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Racialized Women's Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Canadian Higher Education: An Intersectional Analysis

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education

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Abstract

Conducted through a qualitative case study, this dissertation focuses on 15 racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment while attending a post-secondary institution in Ontario, Canada. Drawing on the notion of intersectionality as a conceptual and theoretical framework, this study investigates how the intersections of their identities shaped their experiences.

Findings revealed a number of critical insights with respect to the racialized dimensions of sexual violence and harassment. The behaviours, comments, and actions participants received from men in inter-racial contexts illuminates the simultaneous experience of racialization, sexism, and fetishization which makes racialized women vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment. Although few participants in this study experienced intra-racial sexual violence and harassment, this study's focus on both inter-racial and intra-racial contexts provides important insight into the qualitatively different ways in which sexual violence and harassment is experienced by racialized women; demonstrating how the intersections of social identity shapes the behaviours and comments of perpetrators as well as how women interpret their experiences vis-à-vis the racial and gendered identities of their perpetrators.

Findings of this study also revealed that women often drew upon the intersections of their identities when contemplating disclosure to informal support systems, such as family and peers. With regards to family, the issue of 'culture' as a barrier to disclosure and shaping feelings of self-blame were discussed. While I problematize the overemphasis on culture as the sole reason for why women choose to remain silent, I argue that it is not helpful to ignore culture. Instead, it is necessary to consider how cultural norms and values, as well as structural inequities, simultaneously impede upon women's disclosure decisions. Although few participants in this study disclosed to an on-campus sexual violence service, the experiences of the few who did provides insight into the implications of disclosing for racialized women vis-à-vis structural inequities within post-secondary institutions.

This dissertation thus challenges one-size-fits-all narratives with regards to sexual violence and harassment as solely an issue of gender inequality, and critiques the limitations of existing government and post-secondary policies. This study thus has significant implications for sexual violence policies and services in higher education.

Keywords: sexual violence; sexual harassment; racialized women; higher education; Canada; intersectionality

Summary for Lay Audience

This dissertation is study of 15 women who self-identify as racialized women and have experienced sexual violence and/or harassment while attending a university in Ontario, Canada. Racialized women refers to women who do not identify as White. The main theoretical framework used for this study is intersectionality, a theory which considers how social identity categories, such as but not limited to gender, race, class, and religion overlap. Intersectionality considers how different forms of inequality are simultaneously experienced, and thus challenge focusing solely on single-identity categories. In this study, an intersectional approach is utilized to understand how race and ethnicity intersects with gender to shape women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment.

The findings of this study found that the intersections of identity informed why women were targeted by male perpetrators. The present study found that perpetrator's in inter-racial contexts (where the perpetrator and participant's racial identities were different) often drew on intersecting racial and gendered stereotypes and perceptions of non-White women in their comments, actions, and behaviours towards women. In intra-racial contexts, some participants believed that they were targeted because they shared a similar racial background as their perpetrators. The results of this study reveal that race had as much to do with why women were targeted as much as their gender did.

This study also found that the intersections of identity shaped women's disclosure to both informal networks, such as family and peers, as well as formal on-campus services. While 'culture' was discussed by some participants as a barrier to disclosure, I challenge the overemphasis on culture as the main reason for why women choose to not disclose. Although I do not ignore culture, I argue that we need to also consider how societal inequities inform racialized women's disclosure decisions. Although a small number of participants did disclose to on-campus services, the findings of this study reveal the limitations of such services for helping racialized women.

Finally, this study also examines Ontario's Bill 132, which expects all public post-secondary institutions in the province to have a sexual violence policy. Moreover, I critique several post-secondary sexual violence policies. I argue that the limitations of these policies has implications for racialized women.

This dissertation is intended to help us further understand the experiences of racialized women and to inform more inclusive and equitable sexual violence policies, services, and resources in higher education.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Introduction

This dissertation examines racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education. Conducted through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, this study is an intersectional case study of 15 university students in Ontario who identify as racialized women and experienced sexual violence and harassment during their time as university students. By examining the intersections of their social identities, namely gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and class,¹ the present study examines and illuminates critical insight into the racialized dimensions of sexual violence and harassment for university students. This study contributes to an emerging body of research in the Canadian context which examines women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education through a qualitative analysis. It is the first to focus exclusively on racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education in Canada.

The leading questions which drove this study are as follows:

¹ A limitation of this study is that it focuses on women who identify as cis-gender. Although most participants identified as heterosexual, one did identify as bisexual. However, since they did not delve into the influence of their sexuality on their experiences of sexual violence and harassment, I do not address sexuality as a pertinent identity in this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that individuals who do not identify as heterosexual and are transgender and non-binary experience sexual violence at alarmingly high rates while trans and queer women of colour are particularly vulnerable (see National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, 2020; Office for Victims of Crime, 2014; Ryan, 2018; Torres, Hopper, & Chang, 2019). Moreover, while this study does not focus on disability, it is important to note that women who have a disability are also vulnerable to sexual violence, on and off-campus (See for example Aliksson-Schmidt, Armour, & Thibadeau, 2010; Basile, Breiding, & Smith, 2016; Nichols, Bonomi, Kammes, & Miller, 2018).

- How do racialized women perceive the extent to which the intersections of their social identities influenced why they were targets of sexual violence and harassment?
- How do racialized women interpret their experiences of sexual violence through the intersections of their identities?
- How did the intersections of their identities influence their decisions to disclose or remain silent?

Sexual violence and harassment is arguably “the single most widespread educational hazard in academia” (Rudman, Borgida, & Robertson, 1995, p. 519), with one in five women experiencing some form of assault or sexually explicit behaviour, action, or comment while attending a post-secondary institution in Canada (Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, 2015). Results of the Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey, which was completed by 116,000 Canadian university students and 42,000 college students, found that 63% of students experienced some form of sexual harassment (CCI Research, 2019). The emotional, psychological, and educational consequences of sexual violence and harassment for women is devastating. Women experience post-traumatic stress-disorder, trauma, a lack of self-confidence and motivation, lower levels of academic engagement, and failing grades. They often lack a sense of safety on campus, and in some instances, women have had to change schools or drop out of university (Carey, Norris, Durney, Shepardson, & Carey, 2018; Huerta, Cortina, Pang, Torges, & Magley, 2016; Potter, Howard, Murphy, & Moynihan, 2018; Stermac, Horowitz, & Bance, 2017). In a few cases, students have died by suicide (Farrey & Noreen, 2015; Pinto, Weaver, & Hopper, 2010).

