded and analyzed, I also engaged in peer debriefing in order to increase the credibility of the findings.

There were multiple concerns related to the study including it being conducted at one predominantly white institution on the west coast with only Black men as respondents. The scenario for this study is heteronormative as they detailed in a scenario between two heterosexual individuals and the woman was reporting being assaulted by a man. Each limitation, however, is an opportunity for further research which addresses the gaps in this study. With the research methodology thoroughly explained, it is important to next discuss the findings from the research project.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Research Question 1 "What are Black men's perceptions of intra-racial rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?"

This chapter examines the main perceptions participants had concerning intra-racial sexual assault allegations and what factors impact those perceptions. The first research question, "What are Black men's perceptions of intra-racial rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?" is explored first. The main findings showed Black men understand nuances surrounding rape allegations (such as consent, coercion, victim-blaming, and trauma attached to retelling stories of assault constantly), believed the allegations would split the Black collegiate community at Rodan University, expressed intra-racial rape allegations (irra) are not taken as seriously as interracial rape allegations by Rodan University, and had a sensitivity for Black women in these particular types of cases. The nuanced understanding participants had concerning rape allegations is discussed first.

Nuanced Understanding of Rape Allegations

One of the most prevalent critiques participants had for the university's administration in the scenario was they did not believe the case was taken seriously and thought Rodan University's institutional agents (Title IX and RUPD) handled Myra with insensitivity, asking her to recount her stories many times and penalizing her for every recounting of her story not being exactly the same. Participants also took issue with the administration engaging in victim-blaming Myra, asking her questions such as, "Why didn't you leave?" The participants who took note of those elements show they had a more thorough understanding of the nuances concerning intra-racial and general rape allegations. During his interview, Tevin, the junior from Pasadena, California detailed the lack of seriousness, dismissiveness, numerous requests for Myra retelling her story, and victim-blaming in this quote:

> That Miles didn't even ask Myra refer consent when he even made that move.... that as a black woman like her experience was like dismissed especially along sexual assault and the seriousness of it. Um, I was angry for her like what? Like you asked to recount her story so many times, like you don't know what type of pain or like discomfort or even traumatizing that can be for her. Also too just like her friend telling her, "Why didnt you leave?" That's not healthy.

In this quote, Tevin mentions Rodan University's dismissiveness as it relates to Myra. He shows severe doubt about how seriously administration and other authority figures are taking this case. He also alludes to Title IX not having the proper amount of delicacy towards this case, mentioning how they made her recount her rape multiple times and how they made her feel at fault for her attack by asking her why she didn't leave. Tevin identifies multiple points of critique for Rodan University's institutional agents. I turn now to the ways participants believed intra-racial rape allegations (irra) could split the Black collegiate community apart will be discussed.

Community Split

Participants also believed their peers would think the actions of Miles would have a negative impact on the community. Robert, the senior from Ontario, California articulated this during his interview:

> Come on (man)....like come on. You know what I mean?.....there's only three percent... You making everybody look bad... I mean what happens if the white people here are like, "Hey did you hear about the Black rapist at Rodan?"

This quote shows Robert believes his Black male peers at Rodan University would have concerns non-black communities on campus, especially white ones, will negatively judge all Black students at Rodan University if a Black man raped someone on campus.

One finding was participants believed Miles' actions as a Black man could impact how

other Black men on Rodan University's campus are viewed. While participants could not personally relate to what Miles did, they could see their relationships with Black women on campus being damaged because of the behavior of a fellow Black man on campus. In the quote below Randall, the senior who is an International Development Studies Major, details this dynamic:

> I don't relate to Miles at all, because I would never do anything weird like that. And the only thing I can relate to is that he's a Black man, and I'm Black man. So I don't relate to any of those decisions that he made. …….But in the outcome, the relatability affects the reputation, like I was saying before, if you know, when he gets accused, and he's found guilty of the crime that he committed, that now reflects on other black men on campus, because maybe they knew miles, maybe a lot of people kicked it with Miles, and they didn't think anything was weird about him, or they didn't try and say anything about him or, or maybe even talk to him about some of the situations that he had been going through with women.

Here Randall is concerned the behavior of Miles will reflect poorly on any Black man who might have known him or associated with him. Randall believes Miles sexually assaulting someone may make Black women wonder if his male friends and or associates were aware of, condoned, or even encouraged his behavior.

Another relevant finding was participants believed their peers would think about how small the Black community is at Rodan University and thus would be even more upset about the abuse given it is taking place in the smaller community. Derrick, the Linguistics Major from Los Angeles, California explains how the actions of Miles would have big consequences not only for the Black community at Rodan University, but for Black men in general:

> It's always unfortunate to see situations like that, because Black people in general, are just sort of the representation for other Black people in the entire world to non-black people. But even more so with Black men, since it's a small majority, or a minority rather, on campus. It makes it a lot harder when you're trying to do everything you can to prove that not only yourself is an upstanding man, but that, Black men aren't, you know, "aint shit" and stuff like that.

Derrick believes his peers would worry about the non-black communities at Rodan University viewing or perceiving the Black community in a negative way while also stigmatizing Black men. He also believes his peers think since the Black community is small on Rodan University's campus, Miles' egregious actions would be magnified as well as the consequences for any communities which share his racial/sex identity.

One finding from this theme was participants thought their peers would feel the Black community at Rodan University would be split, with one side supporting Myra and another side supporting Miles. Ernest, the freshman from Inglewood, California, discusses this dynamic more in the quote below:

> I don't know, I feel like it would kind of split the Black men at Rodan in half like, it would be a good amount that's against it [the rape of Myra]. And, you know, his friends might be for or not for it, but they might think that she's lying or exaggerating. So, I definitely could see how it could split up the community. I could definitely also see a scenario where all the men, all the Black men are in solidarity with the woman. So I could definitely see how it like influences them in like different ways.

In this quote, Ernest illuminates the different ways a case like this splits the Black community. He talks about his peers being in solidarity with Myra but also rationalizes Miles

getting support from his friends. This further reinforces the potential split Ernest believes his peers would navigate. With some elements detailing how such a scenario would split the Black collegiate community, I now move to the seriousness of intra-racial rape allegations vs. inter-racial rape allegations.

Many participants believe Miles attacking a Black woman could impact how all Black men on campus are perceived. Randall, discussed the nuance of this dynamic during his interview:

> I think that Myles being Black or being a Black man would cause a chasm. I think that's the word between Black men and Black women, just because now they'd have to open up that dialogue and have those uncomfortable conversations like sexual violence and uncomfortable situations regarding Black men and Black women at Rodan, which can open up a whole can of worms that can now expose others for doing things that they didn't even perceive to be vile or perceived to make others uncomfortable. So, I think just him being a Black man, it's going to affect the reputation of Black men. Like, but that's not to say that it shouldn't. It's just now the Black men on campus now have to put in that extra work to build that relationship back to being as strong as it once was.

Here Randall describes the actions of Miles as serious for intra-racial community morale on campus. He believes his peers could be worried about the behavior of Miles illuminating deeper issues within the Black community as they relate to sexual violence of any sort, with Black men possibly having to see how they contributed to problematic behavior, words, or processes. Thus, Randall believes since Miles, as a Black man, sexually assaulted Myra, a Black woman, the damage this does to the Black communal relations between Black men and Black women on campus could be severe.

Intra-racial vs. Inter-racial

One trend was participants felt the administration would not take cases involving Black students sexually assaulting other Black students seriously. In fact, participants believed the instances of Black men sexually assaulting white women would be taken more seriously by the administration. Derrick explored this discrepancy during his interview:

> I think it [the rape being intra-racial rather than inter-racial] played a factor as well, in terms of not only the victim being a Black person, but also the perpetrator being a Black person, and just sort of the school and the police not taking it as seriously as they would if the woman was white or both individuals were white, I think it sort of led them to not take this seriously, or not taken it as seriously as they should've.

Derrick makes it clear he believes there is a lack of seriousness shown by the police officers and the school in addressing this scenario, and explicitly mentions race as the primary reason for this discriminatory difference in diligence. This illuminates the difference Derrick believes race of the victim and accused perpetrator makes in this case.

Another finding was participants continuously bringing up white women as women who are looked at as not only "damsels in distress" and legitimate victims when it comes to sexual assault, but also being women who have more resources at their disposal which would aid them in getting any rape charges they wanted to file taken seriously by the university's administration. Derrick expanded on how he believes white women are viewed by society below:

> White women, sort of being seen as damsels in distress in any given moment of time, where, if they're in white spaces, and they say something happened to them, most people are going to look at them and have, like, exuberant amount of sympathy for them off the

bat, simply because they're white women. And well, that could be from either other white men, it could be from men of color as well.

In this quote, Derrick discusses white women as validated victims. He believes white women are viewed as legitimate survivors and sympathy for them is societal. Therefore, Derrick believes institutional agents may take white women more seriously than Black women who disclose they have been raped due to white women being given sympathy based on the status of their white womanhood.

Another trend which appeared in this category was participants' belief the administration subscribed to negative stereotypes of Black men and women, with Black men being seen as sexual deviants and savages and Black women being seen as tough and tolerant of pain due to an inherent capacity for it. At his interview, Lance, the 19-year-old student from Carson, California, described this in detail :

I definitely do think that it probably had an influence in the investigation because of like the stereotype that, the pass down hatred of the generational hatred of not even hatred, just the stereotypes that, oh the like Black men are very like over sexual or very aggressive in getting what they want. Just the type of stereotypes that we've been exposed to. And then I didn't mention this for the women part, but Black women are also like, they're probably deemed to be strong. So them probably thinking, oh, Black women they're strong that they carry all this weight that this shouldn't affect them. So it probably was a sort of bias they had as well with these different stereotypes.

Lance not only describes stereotypes he believes are influencing the administration's handling of Myra and Miles in this case, but he also talks about how those stereotypes are connected to perceiving Black men as criminals and Black women as illegitimate survivors of

sexual assault.