A plethora of statistical analysis, surveys, questionnaires, and some empirical studies have examined this pressing social and educational issue across Canada (Bergeron, Hébert, Ricci, Goyer, Kurtzman, & Duhamel, 2016; Dougall, Langille, Steenbeek, Asbridge, & Andreou, 2016; Senn, Eliasziw, Barata, Thurston, Newby-Clark, & Hobden, 2014; Quinlan, Clarke, & Miller, 2016; Quilan, Quilan, Fogel, & Taylor, 2017). Under

heavy scrutiny to address sexual violence and harassment in higher education and workplaces, in 2016 the Government of Ontario enacted Bill 132, which required every public post-secondary institution across the province to implement a comprehensive sexual violence policy by 2017. However, few research studies cited above, including policy implementations and campus initiatives implemented in its wake, have addressed the experiences and unique concerns of racialized women. Existing literature has focused predominately on White students (who were also largely cisgender, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual) whose horrid experiences have not only ignited national outcry, but have informed the development of campus services and resources, including most sexual violence policies—all of which have largely absented issues of race and ethnicity and other marginalized social identities.²

In my review of the Canadian news coverage on sexual violence and harassment in university contexts across the country over the course of the last several years, issues of race and ethnicity have also been widely absent while racialized women have barely been at the centre of any report. This is concerning given that studies in Ontario universities—including a recent 2019 study conducted by the grassroots organization, Silence is Violence (SiV)—revealed that marginalized students experience the highest rates of sexual violence (Elpa, 2019; also see Canadian Federation of University Students-Ontario, 2015). Indeed, while racialized students experience sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education, encounter hostile, discriminatory, and isolating environments, and experience mental and emotional health problems as a consequence, which this present study will demonstrate (also see Henry & Tator, 2009; Perry, 2010), the lack of attention given to

² This is also apparent in the context of the United States (see for example Harris, 2016; Harris & Linder, 2017).

their experiences is deeply alarming. To respond to this gap, this dissertation, informed by an intersectional theoretical framework (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991), centers racialized women as the subjects of inquiry.

While feminist scholarship and anti-violence movements have been at the forefront of exposing the systemic reality of violence against women, racialized and Indigenous feminist anti-violence activists and academics have long challenged traditional feminist conceptions that have postulated that sexism and gender inequality are the sole reason for violence against women (see for example Bogard, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991, 1992, 1997; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 1994, 1998; Richie, 2000; Sokoloff, 2004). They have argued that such explanations and efforts to combat violence have focused exclusively on women who identify as White and occupy other relatively privileged social locations, while neglecting to acknowledge how structures of power and oppression, such as race and economic inequities, inform the experience of gender, sexual violence, and women's abilities to disclose and access appropriate services.

Among such critiques has been from feminist Andrea Smith (2003), who challenged Susan Brownmiller's (1975) argument that sexual violence is "nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (as cited in Smith, 2003, p. 70). Smith suggests that this assertion negates the relationship between sexual violence, colonialism, and racism, and how historically, sexual violence had been weaponized by Europeans during the era of colonization as a "tool" to oppress and dehumanize Indigenous women and men. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1992), too, critiqued limited discourses and approaches to anti-violence by arguing that Black women's experiences of violence cannot be reduced to the limits of gender oppression alone as their experiences of gender and violence are profoundly shaped by racial and economic

oppressions as well. Likewise, Patricia Hill Collins (2004), in her poignant criticism of White feminist and anti-racist narratives that have long silenced Black women's experiences, writes that "the sexual politics of Black womanhood reveals the fallacy of assuming that gender affects all women the same way—race and class matter greatly" (p. 229). And as Audrey Murrell (1996) contends, for women of colour "sexual harassment should be described as a form of both sex discrimination and race discrimination because they are historically and experientially tied to one another" (p. 57).

Existing scholarship has found that racialized women are prone to receiving a range of sexually violent and harassing comments, behaviours, and unsolicited actions due to their intersecting, marginalized locations within Canadian and American society (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Buchanan et al., 2008; Buchanan & Omerod, 2002; Murrell, 1996). Subjugated by their gender and subordinated by their race and ethnicity, dominant cultural narratives, stereotypes, and sexual images of racialized women, rooted in a sexist and racist social structure, point to the centrality of race in the construction and experience of gender in the lives of non-White women (Chou, 2012; Collins, 2004), including in their experiences of sexual violence and harassment. Buchanan and Omerod (2002) refer to this as racialized sexual harassment, which refers to the simultaneous experience of racism and sexism in racialized women's accounts of sexual harassment.

Indeed, a focus on gender as the sole reason for violence against women undermines how differently women's lived experiences are depending on the privileges and disadvantages they are granted due to their intersecting social identities. Intersecting systems of power, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and religion, which have been conditioned by historical processes and structural relations of domination and oppression, makes women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment qualitatively

different from one another. Yet, universities continue to put forth universal narratives of gender and sexual violence, despite the plethora of existing research, news coverage, and statistics which account for the high rate to which Indigenous and racialized women experience violence and how race and structural circumstances have a paramount impact on this; albeit outside of the context of higher education. For example, the last decade has brought the reality of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to the attention of non-Indigenous peoples in Canada (Amnesty International, 2009). Amnesty International identified the pertinent relationship between racism and sexism in the context of violence against Indigenous women, asserting that centuries of colonization, state violence, and discriminatory laws, including inequitable structures of racism, misogyny, poverty, and neglect on part of the state have contributed to making Indigenous women and girls vulnerable to violence. The national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also revealed that violence against Indigenous women is rooted in many systemic issues (Government of Canada, 2019).³ But despite this increased attention and acknowledgment of the link between gender and race, structural inequities and violence against non-White women, most post-secondary institutions in Ontario have surprisingly failed to seriously acknowledge how sexual violence intersects with race and other social identities.