Participants also believed their peers would be split on how they perceived the seriousness of this case. For example, one participant believed some Black men on their campus might take the rape case less seriously because the woman accusing Miles was a Black woman instead of a white woman. Lucas, the freshman from Eastvale, California, discusses this more in the quote below:

> That's a tough one. I think it varies a lot. How they might respond to it. I do think that like being a Black woman, maybe they [Black men] might not feel like it is as serious, I think because what first comes to my mind when like you asked that question, is that if that was to happen to a white woman, and a Black man may feel more worried for Miles, for the sexual assaulter. Because there is a long-storied history of many white women accusing Black men of sexual assault.

Lucas re-emphasizes the history of Black men being falsely accused of rape by white women before. He believes the race of Miles would make his peers more concerned about him if the woman was white because of the history of prosecution and punishment Black men face regarding societal assumptions they are inclined to rape white women. Lucas also believes some of his peers may not take the case as seriously if the sexual violence occurs between a Black man and a Black woman. With the seriousness of intra-racial vs. inter-racial rape allegations and their impact discussed, I turn to participants' examination of Black men's specific sensitivity to Black women in intra-racial rape allegations (irra).

Sensitivity Toward Black Women

Another main finding was race of Myra mattered more to participants because she was Black. Many participants had positive relationships with Black women so the idea of a Black woman being harmed made participants more affirming of Myra because they likened it to Black

women in their own lives experiencing sexual violence. In the quote below. Lance details how important Black women are to the Black community:

> Well in the Black community, Black women, like they're the pillars of the Black community. They do a lot for us. They nurture us and take care of us. They do. Sometimes they do the man's job in the house, sometimes. So really like, they're just the backbone of everything. So … you look at them in different type of light. Like ….. you don't look at them with a like sympathy factor, you look at them like, oh you got this, you handle this. Like they go through all this type of stuff.

Lance talks about Black women in this way because he is thinking of Myra as a Black woman being harmed by a Black man. Lance is showing her harm as a Black woman in particular impacts him in a unique way because of how much Black women support the Black community. Not only does Lance believe Myra, but he also has a more positive bias toward Myra because of her identity as a Black woman.

Participants also expressed the taboo around having conversations in Black communities which are super sensitive and how this happens at the expense of Black women. Tevin explained this phenomenon in more detail during his interview:

> I feel like you have that taboo of like, you know, growing up in a family …., you know, a cousin may have been like, molested or touched by the uncle or something like that right? So even a conversation of sexual assault and abuse is already sensitive as it is. And just thinking about like the sentiments of like chattel slavery, like Black woman were like mutilated, and dehumanized. And I feel like even that sense of like, silencing.

Here Tevin explains his feelings on abuse which happens in Black families being "sensitive." In this instance, Tevin means a conversation about this issue is deemed as sensitive

in a Black family, meaning it is far too serious, uncomfortable, or taboo to discuss. This implies Black women who are assaulted are not socialized to believe they can talk about this with their families. Tevin is stating silencing of Black women is not only happening but is expected, the remnants of years of legalized sexual terrorism from the days of chattel slavery and beyond.

Participants expressed Black women are a group in society which are not valued in the ways some of their counterparts are. Louis discusses this in detail below:

> I will say, like, the, out of all the subgroups of humans, right, like Black men, white women, white men, Black women, I feel like Black women are the probably the most undervalued and the most, like, the ones who have been taken care of the least. So as a Black man [who rapes a Black woman] it just makes it even worse, you know, just a worse situation. But it makes it even worse when a Black man does it.

Here Louis is explaining how reading about Miles raping Myra hurt because Black women are already so undervalued. Louis believes Miles being a Black man makes this event even worse. It is also important to note, as it relates to Black women being undervalued, many participants referenced the following Malcolm X's statement: "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman."

Participants also believed Black men are supported by Black women to a fault in some cases. Louis explains why in more detail below.

> Sometimes they try to like shelter this stuff. And they're like, well, they're [a] Black man, they already go through so much. Like we got to protect them. We're the caretakers, right? Um, which I'm like, "Nah." You got to hold them [Black men] accountable, you know?

Louis is explaining how Black women on Rodan University's campus think about protecting Black men who sexually assault women to protect the collective of Black men on campus. Louis denounces this viewpoint and approach and calls for Black women to hold Black men more accountable. However, the Black men should do the work of keeping themselves accountable and not harming or accepting the harm of Black women.

One of the findings from this theme of sensitivity towards Black women was participants did not consider race as much in terms of their evaluation of Miles's behavior. Many of them believed his actions were wrong no matter what race he was. In the quote below, Lance discusses how the actions of Miles as a Black man made him feel:

> Well his race, it hasn't influenced my perceptions of the case. Because any man of any race can rape somebody, but it kind of influenced how I view like just being a Black man and seeing how he did. So that's my perception. It doesn't really shape that, but kind of just like, how connected I feel to the case. It makes me feel more connected because that's someone the same color as me, we share just the same background and it's just very unfortunate how you could treat Black women like that. And it makes you just feel more empathy and try to become a better man yourself, especially as a Black man to represent ourselves in a better way. So people aren't looking at us in this type of light that, we're highly aggressive towards our own women, our own sisters, mothers, the same people in our community.

Here we see Lance feels connected to the case because even though he did not hurt Black women personally, another Black man did. The actions of Miles make Lance want to be a better ally to Black women and a better representation for Black men. However, the fact Miles was a Black man did not make Lance feel a need to defend him or justify his actions. Since the

sensitivity participants had toward Black women in irra has been discussed, the findings which address the second research question will now be examined.

Research Question 2

The second research question this project seeks to address is, "What impacts Black men's intra-racial rape allegations?" Some of the main answers included current campus incidents/climate, a lack of institutional trust (i.e., Title IX administrators and police officers), media influences, upbringing, and reputation and lip service. Findings concerning current campus incidents/ climate are discussed first.

Current Campus Incidents/Climate

Many participants mentioned a 2020 scandal on the popular social media app Swirlie, in which Black men were called out for being sexual predators and rapists in the Black community by Black women. Many participants believed this had a profound impact on the perceptions of their peers, making them more aware of the specific plights Black women have to navigate when it comes to sexual violence. Randall details the impact of the scandal below:

> My generation of Black men that are going to Rodan University now, we've already gone through that whole ordeal and that whole situation. And for some of us that didn't already think that way, they now have found a new understanding of like, why you should be thinking in that way, and why you should be trying to understand why women in the social justice or in this specific system, are being treated the way that they are. Because it's important, like as a man we're granted certain privileges that we don't really truly understand or are aware of, but we kind of just walk in life, just knowing that we have them, and we utilize them to the best of our ability.

Randall believes his peers gained a new understanding of how women, especially Black women, navigate systems as it relates to sexual violence due to the Swirlie scandal. He believes

the scandal gave Black men at Rodan University more insight into their own privileges as Black men in particular. Thus, Randall believes the way his peers might look at the case of Miles and Myra may be influenced or impacted by the social media scandal. The lack of trust in Rodan University as an institution will now be discussed.

No Institutional Trust

Participants believed Rodan University Police Department (RUPD) is incompetent. Augustus, the sophomore from Palmdale, California, detailed this in his interview:

> I don't know. I feel like from my life experience being on campus, I don't know too much about the Title IX office, but like RUPD has been really, just from what I've been told, I haven't really counted them, but they don't really do much. Besides, like, I don't really know what they do, honestly. They don't do much. So that's why I say that.

Augustus is talking about RUPD's reputation. He is sayinghe has heard they "do not do much." This reputation speaks to administrative issues outside of what was mentioned about administration in the scenario. The assertion also shows participants lacking faith in institutional agents which are there to protect and serve them.

Another major finding is Rodan University is not stern enough when it comes to how it handles issues of sexual violence. Ernest stated as much in his interview: "I think that's why a lot of these cases keeps on going on because Rodan is not stern enough when it comes to things with these issues." It is important to note Ernest not only mentions Rodan University not being stern enough when it comes to these types of issues but also states the campus keeps experiencing these types of issues due in part to the lack of administrative sternness. This may be indicative of a systematic problem the university is facing and could be considered a critique of the protocols Rodan University has in place to address sexual assault issues.

Participants believed Miles being a Black man would make the school's administration

believe he was guilty of sexual violence. They assumed his experience of being investigated for rape was not an objective one, but instead one of negative intersectional bias toward Miles as a Black man. However, they believed the only reason Miles was not charged with rape was the survivor was a Black woman, a group participants believed administrative agents at Rodan University did not support or take seriously. Keith discussed this in during his interview:

> I don't necessarily believe that people gave him the benefit of the doubt, or just like, you know, were trying in active ways to make sure like his story was heard or something like that. When it comes to situations like that, it's hard to determine how.... specifically because I also wasn't there, and like the hearing and all that stuff like that, but I can assume that it was probably hard on him as well.

It is important to note Keith was not given a hypothetical scenario where the experience of Miles with institutional agents was documented. However, Keith assumed even though Miles was not charged with sexual violence, he was still looked at as someone who was guilty throughout the entire investigation, specifically due to his Black maleness. This shows a lack of trust in Rodan University's due process in investigating sexual violence cases.

Participants also believed Title IX was not an office which showed much care or support on their campus. Matthew, the 24-year-old from Los Angeles, California, discusses this in more detail:

> All the signs point to, you know, they just really didn't care. But the thing is like I said, I haven't seen them really care about any case of any kind. You know, I always hear the threat and they always make me do the training every quarter. But other than that, I don't hear of Title IX ever actually doing anything in any of these cases. …. I just I never really hear of anything" happening.

Matthew's quote shows he did not believe Title IX did enough to show care and support to Myra. However, Matthew took it a step further to show he does not see Rodan University's Title IX office showing care in any case outside of the training students are required to complete every quarter. This further emphasizes Matthew's beliefs Black students might not feel cared for if disclosing an instance of sexual violence to Title IX.