Despite virtually every post-secondary institution having some form of official statement regarding the diversity of their student body, (see Chapter 5) most have ignored social differences in these policies in favour of one-size-fits-all, ahistorical, identity-neutral

³ In 2014, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper refused to acknowledge the appalling rate to which Indigenous women and girls were subject to violence as a “sociological phenomenon”, calling instead for Canadians to “view it as a crime” (Kaye & Béland, 2014).

approaches that, in reality, only caters to those who occupy privileged social locations as White, middle-class, heterosexual, and cisgender. Yet as the findings of this study will reveal, gender intimately intersects with race and ethnicity in women's experiences; from why they are targeted by perpetrators, to the options that are available for them to utilize in the context of disclosure, to how women account for feelings of self-blame, guilt, and shame. As Jiwani (2006) asserts in her discussion of violence endured by racialized women, "the absence of any discussion or investigation of racism as a motive reflects not only an erasure of the violence of racism but also its taken-for-granted character as a non-problematic and unrecognizable element" (p. 87). The implications of this are that post-secondary institutions are contributing to a "paradigm that "theoretically erases' (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 57) racialized women from the conversation on sexual violence in higher education" (Harris, 2017, p. 46) while negating the severity of the violence to which they are subject to, which stretches beyond an exclusive focus on gender alone.

Rationale

My reasons for undertaking this study stretched beyond academic pursuit or the need to satiate my intellectual curiosity. In an era supposedly marked by post-feminism, which subsumes victimhood in favour of neoliberal discourses of female agency (see Rodier & Maegher, 2014), my research partly sprung from my urge to challenge the conception that women have attained equality and are thus responsible for their own safety, self-care, and recovery. But as Cahill (2009) pointedly writes:

amidst all the cultural noise about ours being a postfeminist age—a time when women have, allegedly, achieved such social and political equality so as to make feminism obsolete and unnecessary—the rates of sexual violence against women serve as a palpable reminder of women's continued oppression. (p. 14)

The #MeToo movement, which emerged at the same time as this present study, has drawn international attention to the alarming reality of violence and harassment against women in all sectors of society, which has been followed by a number of high-profile accusations and some victories against prominent figures, such as U.S. President Donald Trump, Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, actor Bill Cosby, and Supreme Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh. But despite the intense coverage of these cases, we also witnessed the risks women take in bringing forth their stories of sexual violence and harassment, including the blow-back they often receive, from not being believed and accused of lying, to being blamed for their assault. While drawing attention to the existence of sexual violence and harassment rightfully critiques liberal discourse of gender parity, it also reminds us that there is still much to be done.

According to the World Health Organization (2013), sexual violence in higher education is part of a larger epidemic of violence against women worldwide. Despite the social acceptance of gender equality, and despite the fact that women outnumber men in university enrollment (see Andres & Adamuti-Trache, 2007), women continue to face open hostility, discrimination, and violence within institutions of higher education. And despite the larger national Canadian narrative of multiculturalism and diversity, racism, Eurocentrism, and varying degrees of prejudice, in both subtle and overt forms, still exist, too (Ahmed, 2009; Henry & Tator, 2009; Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007; Kobayashi, 2009; Mirza, 2014; Samuel, 2005). Such gendered and racial inequities, which simultaneously unravel as social and educational inequities, are explicitly intertwined with the larger historical, social, and political context in which the university is located. As Bajaj, Ghaffar-Kucher, and Desai (2016) write, schools are a microcosm of the society in which they are situated, closely reflecting the socio-political climate of its time. The systemic existence of

patriarchy, racism, and sexism which structures Canadian society is simultaneously embedded in the “routine operation” of Canadian universities (Ng, 1993, p. 193; also see Caxaj, Chau, & Parkins, 2018; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2000; Houshman, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014). Given this, any examination of sexual violence and harassment in higher education requires attention to how social inequities of racism, xenophobia, and sexism are reproduced in post-secondary spaces—from interpersonal interactions between students, to the implementation of policies that negate the experiences of minority students.

Finally, I was driven to undertake this research given the dearth of empirical studies regarding sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education, and particularly the lack of studies accounting for racialized women’s experiences. Thus, I unapologetically approach this study through an intersectional framework informed by a feminist lens with the intention of bringing the experiences of racialized women to the forefront of sexual violence research in post-secondary institutions. White women’s experiences are equally concerning, but their experiences have for far too long been at the centre of sexual and gender-based violence scholarship while racialized women have remained in the margins (Hippinsteel, 1997). The oppression of gender told in the narratives of White women have also marginalized racialized women whose experiences interlock with their race and ethnicity, from why they are targeted, to whom they feel they can turn to for help and disclosure. Merely exploring sexual violence and harassment as a problem of gender inequality is thus unhelpful to racialized women whose experiences of gender, including sexual violence and harassment, are shaped by their race and ethnicity, as well as their class identities, sexualities, and religious convictions in the process and aftermath of sexual violence and harassment.

Informing the issue of sexual violence and harassment in higher education by opening it up to racialized women's experiences has many implications for post-secondary institutions as well as for educational equity. As the student population in Canada becomes more diverse, increasing pluralism demands that post-secondary institutions be receptive to this diversity while held accountable for developing policies and practices that mitigate inequity. This requires universities to develop policies, resources, and services which acknowledge the intersectionality of sexual violence and harassment and are reflective of racialized women's experiences instead of approaching the issue through identity-neutral or one-size-fits-all approaches. This requires understanding what the best practices may be to reach racialized women who face structural and cultural barriers to disclosing and utilizing campus services. This requires universities to also reconsider many of its policies and practices which "may be racist in terms of their effects" (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992, p. 13) as it excludes some students and perpetuates institutional racism (see Samuel, 2005). Moreover, this requires universities to recognize that the existence of racism, sexism, and other oppressions in universities are not separate from one another, and not isolated from the historical, social, and political context of which the university itself is located. If we take van Roosmalen and McDaniel's (1998) assertion to be true, that sexual violence in universities teach women about their social positioning in the larger society, it is vital that we do not turn a blind eye to this pressing social and educational issue, including the persistence of racism, sexism, economic vulnerabilities, xenophobia, and other structures of oppression that shape women's experiences in higher education. It is in this context, then, that "intersectionality can be a useful analytic tool for thinking about and developing strategies to achieve campus equity" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 3).