Participants were asked how they felt about how the administration, which in this scenario refers to Rodan University's Title IX Coordinator and police department, handled the case overall in the hypothetical scenario. Participants felt disappointed in how the administration handled interaction with Myra. In their analyses, participants show they are familiar with concepts such as victim-blaming, consent, coercion, trauma associated with retelling harmful experiences, and more. One participant, Louis, the sophomore from Atlanta, Georgia, had this to say about his feelings regarding how the administration handled Myra's case:

> They didn't take her seriously like they should have, they didn't treat her in a way that would make her feel safe. I've had friends who actually went through stuff like this specifically, like, in real life, and it's been the same, it's actually been the same case, where not maybe necessarily some of the nuances, but it's been the overarching thing is that they're not taking it as serious as they should.

These sentiments show Louis perceives Rodan University's Title IX and police department as entities which did not provide a space for Myra to feel safe or as if her case would be taken seriously but also shows this viewpoint is not an outlier for Title IX at Rodan University. The norm Louis alludes to is one which lacks seriousness when dealing with survivors of sexual violence and implies there is a lack of effectiveness in Title IX's approach.

Since the lack of institutional trust participants has been discussed, I turn to the influence of media.

Influence of Media

In his interview, Tevin, the junior from Pasadena, California, discussed the negative portrayal of Black women in media:

> I think too, just white women being seen as pure and purity, right, what they stand for, their symbolism. And then seeing that contrast of Black women, right, we've seen pop culture and mainstream media, like hyper-sexualized, aggressive, doing too much like all these different tropes around Black women. And then what we compare to white women that trickles down, simply that trickles down into the situation in some shape or form.

Here Tevin discusses how white women are seen as pure while Black women are seen as hyper-sexualized and aggressive. Tevin believes this misrepresentation of Black women in media would make Black women seem less believable when they say they are sexually assaulted because men would see them as hypersexual beings instead of valid survivors of sexual violence.

Tevin also discussed how scenes from movies are popular in African American culture reinforce not only trivializing consent, but also dismissing Black women's consent in particular.

> You know, growing up, and just seeing, interacting, and being in conversation with other Black men, I've heard these things or like someone said, No, or like, they put that boundary when it comes to intimacy. And they'll still try to say, like, "Oh, you know, like, let's just talk more or X,Y and Z,".... or even pop culture, like even pop culture promotes that, right? Like, I love poetic justice. But when Janet Jackson was in a car, and ole, boy was trying to get some from her, she kept saying no, and he kept doing that.That's being coerced. Like, That's not cute. That's not healthy.

Here Tevin discusses how he has seen and heard Black men talk about consent as if it

were a negotiation. He recognizes these actions are actually just coercion and critiques those practices. Further, Tevin also addresses how scenes in movies like *Poetic Justice* contribute to the affirming coercion of Black women among Black men. If Black men are taught to glorify coercion now, Tevin believes the type of glorification can lead his peers to negatively judge Black women's validity when they disclose, they have been sexually assaulted.

Tevin also discusses hip-hop music as a place of ultimate empowerment for the Black man but at the expense of the Black woman:

> Even music, like you got music like dehumanizing women, like calling them out of their names, like doing XY and Z, like, you're finna dog them, like, you know what I mean? ….. This idea of entitlement, like, "I can do whatever I want. I can mess with whoever I want. I can, do whatever to you. Because I'm entitled, and, and that's connected to power." I feel like right, that's where the male patriarchy comes into play.

This quote shows Tevin believes rap music sends messages to Black men they are entitled to everything, including women. Tevin believes rap music empowering men to feel overly entitled can lead his peers to doubt Black women's claims of sexual violence against Black men because rap music affirms the idea Black men could not rape a woman if they are entitled to their body, regardless of consent. With the influence of the media discussed, I now move to the trend of participants' upbringing influencing their responses.

Influence of Upbringing

Participants believed their peers, like them, could have had experiences related to consent, and the people they grew up with could contribute to them believing in Myra's claims she was sexually assaulted. In the following quote Derrick, the linguistics major from Los Angeles, California, talks about his upbringing and the conversations he had with his father during his pre-teen years which have stayed with him to the present-day regarding consent.

> My dad taught me when I was a kid like, probably like 10, 11, 12. Like, women can take away consent at any time. No means no, maybe means no. Yes, means yes. So like, for me, consent was like a big thing, not only for yourself but also because you're dealing with another human being like, obviously, you wouldn't, you know, want something to happen to you against your will.

This quote shows Derrick's father's conversation about consent allowed Derrick to think about consent and how important it is to understand it in interactions with other people. Furthermore, these conversations involving consent gave Derrick years to consider the importance of consent before he entered college. Derrick believes understanding consent from an early age could help his peers in recognizing when consent has been violated and may make other Black men believe Myra's claims of being assaulted by Miles.

Tevin discusses the types of family members he grew up around in this quote and the impact it had on how he perceived women.

> I think you'll have, you know, people like me who responded, the way I did were, like, "Nah that not right, this should go XYZ", what I just said before. Probably because my relationship with Black women, like, in my household, like, in growing up, like, respect a woman and, like, even like my, you know, my girlfriend or my, like, my ex-girlfriend in the past, or my partner's, like, I always tell them like, oh, are you comfortable?

Tevin discusses growing up around women in his household gave him an opportunity to deepen his relationship with Black women and be more mindful of their levels of comfort. Tevin believes having grown up with Black women makes him more mindful of their experiences and more affirming of them when they say they have experienced something as serious in nature as sexual assault. Tevin believes his peers who grew up around Black women might subscribe to

these thoughts as well.

Throughout their interviews, participants also talked about how patriarchal roles in their upbringing may impact how their peers perceive women and their desires. In the quote below, Keith, the 22-year-old senior from Los Angeles, California, discusses how he believes patriarchy conditions men from an early age:

> A lot of men, ... let's take away Black men specifically…., men just come from a very patriarchal role, and especially older generations. It's like, "the man of the house," like, it gives them false pride. And just like, overall, like they're validated from a young age that oh, they're the head honcho, they're the so-called dog, they kind of say how it goes and when stuff doesn't happen it kind of like, it hurts their ego, you know, and stuff like that.

In this quote, Keith references how patriarchy passed down from generations instills a sense of false pride in Black men. Patriarchy is defined as "a present-day unjust social system that subordinates, discriminates or is oppressive to women" (Facio, 2013). This type of pride results in men believing women should do what they say because men are supposed to lead and be obeyed by women. Keith believes this kind of thinking might make some of his Black male peers invalidate Myra's sexual assault claim because they may believe women should not refuse the commands/desires of men.

Participants also talked about the intersectional experience of Black men being taught to be cautious of interactions with women. Lucas, the freshman from Eastvale, California, discusses this more in the quote below:

> There is a long-storied history of many white women accusing Black men of sexual assault. And then there are very serious punishments of Black men from the 1800s and 1900s. There are a lot of lynchings and people getting hanged. So like, even in lots of

families…..There's a lot of like parents instilling in honest young Black boys and men, be careful with the women we end up with, because you don't know what might happen.

Here Lucas details how race in this case scenario might impact how his peers perceive this case. Lucas believes if his peers grew up being told to be cautious around women and knew the history of Black men being falsely accused and persecuted for rapes they did not commit, they might be more hesitant to believe Miles sexually assaulted Myra because of his identity as a Black man. Following the discussion of participant upbringing's impact on perception, I now examine reputation.

Reputation

Another interesting finding within this trend was reputation. One participant believed their peers would be more likely to support Myra if she were not known for having multiple sexual partners on campus and if Miles did not have a good reputation on campus. He did believe, however, Myra would not be supported if she had a reputation for having multiple sexual partners on campus. They also believe if Miles had a good reputation, he would have had more support from the Black community when he was accused of rape. Louis breaks this idea down in the following quote:

> If the dude has a good reputation within a community of Black people, if he's pretty chill, he's pretty cool……. most people are gonna have his back. You know what I'm saying like most people are going to have his back. They going be like, nah, he couldn't have did this, especially if the girl is considered promiscuous. …….. But if he is like considered, like, standoffish….people dont really know, him like that. I feel like most people will have a pretty neutral viewpoint and try to like, you know, get him for the most part, especially if he comes off as weird, then they're going to get him, and they're gonna support her.

Louis acknowledges here Myra's sexual assault claims are at risk of being doubted by his peers if they believe Miles has a good reputation. This means Louis believes someone who does assault a woman could be supported by some Black men as long as he is not socially awkward and is well-liked in the Black community. One participant also brought up lip service.

Lip Service

Several participants believed some Black men at Rodan University engage in lip service. Lip service, according to Dictionary.com, means to express approval of or support for something without taking any significant action. The quote below shows Randall describing how lip service aligns with his Black male peers not believing Myra's story of sexual violence:

> I mean, that facade is like, you know, it's, it's speaking without actually doing anything like it's just being performative you know, saying things that you know, that Black women want to hear because you know, that it will get you extra you know, bonus points with them but when it comes to actually being out there and doing what you say that you actually do. It's not there you know, you're not reposting you know, certain issues that are arising that pertain to Black women on your social media or you're not you know, speaking out or, or holding your friends accountable when they say they're doing things that you should perceive as weird like when I say they put up a facade, it's that they put up a guise, a costume of being, you know, this super protector when in reality, they're just as bad as you know, some of the other people that you see on campus.

Randall believes his peers showing support for Myra in this scenario goes above and beyond lip service. However, since he believes some of the Black men on campus engage in lip service only to pander to Black women, some Black men will not support Myra in this instance where she needs support beyond just words.

Summary

The finding of this research project were vast. The study found the initial reactions of participants to the hypothetical scenario from the research project were sadness, anger, and confusion. Participants' initial feelings toward how the administration in the scenario (Rodan University Police Department and Rodan University's Title IX staff) were Myra's case was not taken seriously enough. All participants felt the outcome of the scenario was inaccurate. According to participants, the biggest critique of the administration's behavior toward Myra was they engaged in victim-blaming her and critiqued her story after she recounted it multiple times.

When participants were asked to consider the reaction of their peers to this scenario, they mentioned they felt Black men are not monoliths, so their opinions on how they perceive intra-racial sexual violence allegations would be split. They felt their peers would believe the actions of Miles would impact the smaller Black community on Rodan University's campus. Participants also believed some of their peers could have had upbringings which influenced their perception of this case. This included seeing negative media representations of Black women suggest they are hypersexual, movies which invalidate the consent of Black women, and hip-hop culture which entitles men in their pursuit of women whether it is reciprocal or not. Participants also believed patriarchal roles, in particular ones which tell men they should always, "get their way" as men, have been passed down from generation to generation of Black men and could have an influence on how some of their peers perceive Myra's case. However, participants also felt an upbringing in which the importance of consent was prioritized could also impact their peers as well as growing up around a family full of Black women. Participants felt some of their peers are disingenuous about their support of Black women and only engage in lip service to pander to Black women, which could impact how the peers of participants perceive the case. Participants

also believe Miles'and Myra's individual reputations would have a significant impact on how their peers perceived the case.

There were also many ways in which race influenced this case according to the participants. From an administrative level, participants believe race had a great deal of influence on how this case was investigated and the ultimate outcome of the case. Participants believed intra-racial rape cases were not taken as seriously as inter-racial rape cases, in particular cases of the latter wherein a Black man is accused of sexually assaulting a white woman. Further, participants believed white women were viewed as legitimate victims of sexual violence (by society and campus administration) and Black men were viewed as hyper-sexual savages, who who are unfairly perceived as guilty first. The interviewees believed Miles was assumed guilty and his process still involved negative racial bias from the investigators despite the case's outcome. During interviews, participants also expressed Black women were viewed by the administration as tougher than other women and more tolerant of pain, making them viewed as less legitimate victims of violence in general, much less sexual assault. They also believed the administration is selfish and not considerate of survivors of sexual violence.

Race also impacted the personal opinions participants had about the case. Many of them viewed the act of rape and condemned it no matter the race of the attacker or survivor. Participants also admitted to having a slight positive bias toward Black women, meaning when they read about Myra as a Black woman it impacted them more and made them connect with the scenario on a deeper level. They also felt although they could not relate to what Miles, as a Black man, had done, stating they could potentially be negatively perceived by the Black and non-Black community at large because of Miles' behavior.

Race also impacted how participants believed their peers would perceive the case. They believed their peers would think about the race of Miles and Myra splitting the community. Participants also thought their peers would reference the upbringing of some Black men, in which their guardians warn them to be cautious of their interactions with women. Some participants thought their peers would take the case less seriously because since Myra is not a white woman, the punishment for Miles would not be as severe. Participants believed their peers would also be frustrated with Miles because of him causing harm within a community which is already small to begin with. They thought their peers would believe the actions of Miles would impact how Black women view Black men, assuming this would cause some tension between Black men and Black women on campus. Participants also believed a social media scandal which happened on the platform Swirlie would impact how their peers perceived the racial elements of this case due to the scandal being centered around Black women calling out Black men who were sexual predators on campus.

Several participants also discussed their experiences and opinions of Rodan University's Title IX and police department. They said they felt RUPD had a history and reputation of being incompetent in other cases involving sexual violence. Participants also believed Title IX staff were not as stern about its investigations and that has resulted in increased cases being brought to them.

Finally, participants expressed feelings about the hardships Black women endure. Participants believed Black women were undervalued in society and in this case the administration of Rodan University was the main entity for undervaluing Black women and their experiences. They also believed Black women are expected to suffer in silence as it relates to

sexual violence due to this notion of protecting Black men. Some participants also believed Black women protect Black men to a fault.

The findings of this study were important to illuminate. They are contributing pieces to a proper discussion around the original research questions of this project. Discussion of these findings will hopefully begin to addressing this study's research inquiries.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to remember the original research questions:1) "How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?" 2) "What impacted these perceptions?" It is also imperative to remember the theoretical foundations of this research project—intersectionality, and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory (CBTT). The discussion examines the meaning behind these findings and will use those meanings to understand contributions to the theories used.

Research Question 1 How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?"

The answer to this question is Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men as legitimate but believe some of their Black male peers view them as illegitimate. During the interview process of this study, participants displayed extensive knowledge about consent, victim-blaming, the trauma of repeating stories about sexual assault, and mislabeling of sexual assault crimes. This indicates Black men are no less capable than other men of supporting survivors of sexual assault. Black men also believe optics in a community matter, specifically how Black people are viewed by non-Black communities on college campuses, as well as how Black men are viewed by Black women because Black men view the survivor of sexual assault as legitimate. Many participants believed their friend circles all shared the same ideology of legitimizing the experiences of survivors of sexual assault. This suggests Black men may not believe they themselves or their close Black male friends have perceptions contributing to the delegitimization of a survivor's experience with sexual assault in general, much less intra-racial sexual violence. Black men were also very critical of and unsurprised by

Rodan University's Title IX and the Police Department's lack of care, sensitivity, or thorough investigation. They also claimed Rodan University's Title IX and Police Department would investigate this type of case with more seriousness if a Black man were accused of sexually assaulting a white woman. This suggests Black men are not looking at these systems of justice as effective or fair. Furthermore, this study suggests Black men may perceive Black intra-racial sexual violence allegations as something which will be investigated ineffectively and with racial and gendered bias for themselves and Black women. Now it is time to examine what impacts Black men's perceptions concerning rape allegations made by Black women against Black men.

Research Question 2 "What impacted these perceptions?"

Factors such as reputation, upbringing, allyship, social media, and a lack of institutional trust impacted Black men's perceptions of intra-racial rape allegations. Participants believed women who were perceived as having numerous sexual partners may be less likely to be affirmed by their Black male peers. They also believed their Black male peers would be less likely to affirm a survivor's experience with sexual assault if the man being accused had a "good" reputation amongst their peers. This indicates reputation is a key factor which impacted Black men's perceptions of intra-racial sexual assault allegations. This suggests people who commit acts of sexual violence may still have the support of their male peers as long as the woman involved has a reputation which is negatively attached to her history of intimacy or the rapist has a good reputation amongst his peers already. Even though this phenomenon is not race specific, it can be applied to Black intra-racial interactions.

Black men talked about their upbringing having a powerful impact on them. For example, some Black men grew up with fathers who taught them the importance of consent, which impacted how they perceived sexual violence allegations later in life. However, Black men also

believed some of their peers grew up with patriarchal mindsets instilled in them. For example, Black men thought some of their peers may have been raised to believe women do not have the right to deny a man intimacy. This suggests upbringing is not a monolithic experience for Black men and can impact perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence in different ways. This means Black men could enter universities with perceptions affirming or dismissing survivors of sexual violence.

One participant mentioned lip service, which is performative, disingenuous allyship. He believed some Black men engage in lip service to create the appearance of true allyship for Black women. This suggests some Black men may not be as supportive of Black women's experiences as they claim to be and thus may not be as affirming of Black women who disclose being sexually assaulted.

Social media played a role in impacting Black men's perceptions as well. Many participants mentioned a scandal which transpired on social media. This scandal involved Black women accusing multiple Black men of sexual violence. Black men believed the scandal impacted their perceptions of sexual violence allegations. This means sexual violence allegations can be impacted by how they are addressed on social media.

Lack of institutional trust also impacted Black men's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence claims. Black men had friends who had negative experiences with Title IX and RUPD. They were not surprised and expected those departments to not be effective in handling cases of sexual violence and making Black students feel safe. This indicates Black men perceive intra-racial sexual violence allegations as ones which will not be investigated properly or effectively by Title IX or RUPD.

Implications

Research Question 1: How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?"

Black men must be stripped of this image of being dangerous or hypersexual, as they do show empathy and understanding around issues and survivors of sexual violence. However, Black men must also be able to challenge their own participation in patriarchy and not assume they are beyond reproach as it relates to sexual violence, nor are their close friends. Furthermore, Black men are not likely to use "justice systems" such as Title IX or the Police Department because they do not trust these entities. This means Black men cannot feel safe and secure with the current structures in place like their non-Black counterparts, which is a glaring injustice.

Research Question 2: "What impacted these perceptions?"

Black women are more likely to suffer as survivors of assault if their peers perceive their reputation as simplistic. For example, if students do not realize someone can do amazing things and be "kind" to others but still commit acts of sexual violence, then Black women may hesitate or decide not to report or disclose an act of sexual assault they experienced by a man who has a "good" reputation. Black men entering higher education, like everyone else, are not monoliths, and if they are treated like monoliths, any problematic perceptions concerning sexual violence in general, much less towards Black women, cannot be properly addressed. Given lip service impacts Black men's perceptions, if true allyship is not taught, Black men on campus could unintentionally or intentionally contribute to lip service and ultimately create a less affirming environment for Black women who experience sexual violence. Universities must also understand how social media is used to spread narratives around sexual violence. If this does not happen, social media could be used as a tool which makes survivors feel unsafe and not heard. If universities and institutions do not pay attention to the feelings and needs of students when