Research Contributions

This dissertation is the first study to focus exclusively on racialized women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education and contributes to an emerging body of research that approaches sexual violence and harassment in higher education through a qualitative analysis. Given that most sexual violence research in post-secondary institutions have been conducted through quantitative methodologies, this study contributes, methodologically, to centering the voices of racialized women in sexual violence research rather than reducing their experiences to mere surveys, questionnaires, and statistics. As I discuss further in Chapter 3, qualitative studies of sexual violence and harassment in higher education is necessary for our efforts to not only expand the field to include racialized students, but to develop more inclusive, equitable, and effective sexual violence policies, services, and resources in post-secondary institutions.

The present study delineates itself from existing studies on sexual violence in higher education in a number of ways. Firstly, this research focuses partly on a demographic of women who have been overlooked in this body of research: second-generation⁴ Middle Eastern and South Asian-Canadian women. While there has been scholarship on Black, Latina, and to a smaller extent, East Asian women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in American universities, there has been a noticeable absence among understanding the experiences and perspectives of Middle Eastern and South Asian women. While this population of women have been subject to extensive research on violence across Canada, the United States, as well as the United Kingdom (see for example Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009; Kallivayalil, 2007; Reavey, Ahmed, & Majumdar, 2006), most

⁴ In this study, second-generation refers to individuals who were either born in Canada and have at least one parent born outside of the country, as well as individuals who immigrated to Canada before the age of 12.

of this research has been dominated by a focus on immigrant women specifically and mainly within the context of intimate partner violence and domestic abuse as experienced within their cultural and ethnic communities. Not only do we know virtually nothing about their experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education, but we also do not have sufficient understanding of their experiences with male perpetrators from outside of their communities or within cross-racial contexts, which this study partly addresses.

Secondly, the present study utilizes what Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2004) refers to as “controlling images”, a term that she applies to describe racist and sexist stereotypes and images which work to harm, namely, Black women, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. While this notion has been utilized by scholars in their analysis of the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality among Black women, and to a smaller extent, East Asian women, it surprisingly remains under-theorized in discussions regarding Middle Eastern and South Asian women, namely those who identify as Muslim. By extending this notion to Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian women, this study provides critical insight into the power of controlling images at the intersections of racialization, gendered Islamophobia, and fetishization which shape perceptions of perpetrators and make women vulnerable to sexual violence. In this regard, this study contributes to the understanding of racialized dimensions of sexual violence and harassment by drawing attention to its intersectional significance with respect to the bodies of Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian women. Although the notion of controlling images has been applied to East Asian women in some research, I expand on these studies through theoretical insights gleaned from an intersectional framework as I discuss the experiences East Asian-Canadian participants in this study have had with racialized forms of sexual violence and harassment.

Thirdly, while studies by Shelton and Chavous (1999) and Buchanan and Omerod (2002) provide insight into how Black American women perceive and interpret sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial and intra-racial contexts, similar studies have not been extended to women who identify as Middle Eastern and South Asian, and East Asian-Canadian women. Thus, this present study demonstrates the qualitatively different ways which sexual violence and harassment is experienced by Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian-Canadian women by considering sociocultural variations in terms of how the intersections of social identity shapes how women interpret their experiences of sexual violence and harassment vis-à-vis the racial and ethnic identity of their perpetrators.

An additional contribution of this study focuses on disclosing to peers. Although studies have found that peers, particularly female peers, are the most utilized support network for university students who have experienced sexual violence and harassment (see for example Dworkin, Pittenger, & Allen, 2016; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012; Stepleton, McMahon, Potter, & MacKenzie, 2019), research has not addressed how the racial, ethnic, and religious identities of peers, vis-à-vis the identities of women themselves, are significant in terms of who they are willing to disclose to. This study provides insightful revelations with regards to peer disclosure and the intersections of social identity; contributing to an unexplored issue between the role of identity within the context of peer support. This contribution also problematizes the limitations of bystander interventions that are increasingly practiced in universities to help combat sexual violence and harassment on campus.

Although Stermac, Horowitz, and Bianca's (2017) study is among the few existing scholarly studies which have examined racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Ontario's institutions of higher education—providing valuable

understanding of racialized women's experiences of disclosure and its impact on their education—there are several limitations to their study. Firstly, the authors tend to speak of minority subgroups, such as “South Asian” or “East Asian”, without delineating between the multitude of ethnic, religious, and national groups categorized under these broad umbrella terms; something that a number of other studies have done as well (see for example Bryant-Davis, Chung, & Tillman, 2009; Buchanan, Bergman, Bruce, Woods, & Lichty, 2009; Burgess-Proctor, Pickett, Parkhill, Hamill, Kirwan, & Kozak, 2016; Stepleton et al., 2019). Given that I approach this present study through an intersectional analysis, my research demonstrates that there are critical differences within subgroups in terms of how women rely on cultural frameworks to reflect on feelings of self-blame or their concerns about disclosing to informal and formal support services. Unlike my own findings, the authors also do not provide in-depth insight into how race, ethnicity, religion, and cultural socialization shapes women's decisions to not disclose to the university.

While Stermac, Horowitz, and Bianca do address the issue of culture in shaping some of their participants' disclosure decisions, they fail to provide theoretical insight and scholarly context into how women from certain minority communities are framed vis-à-vis racialized and stereotypical perceptions of culture by the dominant society, nor do they address debates regarding the implications of speaking of culture in the context of violence against racialized women (see for example Jiwani, 2006; Volpp, 2011). Indeed, speaking about culture is risky given that discussing culture within the context of violence against racialized women often works to confirm the dominant society's racist, stereotypical impressions of non-White women as subject to the overbearing control of their patriarchal, repressive families and communities (Razack, 1998, 2003). For this reason, telling women's stories of culture often risks marginalizing and further othering racialized women

as their stories of silence about violence become stories about the consequences of what I call the *culturalization of silence*. Expanding on Sherene Razack's (1994, 1998, 2003) extensive theorizing on the culturalization of violence—which speaks to how violence against women from certain minority communities is often perceived through a culturalist lens by the dominant society—I posit the culturalization of silence in order to draw attention to the implications of discussing culture in the context of disclosure and bringing narratives of silence about abuse to the attention of the university, which is a White institution. Indeed, the implications of culturalist narratives of violence, often legitimized and perpetuated by the dominant society, is that women's accounts become solely about culture—detached from any structural circumstances.