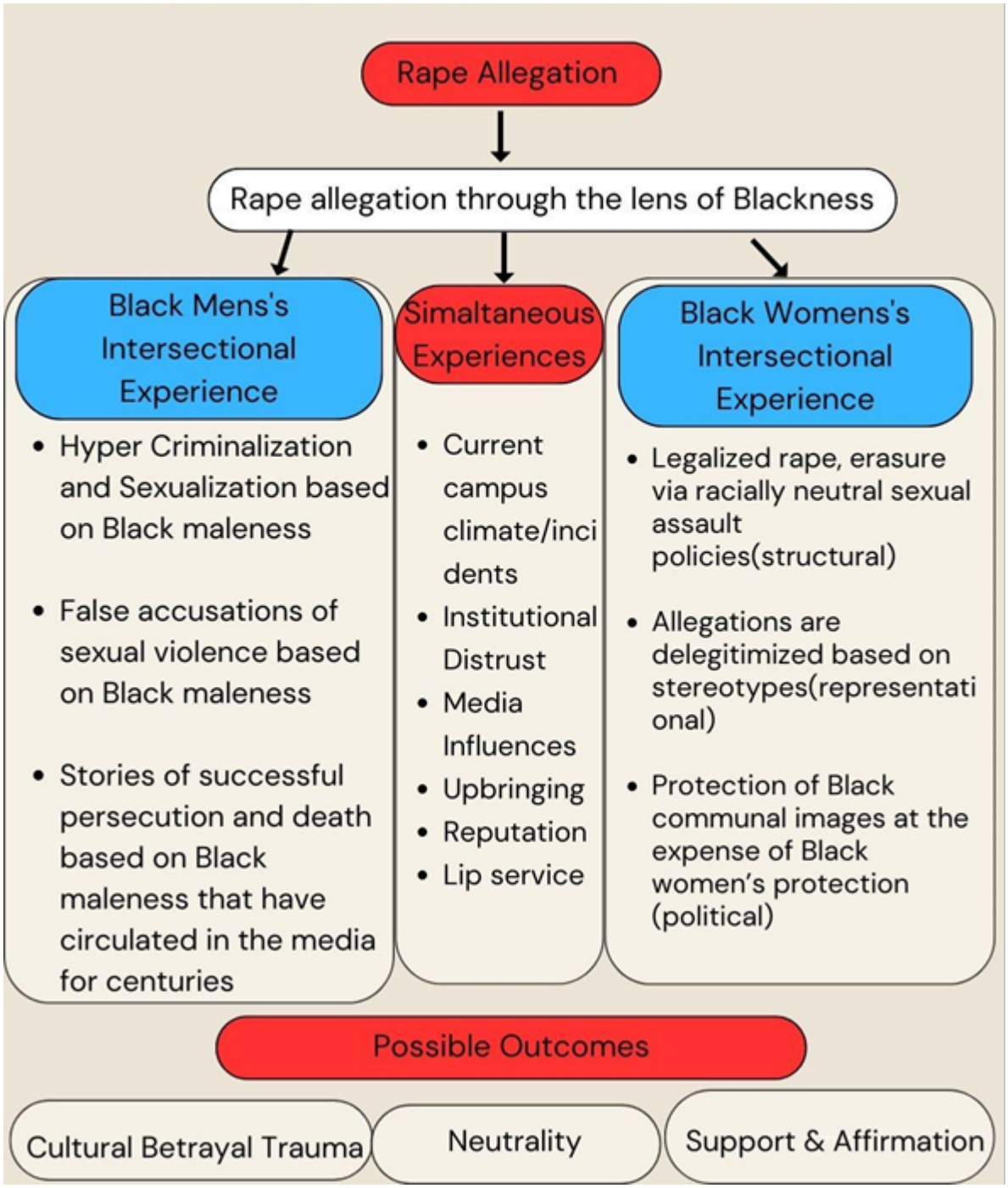
instances of sexual violence occur, they contribute to a campus climate of distrust, which allows for more crimes to happen because perpetrators may start to assume their victims of sexual violence will not report to investigative departments. This could delegitimize attempts at justice because students distrust the officials who investigate cases of sexual violence. This will ultimately contribute to a culture of danger at a university, which could hinder the academic, professional, social, mental, and emotional success of Black students (especially Black women).

Contribution to theory

Black men mentioned Black women's plights numerous times in this study. They felt a unique sympathy for the Black woman (Myra) who was sexually assaulted and created cultural affirmation instead of betrayal. This study has shown people can affirm others within their own minoritized group and presents the opportunity for researchers to study what cultural affirmation looks like, not only cultural betrayal trauma. There is an opportunity for future research to examine what cultural affirmation may look like in-depth. This study also revealed Black men understand how to consider Black women's specific trials and tribulations. They talked about Black women being betrayed by structures, represented poorly in the media, and sacrificing their own form of justice to protect Black men. This addresses structural, representational, and political intersectionality and shows Black men have deeper understandings on what Black women's particular experiences are in the world. There is an opportunity to engage Black men based on their knowledge on Black women's plight in areas outside of sexual violence. The original framework (Figure 1) used to describe the Theoretical Framework will now be re-examined.

Figure 2

Intra-racial Sexual Assault Allegations Analyses



Reanalyzing Figure 1

Figure 1(a visual representation of the interconnected frameworks of intersectionality and Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory), overall, was proven accurate in this study. However, there are some changes to consider, and Figure 2 represents these changes. For example, categories in Figure 1 should change from intersectional lens to intersectional experiences for both Black men and Black women's tables. The term "lens" gives the impression Black men view rape allegations through the elements in the "Black Men's Intersectional Lens" table and Black women view sexual assault allegations through the elements in the "Black Women's Intersectional Lens" exclusively. Participants, however, showed they viewed intra-racial rape allegations with elements from both Black men's and Black women's intersectional experiences in mind. Furthermore, the findings reveal there are elements currently impacting how Black communities are perceiving intra-racial rape allegations. Such elements include current campus incidents/climate, a lack of institutional trust (i.e., Title IX administrators and university police officers), media influences, upbringing, reputation, and lip service. Additionally, even though cultural betrayal was trauma was a possible outcome, support, and affirmation, as well as neutrality were possible outcomes as well.

Summary

The answer to the first research question, "How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men?" is ultimately Black men perceive these specific allegations in multiple ways. Black men are aware of elements of sexual assault allegations and disclosure such as victim-blaming, consent, coercion, PTSD from recounting sexual assault instances, and mislabeling/minimizing sexual assault offenses. Also, Black men believed Myra in fictional scenario. They also believed how their peers and institutional agents of Rodan University (RU's Title IX staff and police department) judged the case would be based on race

and gender but also believed no matter Miles's race, what he did was rape, and he deserved to be addressed accordingly.

Black men are also concerned about the optics of a rape case like this out of fear Miles and other Black people will be viewed negatively by a huge non-Black population at Rodan University. However, Black men are also concerned the behavior of Miles would cause a rift between the small community of Black men and Black women on campus as well.

Black men also have a lot of trust in their peers to look at intra-racial sexual assault allegations the same way they do, through a lens of care and sympathy for the survivor. However, they do mention their Black male peers could be dismissive of Myra and supportive of Miles. Black men believe both Black men and Black women are treated unfairly by the Title IX office and police department at Rodan University while white women are treated like legitimate survivors of rape. Participants believe Title IX thinks of them as hyper-aggressive sexual deviants and Black women as extremely tough and tolerant of pain, with the latter incapable of truly being harmed or forced to engage in sexual activity.

The answer to the second research question, "What impacts do these perceptions Black men have of intra-racial sexual assault allegations within Black communities?" is also varied due to the numerous answers to the first research question. Black men believe their Black male peers consider an accuser's or alleged assailant's reputation when it comes to deciding how they will perceive the assault. Messages about elements of sexual violence such as consent, coercion, and entitlement Black women and Black men receive growing up, whether from media, music, or community members like family, influences how they might perceive intra-racial sexual assault allegations. Furthermore, some Black men are warned to be cautious of their interactions with women which also may influence how they look at any sexual assault case where a Black man is

pinned as the perpetrator. Growing up around women might also give Black men a foundation for their perceptions.

One implication of this study is Black men and Black women are being impacted by the same messages about elements of sexual violence during their upbringing, but the impact of these messages affects each group differently based on their intersectional positionality. Black men are being told to be cautious of interactions with women and are familiar with the stories of Black men being falsely accused and wrongfully punished for (often unfounded) sexual violence. Furthermore, messages in hip hop culture, movies, and in their own households reinforce patriarchal norms of men being entitled to women's bodies at any time while also trivializing consent and promoting coercion. In music and movies centered on Black life, Black women are the focal point of these patriarchal attacks on consent and affirmation of men's hyper-entitlement, placing Black women on the vulnerable side of this. They are learning about the famous stories of Black men being falsely accused of sexual violence, and seeing women who look like them being disrespected and disregarded as it relates to their sexual boundaries, while being socialized into silence. By the time Black men and women enter a university, if they have received the aforementioned messages subtly or overtly about sexual violence, it puts Black women at risk of not only being harmed but also being dismissed if they disclose what happened to them or try and to seek justice against their rapists. Finally, institutional relationships are also a part of the implication of this project.

Participants in the study already had negative relationships with the university's Title IX office and RUPD. Black men have a complete distrust of those systems, for themselves and for Black women as well. This is dangerous for survivors. If perpetrators (regardless of race) subscribe to the notion Title IX administration does not equitably look after or seek justice for

Black women, Black women attending, working at, or simply visiting the university could be at risk of being targeted for sexual violence. Furthermore, Black women may not feel comfortable disclosing to Title IX off or police departments if they think they will not be regarded properly when they disclose. Black men might also feel the need to support any Black man being investigated by the Title IX office or police department at Rodan University if they believe those departments are unfair in their treatment of students and are racially biased against Black men. If this support of rapists who happen to be Black men is given blindly because of a distrust of those institutional departments, the situation could lead to Black women feeling less empowered to disclose or report being raped (or any similar crime) to anyone who believes these departments are biased based on the identity (including racial and gender status) of the people involved in the case.

Some Black men's foundation for their perceptions is a disingenuous and performative allyship for Black women expresses itself through lip service. Black men's perceptions might also be influenced by institutional/communal scandals such as the incident with the social media app Swirlie. Multiple participants have also seen or heard of Rodan University's Title IX office or police department failing Black and non-Black students during incidents of sexual assault or other on-campus issues. Finally, Black men being aware of some of Black women's specific plights—being dismissed, undervalued, and expected to suffer for the protection of Black men—also influenced their perception of intra-racial rape allegations. With initial discussion of the findings commenced and answers to the research questions explored, it is critical to examine the implications and suggestions for this research project's findings, both academic and practical.