I understand why some racialized scholars and women have chosen to not speak of culture in the context of violence against non-White women, especially in light of how such discussions often reproduce racist, Orientalist narratives that ultimately marginalize and other minority women and their communities, which I delve into in Chapter 6. Addressing some participants' discussions of culture in this study has indeed weighed heavily on me as I contemplated how I was going to discuss this without reproducing and justifying racial and discriminatory narratives of non-White women and their communities. I have come to the realization, however, that avoiding culture is not only ineffective, but in fact, quite necessary to our efforts to challenge one-size-fits-all approaches to sexual violence and harassment as well as for our need to develop more effective services on campus for racialized women.

While I indeed challenge the overemphasis on culture as an explanatory framework as for why racialized women choose to remain silent about abuse, I do not ignore it, either. I demonstrate that it is not useful nor fruitful to ignore culture in favour of structural factors,

while, at the same time, I argue that we must also understand women's decisions to not to disclose as a consequence of structural inequities in light of structural racism, marginalization, xenophobia, othering, racialization, and an absence of comprehensive post-secondary policies and services. In other words, I argue that we can speak of culture while also speaking of structural circumstances in the context of women's disclosure decisions.

A final contribution of this study is that it critiques Ontario's Bill 132 and several post-secondary sexual violence policies that were implemented in its wake in 2017 through an intersectional analysis, which will be explored in Chapter 5. This critique addresses the failure of most policies, including post-secondary institutions more generally, to sufficiently address and account for not only social differences and structural oppressions in the context of sexual violence and harassment, but to develop appropriate services and resources that would cater to the needs of racialized women and other minority students. This critique will be contextualized by using the insights of Sara Ahmed (2007, 2012a) into the limitations of institutional responses to diversity and their commitment to institutional change.

Racialized Women

Omi and Winant (1986) assert that racialization is a process of racial formation, where racial categories are subject to construction and transformation within certain historical, political, social, and economic contexts. More specifically, they define racial formation as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (1994, p. 55), while it is explicably intertwined and connected with how society is shaped, organized, and governed. A critical factor in the development and

reproduction of racial meanings (Gonzalez-Sobrinio & Goss, 2019), racialization is not a neutral form of categorization, but an act of power “which aim[s] to delineate who is White and who is not, and therefore who qualifies for the privileges linked to Whiteness...Through the state, race and racialization become institutionalized and have material consequences on people’s lives ” (Lee, Park, & Wong, 2017, p. 494).

Racialization draws attention to the social construction of race as well as its social significance throughout social, cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts through which race has existed and has been reproduced (Taylor, James, & Saul, 2007, p. 155). Taylor, James, and Saul (2007) go on to contend that: “[i]n all social contexts, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchy inform *how*, *when*, and *where* race takes meaning and mediate its interlocking relationship with gender, sexuality, class, colour, citizenship/immigrant status, and nationality” (p. 155). The varying ways in which particular groups become racialized are through social practices such as stereotyping or holding certain beliefs about the ways in which certain non-White groups naturally are (also see Jiwani, 2002). As Kobayashi (2009) writes:

[w]e cannot understand systemic effects without a recognition that the normalized patterns of racialization are acted out by and through individual bodies...We need to acknowledge that the ‘adverse effects’ of racialization range from the scarcity of bodies of colour on virtually all Canadian campuses, to deeply personal experiences of exclusion. (p. 73)

My use of the term racialized women is intended to refer to women who have been subject to historical and contemporary forms of racialization and experience systemic racism, discrimination, and marginalization due to their race, ethnic background, culture, and/or religion. The term racialized, as posited by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) (2005), recognizes both the social construction of race and the ongoing systemic and institutionalized marginalization of racialized peoples. It is

CRIAW's description of racialized women that I will utilize in this dissertation. Racialized women refer to women who:

Experience racism because of their race, skin colour, ethnic background, accent, culture or religion...[and includes women] of colour...from different ethnic, linguistic, religious, or cultural minorities...who are targets of racism...What they have in common is they are racialized — they are subjected to racism and made to feel different because of their racial/ethnic background. (as cited in Ng-See-Quan, 2013, p. 1)

According to Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), given that the notion of 'racism' often evokes defensiveness from members of the majority, the term racialization "can get people to think about broader processes that bring into play the range of systemic and cultural forces through which we construct our lives" (p. 5).

Indeed, using the broad term 'racialized women' has the potential to negate differences between women who are subject to varying processes of racialization, and risks perpetuating the assumption that women experience the intersections of gender inequality and racism in similar ways simply because they are not White—the same way that notions such as "immigrants" or "visible minorities" tends to do. As I approach the issue of sexual violence and harassment through an intersectional framework, I "join those treating from universalized images of women...and instead provide analytical and creative insight" into the experiences disparate women have with sexual violence as shaped by varying relations of power and structural inequities (Downe & Biggs, 2011, p. 25).

Conceptual Framework: Intersectionality

Intersectionality considers the range of diverse identities and differences that exist within single social categories (McCall, 2005). While women may share a commonality on the basis of their gender, their experiences of gender are rendered far different from one another

depending on which, for example, racial, sexual, or classed category they identify with. Because each individual has different social identities, one's membership within myriad social factions shapes and affects the ways in which one experiences gender in their life (Gillborn, 2015). As Yuval-Davis (2006) writes:

there is no such thing as suffering from oppression 'as Black', 'as a woman', 'as a working-class person'. We argued that each social division has a different ontological basis, which is irreducible to other social divisions...However, this does not make it less important to acknowledge that, in concrete experiences of oppression, being oppressed, for example, as 'a Black person' is always constructed and intermeshed in other social divisions (for example, gender, social class, disability status, sexuality, age, nationality, immigration status, geography, etc.). (p. 195)

Collins (1990, 2010) has extensively discussed that race, class, sexuality, and gender are disparate categories yet interlocking structures of oppression that merge together to organize individuals in distinctive ways, shaping how systems of oppression interconnect differently in people's lives. For women, intersections of social identity take place, and are shaped by and within a context of interconnected systems and structures of power and oppression, such as racism, sexism, and patriarchy (Also see Collins, 2004, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Thus approaching gender oppression by only examining gender alone, without considering how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and social class intersects, disguises the specific forms of oppression experienced by different women. As categories, gender, race, sexuality, ability, religion, age, and class reference significant and real social divisions. But they are "categories that gain meaning from power relations of racism, sexism and class exploitation" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 7) and these relations of power structure our relations and interactions with one another. However, as Collins and Bilge (2016) remind us, "[w]ithin intersectional frameworks, there is no pure racism or sexism. Rather, power

relations of racism and sexism gain meaning in relation to one another” (p. 26-7). In this regard, as Phillips (2011) notes, intersectionality allows us to:

recognise the significance of seeing individuals as multiply positioned, with each identity (race/ethnicity, gender or class) irreducible to a discrete category or experience. These multiple axes of differentiation and interacting levels of disadvantage and discrimination produce complex social relations (Crenshaw, 1993; Brah & Phoenix, 2009). Analytically, such an approach can also better appreciate internal differentiation which avoids essentialising experience and recognises its historically and spatially contingent nature. (p. 175)

Examining power relations through an intersectional analysis requires one to examine, for example, how social categories are constituted in relation to one another, how people are positioned and restricted in the broader socioeconomic system rather than their own merit, and how uneven distribution of resources shape individuals due to their social categories and social locations in the hierarchal schema of society. The interactions between these shape people’s lived experiences and subjectivities in profoundly disparate ways (Anthias, 2014). But as Tomlinson (2013) asserts, “[i]f critics think intersectionality is a matter of identity rather than power, they cannot see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance” (p.1012 as cited in Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 798). By focusing on power relations through an intersectional theoretical framework, we notice how social categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality reinforce oppression in relation to others (Anthias, 2013).

In accordance with Anthias, Núñez (2014) asserts that how power relations are produced can take intersectionality beyond how categories intersect toward reifying intersectionality’s theoretical and analytical ability to ascertain and challenge the broader social dynamics which perpetuate social inequalities. “Attending to how intersecting power relations shape identities, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural representations and ideologies in ways that are contextualized and historicized introduces

a level of complexity into everything” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 203). This thus brings us to a critical dimension of intersectional scholarship that has remained under-explored in intersectional scholarship: the macro-dynamics of intersectionality.

The structural dimension of intersectionality has often remained missing in studies which have adopted an intersectional conceptual framework as most have focused on understanding the multiplicity of identity and how this affects peoples lived experiences. However, we cannot understand disparate social categories that make up identity, or the power relations that exist between them and inform one another, without focusing on a macro analysis, as it is here that we can identify institutional and structural relations that perpetuate marginalization, inequality, and oppression (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) while conditioning the experiences individuals have (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Núñez, 2014). Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) discuss the implications of ignoring structural analysis in intersectional scholarship:

The recasting of intersectionality as a theory primarily fascinated with the infinite combinations and implications of overlapping identities from an analytic initially concerned with structures of power and exclusion is curious given the explicit references to structures that appear in much of the early work. Within academic as well as political discourse, Black feminism emphasized the role of structures in constituting the conditions of life in which racially and economically marginalized women were situated. “Structural intersectionality” further delineated the “multilayered and routinized forms of domination” (Crenshaw 1991, 1245) in specific contexts such as violence against women. The analysis of the overlapping structures of subordination revealed how certain groups of women were made particularly vulnerable to abuse and were also vulnerable to inadequate interventions that failed to take into account the structural dimensions of the context. (p. 797)

Crenshaw’s (1997) assertion of structural inequality is vital to understanding and contextualizing violence against racialized women:

I use the term structural inequality to refer to the way in which women of color are situated within overlapping structures of subordination...An analysis sensitive to structural intersectionality explores the lives of those at the bottom of multiple

hierarchies to determine how the dynamics of each hierarchy exacerbates and compounds the consequences of another. The material consequences of the interaction of these multiple hierarchies in the lives of women of color is what I call structural intersectionality. Illustrations suggest that violence toward women usually occurs within a specific context that may vary depending on the woman's race, class and other social characteristics. These constraints can be better understood and addressed through a framework that links them to broader structures of subordination that intersect in fairly predictable ways. (p. 249)

According to Mason (2011), social inequality is developed in the context of the larger society, and an analysis of the broader, macro-context helps illuminate the relationship between individuals and groups, as well as social institutions and structures, such as the media, the government, education, and the criminal justice system. It is through such social institutions and structures in which the beliefs, ideologies, values, and hierarchal organization of a society is not only sustained, but reproduces inequity. Mason organizes macro intersectionality into four distinct categories: *political intersectionality*, which focuses on structures and systems such as law, policies, and the criminal justice system; *institutional intersectionality*, which analyzes how social institutions impact, shape, and restrict access to resources and services for specific groups (p. 8); *economic intersectionality*, which adheres to the distribution of wealth and resources and how social class shapes and affects peoples access, mobility, and opportunities. And finally, *representational intersectionality*, which refers to how social groups who are both advantaged and disadvantaged are represented and portrayed in media, texts, and images (p. 9).

Having outlined representational, political, and structural intersectionality in her earlier work, Crenshaw (1997) asserts that intersectional frameworks bring our attention to how broader political and representational practices frame social categories of race and gender. For example, as political initiatives and policies are often developed through the

perspectives of those who belong to dominant social categories, the anti-violence movement and accompanying strategies have often been approached through the experiences of White women (also see Richie, 2000). Given that there has been a failure to consider how factors other than gender, such as race or class make women vulnerable to violence, Crenshaw contends that “[p]olitical strategies that challenge only certain subordinating practices while maintaining existing hierarchies not only marginalize those who are subject to multiple systems of subordination but also often result in oppositionalizing race and gender discourses” (p. 247). Collins (2000) argues that “seemingly color-blind contexts are also characterized by policies that appear to be racially neutral yet have racially disparate effects” (p. 61). In this sense, policies and initiatives aimed to help victims of sexual violence inadvertently revictimize women as prevention efforts and policies fail to consider how broader structural, political, economic, and social conditions shape peoples experiences, vulnerabilities, and oppressions.