Suggestions

The suggestions for this project focus on what can happen within the realm of higher education. However, this does not mean these suggestions lack the ability to be adapted to institutions and communities outside of colleges and universities. The first portion of these suggestions deals with orientation methods for students. However, the goal and mission of colleges and universities as they relate to reshaping dangerous perceptions around sexual violence—in this case intra-racial sexual violence—should be acknowledged. Sexual violence and the dangerous perceptions which affirm it are the result of a lack of understanding of elements such as consent, victim-blaming, coercion, power, and others. Students must learn about these elements as they relate to sexual violence and how they are embedded in everyday life. Students must also learn how to respect boundaries, honor consent, and fight against victim-blaming, coercion, and abusing power and privilege in multiple parts of their lives outside of sexual interactions to recognize it more thoroughly in situations involving intimacy. Thus, colleges and universities should have a full-scale approach to addressing issues of sexual violence. This approach would include modifying student orientations, courses, workshops and newsletters, and national policies. This full-scale approach will now be discussed further.

Student Orientation Methods

The findings suggest participants believe Black men are being raised in different ways which can influence how they perceive sexual assault allegations in general and Black intra-racial allegations in particular. Given this approach, universities should assume students do not understand the nuances of sexual violence. Schools like Rodan University have mandatory Title IX trainings, however, findings from this research project suggest students disassociate themselves and their peer groups from these trainings. In addition, elements of sexual violence

which Title IX administration might illuminate, such as consent and coercion, show up in other mediums such as music and movies. Therefore, some suggestions to create more informed perceptions about sexual assault would be student orientations including mandatory Title IX training which focuses on addressing sexual violence—not only in direct ways in which elements of rape culture show up explicitly but also how it is streamlined into popular culture references such as movies, television shows, music videos, and lyrics. They would also bring attention to how the various messages subtly trivialize consent and champion coercion and victim-blaming. Universities could even explore how these elements show up in other ways which are outside the scope of sexual violence. By doing this for students, they may start to understand how the culture and the persistence of sexual violence manifest itself in numerous smaller ways within the world around them, which might enlighten and positively impact their perceptions of sexual violence and, subsequently, rape allegations.

Given the findings, peer perceptions must also be addressed in any orientations addressing sexual violence. Students must understand perpetrators of sexual assault, as perceptions of sexual assault, are not monolithic. Furthermore, training is needed to help students find ways to hold their friends accountable if they believe a peer or friend is or may be harmful to others. For example, how do students address a friend whom other students have accused of sexual harassment? Formulating answers to such questions creates a culture of humility at institutions which does not allow an accused perpetrator's or alleged victim's good reputation, leadership, or accolades dictate the accountability perpetrators of sexual violence face. In addition, training can also acknowledge real-life examples of students who engaged in systemic sexual predation. For example, one PWI in the South has a video showing a student who described how they and their friends target first-year undergraduate women students by secretly

intoxicating them at college parties. This shows the normalization of executing a system of sexual violence (Lisak & Miller 2002). Videos like these should be shown to students and can shift viewer perception to be more affirming of survivors as they re-emphasize some students are strategic sexual deviants and survivors were targets of violence long before they were violated. This video shows the reality of sexual predator systems and their relevance and prevalence on college campuses. Learning such difficult, pertinent information allows students to accept the possibility of one of their peers being capable of sexual predation, which gives any survivors of assault more perceived credibility because students will understand anyone is capable of creating and facilitating systems of predation. Furthermore, orientation trainings should continue to expand on ways for students to thwart the efforts of predators who are trying to sexually assault someone. While student orientation methods are important in impacting perception, courses play a critical role as well.

Courses

Participants mentioned courses centered around Black men being helpful for them and having a positive impact. Thus, providing these types of programs and classes which target specific identity groups is ideal. Furthermore, identity-specific courses allow concepts of sexual violence perceptions to be discussed within certain populations more intentionally, leaving room for the nuance of how sexual violence impacts particular populations. Based on this finding, the elements of sexual violence may impact how perceptions should be explored by most students on campus. The findings of this research project suggest there should be a strategic effort by various college and university departments to not only offer courses which discuss sexual violence and how perceptions of them are formed but also identify elements of rape culture (such as trivializing consent and championing victim blaming and coercion) and working them into

lessons within existing curricula. Sociology, cultural identities (e.g., African and African American studies) history, media, music, movie, and communication departments, for example, could all collaborate and review the syllabi of their courses and incorporate lessons about elements of rape which fit into the existing content of a class. For example, faculty for an African American Studies course focusing on discussing legal fights of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) could team up with the History and Gender and Sexuality Department faculty to create a lesson which discusses the story of Recy Taylor, who was sexually assaulted by six white men in 1944, and how Black womanhood led to a jury not indicting her attackers twice even though she was represented by the NAACP for a limited time (Chan, 2017).

Furthermore, schools could create and mandate courses where the messages of media are problematized and critiqued and, for example, feature a section on the curriculum which addresses how consent is trivialized. Departments and/or professors who participate in these intentional cross-listing strategies could be incentivized with additional funding, vacation days, and credit toward tenure. Incorporating systems of incentives for this work would show a commitment to disrupting problematic perceptions which support rape culture. Such incorporation would also set a precedent for a higher education institution demonstrating this type of work is important and should be considered and awarded as such. While strategically cross-listing course concepts may be helpful, trained professionals and their understanding of responding to sexual assault must be challenged as well.

Cultural Orientation Workshops

The findings from this project suggest Black students are not trusting of the university's Title IX office or campus police departments. One reason, according to participants, was due to

believing investigations by these entities would be conducted with racial bias. Therefore, workshops which talk about the histories of various racialized and other marginalized groups as it relates to sexual violence might be helpful for people in Title IX office and university police departments to take. Students, faculty, and others at a university, could team up to provide workshops which give context for how cultural norms may impact how a rape survivor navigates sexual violence and what to consider when investigating a sexual assault case. This may help people like RAs, trusted faculty and staff, Title IX employees, campus police officers, and even student peers understand the cultural context surrounding how an instance of rape not only impacts a particular affinity group's community but how it might impact a survivor or someone who is accused of sexual violence. There should also be an intentional effort made by Title IX staff to humanize themselves by showing up to student programming, particularly programming which focuses on sexual violence. This could allow Black students to start building trust with Title IX officers as students would be able to interact with them and get to know them on a more personal level, which could possibly lead to students' increased comfort in engaging with these offices.

The study's findings reveal trust means a lot to students. Student leaders could take on the task of identifying and teaming up with trusted student organizations, departments, faculty and staff, and administration to facilitate these minoritized group workshops. Once again, the people involved in planning and attending these workshops could be incentivized with perks which advance their careers or enhance their departmental environment. Higher education could even offer a certification of completion for those who attend a requisite number of affinity group workshops which could be used as a resume/CV enhancer. It is important to offer these

incentives to emphasize the university values people who take the time to learn about these concepts deeper to keep the community safer.

Another way for students, RAs, trusted faculty and staff, Title IX employees, campus cops, and others to constantly engage in these conversations around sexual violence and the cultural nuances surrounding it is to incorporate distribution of targeted newsletters. Scholars have created newsletters highlighting research which deals with nuances of sexual violence for different affinity/cultural/racial groups. For instance, scholar Nadeeka Karunaratne, who is a post-doctoral research associate in the University of Utah's McCluskey Center for Violence Prevention Research & Education operates a monthly newsletter highlighting current, nuanced research about sexual violence. Research articles are not only masterfully summarized, but they also discuss a range of unique identity-based groups and how these groups are impacted by sexual assault. For example, one newsletter summarized an article covering barriers queer women in college have disclosing sexual assault to family members. Title IX administrators and police officers, as well as RAs and other mandated reporters, could have a mandatory opt-in to these types of newsletters to stay updated on different types of experiences surrounding sexual violence. However, students on campus could have an opt-in opportunity to subscribe to these newsletters. The circulation of these types of newsletters would hopefully have a positive impact on the collegiate community, helping people continuously explore and become more aware of the complexities of sexual violence for multiple identity groups. How these methods can have impact on a larger scale is discussed next.

Sexual Assault Reports Modifications

Sexual assault task forces have been created and national policy reports which are sent out to higher education institutions (Wooten, 2016). However, as discussed, there must be

cultural/identity-based nuance considered within sexual violence. Therefore, these national and institutional collegiate reports on sexual violence should incorporate sections which center on different identity-based groups based on elements like summaries of current and nuanced articles concerning sexual violence. There should also be a national database for sexual violence responders and professionals with resources such as research article summaries, PowerPoint presentations, videos, etc. which illuminate different affinity group identities. Access to or distribution of these materials could be tied together by having a national monthly newsletter—sent to collegiate agents such as Title IX staff and police officers, as well as RAs and other mandated reporters—which highlights nuanced sexual violence research articles, with a link to the database always included in the newsletter's distribution email. These suggestions would bring awareness to sexual violence responders and professionals across the country and might even impact spaces outside of higher education if places like the White House and state, regional, and national entities incorporate these elements into their policies practices.

Student Organizations

Even if students find ways to put faith in institutions to investigate sexual violence crimes on campus, objectively having systems of safety, protection, and healing which students alone can hold could also be helpful. One suggestion is for Black student leaders to strategize how to hold both private and public healing spaces for survivors. There should also be spaces for Black men and women on campus to discuss the state of their intra-racial relations and how the community can support each other holistically. These types of practices fall along the lines of restorative justice. Restorative justice is, "an alternative model of criminal justice, seeking healing and reconciliation for offenders, victims, and the communities in which they are embedded" (Menkel-Meadow, 2007). Figure 3 (below) represents a restorative justice Venn

diagram model which displays different ways, outside of the typical criminal justice/incarceration system communities, can address disclosures of sexual violence. The model allows students to expand the ways they perceive disclosures and how the survivor and the accused can navigate sexual violence and its aftermath in ways holding community members accountable, without trusting traditional "justice" systems. The model shows the individual and collective elements of survivor reparation, offender responsibilities, and overall communities of care reconciliation (Wachtel, 2016). While suggestions about student orientations, courses, workshops, and student organizations could be beneficial, the question of how these moving pieces are facilitated remains.