Collins’ (2000) concept of the “matrix of domination,” an analytical dimension to examine intersectional identities and how power and dominance function on a structural level in intersecting systems, is useful here. She suggests that in order to identify and understand the functioning and operationalization of power, we need to approach it through the analysis and intersections of four domains of power: *the structural*, *the disciplinary*, *the hegemonic (or cultural)* and *the interpersonal*. Similar to institutional or structural intersectionality that Mason and Crenshaw discuss above, the *structural* domain of power focuses on how social institutions, such as education and the legal system are organized to create subordination and uneven power relations (Collins, 2000, p. 277). For example, racism is a power system that has been “set up” and “organized” through social institutions. This domain of power is concerned with seeing how institutions are structured and how the

intersections of class, race, and gender, among others, structure institutions (See Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 11-12). The *disciplinary* domain of power regards how rules and regulations either uphold hierarchy or challenge it, and it is organized through bureaucracies that advance or retain oppressive structures (2009, p. 53). The *hegemonic* or *cultural domain* of power pertains to how representations, ideologies, and narratives concerning race, class, gender, and sexuality, (as well as their intersections) function as a system of power and play an effective role in the “operation of domination” (2009, p. 53; Collins, 2000, p. 284). The significance of the cultural or hegemonic domain of power is its capacity to influence and shape “consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies” (Collins, 2000, p. 285). As Collins (2000) notes:

[t]he structural and disciplinary domains of power operate through system wide social policies managed primarily by bureaucracies...[i]n contrast, the hegemonic domain of power aims to justify practices in these domains of power. By manipulating ideology and culture, the hegemonic domain acts as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interactions (interpersonal domain). (p. 284)

Lastly, the *interpersonal* domain of power focuses on how power relations play out in people’s lives, in their social interactions with others, and who may be either advantaged or disadvantaged in that interaction (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

In the context of sexual violence against racialized women, it is important to locate each of these domains of power to see how sexism, racism, and socio-economic inequality is reproduced in each realm. In this dissertation, I have approached the structural domain by not only contextualizing the issue of sexual violence against racialized women through a historical understanding of colonialism and immigration, but also examining how the institution of the university, which I view as a macro site, in addition to sexual assault services and the police, might reproduce oppression. In the disciplinary domain, I have

focused on how policies that ignore diversity and social differences inadvertently revictimize women while subjecting them to institutional forms of violence and racism. I also examine how broader discourses of multiculturalism and diversity emphasized by Canadian national rhetoric and universities locate sexism, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and incidences of sexual violence as isolated or interpersonal issues rather than matters conditioned by the structural domain of power. As Collins (2000) writes, “it is vitally important to notice that in most people’s minds, especially if they believe that a colorblind society is a reality, the first three domains—the structural, the cultural or hegemonic, and the disciplinary—often disappear. As a result, people’s understandings of race and racism get collapsed into the interpersonal sphere” (p. 54). Finally, I approach the hegemonic or cultural domain, as well as the interpersonal domain in this dissertation by acknowledging how ideologies, rape myths, and controlling images of racialized women’s bodies and sexualities plays a critical role in shaping the presumptions, stereotypes, and imaginations of perpetrators, as well as women’s responses to their experiences. According to Collins and Bilge (2016):

intersectional analysis reveals how violence is not only understood and practiced within discrete systems of power, but also how it constitutes a common threat that connects racism, colonialism, patriarchy, and nationalism, for example. By questioning how forms of violence within separate systems might in fact be interconnected and mutually supporting, intersectionality’s analytical framework opens up new paths for investigation. (p. 55)

Perhaps what is significant about the potential of intersectionality as applied to the study of sexual violence is that it can help us go beyond violence as an isolated, interpersonal issue and physical form of male aggression towards women, to one which is rooted in how broader structural oppressions and institutions contribute to sexual violence and harassment and its accompanying issues, such as disclosure and women’s help seeking processes.

While my research intends to cater to the voices and experiences of racialized women as they have interpersonal experiences of sexual violence and harassment, in this dissertation I locate these experiences within broader historical contexts of colonialism, Whiteness, and patriarchy which continue to shape and contour our structures of racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Considering how historical processes and contemporary social and political formations shape our experiences, we need to attend to the roots and extricate the “causes, meanings, experiences and consequences of structural violence and show how it operates in real lives” (Farmer, 2004, p. 318). I find Farmer (2004)’s work on structural violence, a phrase initially coined by Johan Caltung and liberation theologians during the 1960s, very useful here. Structural violence refers to how violence is imbedded in social structures and normalized by institutions. In others words, uneven access to resources, the perpetuation of racism, and gender inequality are structural forms of violence. These various dimensions of social oppression perpetuate violence, whether physical or not, towards individuals and social groups (Montesanti, 2015). Taken together, it is structural violence that creates the circumstances in which interpersonal violence can unfold. Sexual violence is undoubtedly part of a broader structural systems and forms of violence, which includes racism, colonialism, patriarchy, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and if we are to attempt to eradicate sexual violence and harassment in higher education and help those effected by it, we must acknowledge its root causes, which are engrained in socially structured systems of inequality and oppression.