Figure 3

Restorative Justice Models

Task Force

Universities should have task forces committed to seeing the aforementioned suggestions manifest. At any given entity, this task force should be comprised of a multitude of stakeholders, including but not limited to undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, staff, administration, counseling professionals, Title IX officers, and police officers. The responsibilities of the task force would be to understand, craft, and facilitate the aforementioned suggestions into the operations of their university, to conduct surveys, and to analyze the surveys to regroup and adjust strategies every year. This task force should include financial incentives, vacation days (for employees), CV enhancers, and a guaranteed letter of recommendation from a top

administrative office and/or academic department. However, the task force's positions should be coveted and have a thorough application process as well. This task force shows a commitment to thinking through the issues of sexual violence and how to ultimately shift problematic perceptions concerning it. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee institutions will be enthusiastic about, much less open to, these suggestions. Therefore, certain practices should be implemented by students, which will now be discussed.

Pressuring Systems

Peer debriefing "(a researcher and an impartial peer preplan and conduct extensive discussions about the findings and progress of an investigation)" with staff at Rodan University also revealed a lack of trust in institutions to incorporate these suggested practices (Spall, 1998). Based on these peer debriefing suggestions, students should also create systems to keep pressure on the universities to listen to their demands and incorporate impactful changes to address issues and instances of sexual violence. Furthermore, students are encouraged to pass down strategies for maintaining and enhancing pressure on institutions to see progress. This will help avoid administrators making strictly performative promises to delay addressing issues until student leaders fighting hardest for those issues graduate or transition from a university.

Beyond Higher Education

Black men's and Black women's histories with sexual violence claims and perceptions should be discussed before students enter universities. These conversations should be happening as early as the K-12 level. As this study revealed, Black men are being taught about the history of Black men and sexual violence. Spaces should be created for parents, guardians, and community leaders to discuss the specific vulnerabilities both Black men and Black women experience around sexual violence so Black youth have an understanding on how to show

affirmation and support of each other as it relates to these issues. Furthermore, there must be a collective and sustained conversation about caring for humans who are not family members or friends. An assault or a false claim concerning any human being, whether someone is affiliated with them or not, is deplorable and Black youth (and all youth) should be taught this at an early age so their sympathy is not exclusively reserved for their family and friends who might have to navigate sexual violence situations. It is also important for Black youth to understand how sexual violence claims, especially those involving Black people, are handled in the criminal justice system. There must be spaces for everyone from Black youth to police officers, judges, and others to understand the biases Black people have historically faced, along with current context, when dealing with sexual violence.

Future Research Suggestions

This project opens a multitude of future research options. One suggestion is replicating this study by conducting it in different schools across the country to see if there is consistency in the results. Future studies could also include doing this research with Black men at Historically Black Colleges and Universities as many participants mentioned the impact of intra-racial sexual violence would have on them as a small Black community at a predominantly white institution.

Future research could also exclusively examine intra-racial rape from the perspective of Black women to understand how both sexes perceive this particular aspect of sexual violence. However, focus groups with Black men and women could also be held to facilitate conversation between groups so each could inform themselves about the perspectives of a sex they do not identify with.

Media influences and communal upbringing were also integral parts of participant perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence so a study which centers how messages from different

forms of media (e.g., television, movies, music, social media) and community members impacted by sexual assault allegations would also be helpful. Another integral part of the findings was the distrust which participants had in institutional agents at Rodan University. Therefore, studies which explore (via one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the participants or focus groups of Title IX workers and police officers) the mistrust in these systems as it relates to the disclosure and investigation of sexual assault could be helpful.

Future research should also include studies which center the participants' own journeys with the evolution of their thoughts on sexual violence and allows them to not only examine their own journey but also their peers. A study which allows participants to challenge their own perceptions around sexual violence would be helpful as there is always more information to learn about sexual violence in the different entities influencing perceptions concerning the issue. Conducting studies where participants must also navigate how they would respond if their close friends were accused of perpetrating or engaging in sexual violence would be helpful, as many participants did not believe their friends would be accused of those actions. Therefore, studies should be administered on how Black men (and men in general) navigate friendships with potential sexual predators. Future studies should also include how Black men perceive allyship since this study revealed some Black men think their peers engage in disingenuous allyship (lip service).

Since restorative justice was also discussed amongst participants, future research would also include ways to bring Black men and women together to discuss their thoughts on what restorative justice, reporting sexual violence, and looking for justice look like. Participants had varying thoughts on what justice could or should look like and they often said it should be

dependent on what the survivor of the assault wants to happen. Therefore, what justice looks like and the pathways to get there should be discussed in more detail via future research.

Finally, this research could act as a catalyst to examine intra-racial and intra-cultural sexual assault allegations in other communities from different identity groups as they relate to race, sexual orientation, etc. The possibilities of extending this crucial research are truly endless.

Summary

The main implications of this study examine the upbringing of participants. The upbringing and the messages participants receive about patriarchy, consent, coercion, victim-blaming, and power could have immense impact on intra-racial rape perceptions and rape perceptions in general. While some of these messages for participants were positive, there were also messages which were negative and Black women in collegiate spaces stand to suffer because of those messages. Black women also stand to suffer as many participants do not believe in the legitimacy of institutional investigations of sexual violence and believe their peers, in some cases, may—rather than supporting Black women disclose—be more likely to support Black men who are being investigated by institutions because of their belief these institutions have a racial bias against Black students.

Based on the implications of participants' upbringing, it could be helpful to incorporate popular media clips from movies, television shows, books, music, etc. which allow students to recognize how patriarchy, consent, coercion, victim-blaming, and power show up and are affirmed in everyday life. This allows students to understand sexual violence and the culture which stabilizes it is maintained through covert messages championing coercion, victim-blaming, and dismissiveness, toward women in particular. More intentional work to cross-list courses and curricula within courses at universities also helps students normalize identifying

elements of rape culture in other areas. If students are constantly being forced to critique elements such as patriarchy, consent, coercion, victim blaming, and power in topics outside of sexual violence, their perspectives around intra-racial sexual violence will be more nuanced and informed. Students within the same cultural groups (Black students for the purposes of this study) also must hold space to not only engage each other but to also heal from hurt caused within and outside of their respective cultural communities due to instances of sexual assault. Understanding one another and making space to develop relationships and community consistency with one another could result in more nuanced and positive perceptions of intra-racial sexual assault allegations and rape allegations.

However, there are critical responsibilities held by institutional agents such as Title IX coordinators and police officers, who not only investigate these cases but are also sometimes the first person a survivor discloses their sexual assault instance to. Therefore, workshops made for these institutional agents should focus on teaching the history of how rape impacts specific minoritized groups. This could act as a first step in building trust between institutions and students. Students being able to identify what agents took the initiative to learn about how sexual violence impacts specific cultures could help them trust investigations will be handled with less bias, particularly racial bias, moving forward. As it relates to Title IX coordinators, developing a relationship with students via attending programming and events which are important to them—especially those which relate to sexual violence—could also play a role in building trust between these administrators and students.

Suggestions also include incorporating a mandated opt-in mechanism to newsletters for these mandatory reporters to access articles discussing the nuances of how sexual violence impacts different affinity groups. There was also a call to policymakers to include sections on

sexual violence prevention reports which highlight these articles, as well as connecting mandated reporters to databases of resources which are based on supporting students' different minoritized groups when they experience sexual violence.

Institutions being able to humanize themselves and show up for Black students might help alleviate some concerns participants expressed regarding sexual violence. In addition, operating a task force to ensure the execution, maintenance, and evaluation of these suggestions could reinforce a university's commitment to addressing sexual assault via a comprehensive approach and could impact intra-racial sexual assault perceptions. Universities should swiftly incorporate the catalyzing suggestions of this research, including students creating systems to maintain and enhance pressure on the administration to make necessary changes. Universities should also work with students to create their own systems of addressing instances of sexual violence within their own minoritized communities via restorative justice models.

The research component of my suggestions includes conducting this study in different state and regional locations, at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with Black women as the sole participants, with Black men and women together in focus groups, as well as Black students with Title IX staff and police officers in focus groups. I also suggest looking at the sexual assault allegations as they relate to upbringing and media. One of the most significant research suggestions of this project includes the extension of this research to different minoritized groups to understand the nuances which might be missed in how rape cases are perceived. These are just a few examples of the suggestions which could be helpful based on the findings of this research.

Conclusion

Every college in America needs to do more to prevent sexual violence. According to critical race theorists like Derrick Bell, sexual assault can be seen through a racial lens because racism is normal and not abnormal (Crewe, 2021).

The perceptions racialized groups or communities, such as Black students, have while talking about sexual violence, can be influenced by historical context. Black men have a sociocultural history of being associated with hypersexuality and crime (Baker, 1998). This might change how Black males feel towards their sex abuse accusers. However, when Black women admit having experienced sexual violence, it has often been treated with skepticism or denial (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017). According to studies, intra-racial rapes predominate (Koch, 1995; Wheeler & George, 2001). To properly examine and evaluate charges of sexual violence between Black men and women inside Black communities, it is vital to understand how sexual violence effects Black communities on an internal level.

The following issues are looked at in this study: (1) How do Black men perceive rape allegations made by Black women against Black men? (2) What impacts those perceptions? I ran a study in which participants were given a fictitious scenario to find answers to both questions. The scenario included a fictitious instance of intra-racial sexual assault in which a Black woman claimed a Black man had attacked her. I used intersectionality and the Cultural Betrayal Trauma Theory (CBTT) to examine the interview data using inductive coding. I searched for Black male participants' perceptions of Black women's accusations of sexual assault against Black males in my analysis of the outcomes from 14 interviews. The participants in this study were 14 undergraduate students who were enrolled in a mainly white institution (PWI) on the west coast

of the United States of America. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were used to get the data.

The results showed Black men had a wide range of opinions about intra-racial sexual assault allegations in Black communities which included some perceiving claims of sexual violence as legitimate and some viewing them as illegitimate. In the hypothetical situation, they supported the survivor and pointed out crucial factors which contributed to her dismissal as well as obstacles which prevented her from disclosing the assault. Participants also thought their Black male peers would respond to the situation in a variety of ways, with some affirming and supporting the survivor and others discounting and discrediting the victim's experience. Participants mentioned a variety of factors, including upbringing, media influences, reputation, a lack of institutional trust, and others, affected how participants responded to various circumstances.

Among the concrete recommendations was an institutional shift within the academic setting to identify aspects of rape culture outside of explicit discussions about sexual violence, such as coercion, victim-blaming, and consent. Specifically, this involved revising specific Title IX orientations, developing courses which highlight these components in their curricula, hosting workshops for mandated reporters, Title IX officers, and university police departments in particular, holding culturally relevant training sessions, and putting taskforces in place to strategically implement these recommendations. Suggestions also included adding newsletters which describe the effects of sexual violence on various underrepresented groups and including additional resources from minoritized groups in national reports on the prevention of sexual violence in colleges. Other suggestions include using restorative justice models in colleges and

universities as well as pressure systems to make institutions accountable for making the necessary adjustments to address campus sexual violence concerns.

Future research ideas include examining the interactions between Black men and institutional agents (such as Title IX officers and police officers), Black men's perceptions of allegations of intra-racial sexual violence at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Black men's perceptions of allegations of intra-racial sexual violence at higher education institutions throughout the United States beyond just the West Coast, and Black women's perceptions of intra-racial sexual violence, as well as opinions about instances of racial/cultural intra-group sexual assault in other minoritized groupings.

This research project hopes to disrupt the systems which taint misinformed perceptions Black men may have of intra-racial sexual violence. The goal of this project is to illuminate the systems which produce these perceptions in students' everyday lives outside of sexual violence so they can recognize, critique, and dismantle misinformed perceptions of sexual violence in the walls of higher education, and beyond.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

INTRODUCTION:
Gregory Ashton Pemberton who is the principal investigator for this study and Jessica Harris who is the faculty advisor for this study, from the Department of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles are conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your self-identification as a Black male undergraduate, aged 18 or older, and currently enrolled at the Rodan University. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part in this study.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?
To understand how black men perceive being accused of crimes on collegiate campuses.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?
Participation will take a total of about *1 to1.5 hours. Those who desire can take an additional hour to answer interview questions. (but is not mandatory).*
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Do a demographic survey before the interview.
- Block out 1to 1.5 hours of your time for a one-on-one zoom interview.
- Be willing to be recorded on the zoom interview.
- Discuss hypothetical case scenarios.
- Rationalize your opinions of hypothetical case scenario.
- Be 18 years or older and identify as Black/African American.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?
Conversations around certain topics in the interview can be potentially triggering for participants. Therefore participants will be allowed to excuse themselves from the interview if needed.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?
There will not be any direct benefits for participating but data from this interview will be used to potentially impact conversations around Blackness on college campuses.
The results of the research may help institutions have a deeper understanding of experiences of Blackness on college campuses.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?
Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?
The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Data will be placed in a transcription system that is password-encrypted, and the password is only known by the principal investigator. All data will be held in password-encrypted accounts. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach of confidentiality. All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the interview confidential. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security. Participants will be able to review, edit, and erase the tapes/recordings of their research participation.

Use of personal information that can identify you:
None. No names or other personal identifiers will be mentioned in the final publishings of this study.

How long information from the study will be kept:
A minimum of 2 years

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
Identifiers will be removed from the identifiable private information and, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject or the legally authorized representative.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?
- $25 will be paid to each participant via Venmo or CashApp no later than a week after their participation in the study.
- If participants are unable to complete their Zoom interview, they will receive full compensation of $25.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
The research team: If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Gregory Ashton Pemberton @ ashtonp627@gmail.com or Dr. Walter Allen wallen@ucla.edu or the study's Faculty Sponsor Jessica Harris at jharris@gseis.ucla.edu.

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP): If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty

to you. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

APPENDIX B: PROTOCOL

Qualtrics Survey

http://Rodan Universityed.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0NuPXHGAcylc9O5

Facilitator Script

Thank you for your participation. This interview will focus on how Black collegiate men navigate their interactions with Black collegiate women. It will be recorded. I will begin by presenting you with a scenario, and then I will ask you some questions about it. If any of the questions upset you, please feel free to skip them. You are also able to end the interview at any point. If you have any questions or want to briefly or permanently excuse yourself from the interview, please let me know. Do you have any questions, comments, or concerns before we get started? (Answer any of those that come up.) Alright, we shall begin?

Questions (Before Case Scenario is Read)

- Tell me more about your college search process and why you applied to Rodan University. What aspects of the institution led you to enroll at Rodan University?
- Please tell me about some of your personal values, such as family or religion. How have these values changed or shifted while at Rodan University?
- What would you say are some of the best parts about being a Black male student at Rodan University? What about some of the challenging parts of being a Black male student at Rodan University?
- Tell me more about your experiences with Black women students on campus.

Case Scenario

Myra remembers (a Black female student at Rodan University) the evening of March, 7th, 2015 had already been a difficult night for her. Myra says she was upset after an argument with her friend, Lance, a black male student who was also a Rodan University student. She said she thought talking to Miles, a close friend of Lance, would help her calm down. Myra recalls that Miles had told her he had just gotten cable, so after coming to his apartment to talk and relax, she laid down on his bed to watch TV. Myra said that after a few minutes, Miles reached over and put his hand down her pants. Myra said she told him "No," and Miles listened to her talk for a minute, but not long after, he tried to put his hands down her pants again. Myra claimed that she told him "No," once more. However, this time, she said Miles did not stop; he raped her.

Myra recalls that the day following her assault; she visited the Title IX office, where she met with Title IX coordinator and Assistant Vice President for Harassment & Discrimination, Prevention and Compliance, Amanda Lowry. Myra states that the first question that Lowry asked her following the assault was, "Why didn't you leave?" Myra felt that this type of question was putting her at fault for being raped. Even though Lowry told her that the Title IX office would pursue an investigation, Myra wanted to make sure she put in a report to Rodan University Police Department, given the lack of support she felt from Lowry. So, the day after reporting the rape to Lowry, Myra reported the rape to the Rodan University Police Department.

Over the next two weeks, Myra recalls the Title IX office interviewing her several times. She states that the interviews were intense and that she did not know why she was being asked to recount her story multiple times, as it was stressful due to the number of intimate details she was being asked to recall again and again. The Title IX office informed her that Miles was going through the same type of questioning process.

Takeaways from the Title IX Interviews

- In one interview Myra said she had come to be on top at one point during the alleged assault because she had involuntarily been pulled on top, but in another interview stated she voluntarily got on top after she originally said “No.”
- In one interview Myra stated that there had been “no force” applied and that she hadn’t felt “threatened,” although she had said she'd been in fear.
- The interviews of both Myra and Miles affirm neither student had been drinking or doing drugs.
- The interviews of both Myra and Miles affirm that Myra said “No” at least twice during the alleged assault.

Title IX Policies

- Under Title IX, a school must inform students who report an assault of their right to request a criminal investigation alongside disciplinary intervention, and cannot prevent them from doing so. Therefore the day after disclosing the rape to Lowry, Myra reported the rape to the Rodan University Police Department.
- According to Rodan University policy, in order to constitute a lack of consent, there must be incapacitation, use of physical force, the threat of physical or emotional harm, undue pressure, isolation, or confinement involved.

Takeaway from the Police Report

- Although the officer who completed Myra’s report for Rodan University plainly wrote the incident type was "rape"—and Lowry investigated her claim as one of "sexual assault"—the college's crime log classifies the incident as “simple battery.”

Questions (Asked After Case is Read)

- What are some of the first things that come to your mind as you read this case? What emotions are you feeling?
- Is there anything about this case that seems unusual, or atypical for you? If so, please explain why.
- So Myra reported this assault to campus police officers and the Title IX Coordinator.
- How do you think this would've played out if she told her peers about this? Family members?
- What does a restorative justice response to this instance look like? Restorative justice (a system of criminal justice which focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large).
- Explain how you felt about the Title IX coordinators , the campus evaluation of the case, and their decision about the case. Tell me what you think about how Rodan University handled this case, all things considered.
- How do you think other Black men at Rodan University might react to this situation if they read about this case? (Similar, different, to you and why?)
- How does the racial identity of Myra, as a Black woman, influence your perceptions of this case? Do you think her race impacted how she was treated or the outcome of the case? Why or why not?
- How do you think Myra’s identity as a Black woman especially with this being a case of sexual violence between two black people specifically impacts how other Black men at Rodan University might look at this case?
- How does the racial identity of Miles, as a Black man, influence your perceptions of this case? Do you think race impacted the outcome of the case? Why or why not?

- How do you think Miles's identity as a Black man, especially with this being a case of sexual violence between two black people, specifically impacts how other Black men at Rodan University might look at this case?
- What are your final reflections, questions, comments, or concerns, before we conclude this interview?

Thank you for your time. If you have found any of these conversations triggering or want to know more about sexual violence, please let me know and I will give you the appropriate and relevant resources. If you are interested in learning more about how sexual assault affects Black people specifically, a list of videos/documentaries will be shared with you. Finally, please remember that as compensation for this interview, you will receive $25. Thank you once again for your time and participation.

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FLYER

ASHTON PEMBERTON, A GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHER, IS SEEKING BLACK UNDERGRADUATE MEN AT RODAN UNIVERSITY TO TAKE PART IN HIS STUDY ABOUT BLACKNESS AND GENDER

1. Talk about their Rodan University experience
2. Have Deep Discussions about race
3. Discuss Relationships between Black men and Black women
4. Get Paid $25 for 1 hour of their time

Ready for your voice to be heard?
Use the QR Code below to a time slot for the interview!

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