Conceptualizing Intersectionality, Feminist politics, and Violence Against Women

Kimberlé Crenshaw popularized intersectionality in academia in her insightful 1989 essay, *“Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of*

Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” However, the notion of intersectionality was not a novel idea that Crenshaw posited, as racialized women activists, feminists, and scholars had been talking about the implications of discussing gender through single-axis analysis for quite some time before Crenshaw introduced this term.⁵ But for the last several decades, intersectionality has found a significant place in academic and feminist theory and practice, assuming a central space in the “feminist tool kit of knowledge production” (Lewis, 2013, p. 869). While intersectionality has undoubtedly altered the way in which gender is discussed in academic and feminist circles today (Shields, 2008), we should not go as far as suggesting that intersectionality is the “brain child of feminism.” Bilge (2013) argues that:

[a] serious consequence of this assumption is that it downplays the centrality of race in the advent of intersectional thought and activism, while concurrently obscuring the formative tensions, both historical and contemporary, between feminism and women of color in the shaping of intersectionality. (p. 413)

Thus, locating intersectionality as a historical product of Black feminist thought and knowledge projects of minority women reminds us of the importance of focusing on racialized women—women who have long been excluded and continue to be marginalized in a variety of spheres, including academia. Racialized female academics have written about the challenges they face for designing courses which focus on feminism and social inequity (Ng, 1993), while others have discussed the hostility and disrespect they receive from, largely, White, male students (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). Others have also written about the racism and sexism, as well as harassment, they have experienced from students

⁵⁵ In the mid-19th century, Sojourner Truth, in her famous 1851 speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” drew attention to the failure of abolitionists to advocate for Black women as they did for Black men, and criticized the racism of the women’s rights movement (Brah & Pheonix, 2004). The Combahee River Collective, along with academic activists, such as Angela Davis and Nira Yuval-Davis, had also addressed the need to understand how gender interlocks with other social identities such as race and class (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

as well as colleagues (Calafell, 2014). Besides this, the concerns of racialized women still stands at the periphery of the women's movement and anti-violence initiatives (see Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016; Richie, 2000), and their oppressions are often blurred by multicultural and liberal democratic rhetoric of institutions, policies, and the state (see Bannerji, 2000; Jiwani, 2006). They are also rarely the subject of sexual violence research beyond intimate partner violence and domestic abuse (see Harris & Linder, 2017; Murrell, 1996).

While intersectionality may be conceptualized as part and parcel to contemporary feminist scholarship, some academics, while acknowledging social differences and oppressions, are still reluctant to utilize intersectionality as a critical theoretical and analytical tool in the context of sexual violence research and theorizing while failing to seriously engage with the core tenets of the theory. I find Lisa Price's (2005) assertions in her book, "*Feminist frameworks: Building theory on violence against women*," quite telling of this aversion to use intersectionality in many feminist approaches to sexual violence, despite extensive calls by racialized women to go beyond gender inequality as being the sole reason for violence against women. Price does not deny that racism and sexism interact in women's lived experiences, and that intersectionality *is* a useful theoretical tool to understand different forms of oppression. However, Price suggests that "[i]n accounting for difference, it is important neither to represent a hierarchy of oppression among women nor to lose sight of the main issue" (p. 66). While acknowledge differences among women is important, she notes, it is necessary to put aside race and ethnicity in order to not lose sight of the main issue: gender inequality.

What the focus primarily on gender inequality does is that it delegitimizes issues of race, ethnicity, sexual, and class oppressions, which are imbedded and intertwined in women's gendered realities and unfold together in the context of sexual violence. As

Crenshaw (1997) points out, the assumption that all women benefit equally from the effort to politicize violence against women as only a gendered issue relegates race, for example, as “unnecessarily divisive” (p. 247). Crenshaw goes on to write that “[i]ndeed, it seems that what women have in common—the fact that they are primary targets of rape and battering—not only outweighs the differences among them but may render bizarre the argument that race should play a significant role in the analysis of these issues” (p. 247). Price’s failure lies in the fact that she sees gender and race as separate social categories rather than constitutive and imbedded in larger processes of power relations and structures that interact to produce unique experiences of sexual violence for racialized women and presents certain barriers and obstacles in the aftermath of their experiences (for example, accessing services and disclosing).

Referring to Crenshaw (1989) who noted that White women often “ignore how their race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women” (p. 184), Price responds by asking “are white women less vulnerable to men’s sex/sexual violence than women of colour?” (p. 65). Price overlooks the fact that intersectionality is not about identifying nor claiming which group is more oppressed than others, but it is instead about seeing where one is located on the spectrum of advantage or disadvantage in regard to, and at the intersections of, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class, among others (Collins, 2010). As Collins (2010) notes, “white feminists routinely point with confidence to their oppression as women but resist seeing how much their white skin privileges them” (p. 20).

Indeed, there is no denying that women, regardless of their race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, citizenship, or age, and so forth, experience violence at alarmingly higher rates than men, and often at the hands of men. But Price’s weakness is that she overlooks

not only the racial, ethnic, sexual, and class dimensions of vulnerability to sexual violence, but she ignores how broader social structures have shaped the hierarchalization of social identity which makes the experiences of racialized women qualitatively different than White women, from why women are targeted and the form in which violence occurs, to their help-seeking processes and the perceptions of service providers—the latter of which have been heavily criticized for perpetuating the marginalization and re-victimization of racialized women who turn to service provisions for help (see Maier, 2008; Razack, 1994).

In the context of examining violence against women, intersectional theorists argue that there is no oppression that is necessarily more significant in a certain situation than other axes' of oppression. However, gender can only be understood in the context of other oppressions. Thus, to approach sexual violence, an intersectional analysis places the intersections and relationship between these categories at the center of its inquiry (Creek & Dunn, 2011). As Khayatt (1994) eloquently asserts:

Unless the boundaries of race, gender, class and sexuality intersect to make visible the various nuances of each category, the usefulness of each becomes lost in hierarchalization of oppressions. In other words, if we isolate each characteristic in an attempt to make it visible without thinking the whole framework into consideration, we are, in effect, rendering invisible the significant factors which combine to produce situations of oppression and discrimination. (p. 10)

Racialized women have brought to the fore different approaches and experiences of gender and gendered power relations to the attention to White feminism. Racial and ethnic disparities, constructed and shaped by historical processes, state intervention, and various social forces, highlight the fact that the main sites of oppression for White women may not be as formidable for racialized women, who experience oppression beyond gender inequality alone. In Sokoloff's (2004) work on domestic violence—using an intersectional approach to challenge gender inequality as the primary explanation for violence—she

argues, “gender inequality is neither the most important nor the only factor that is needed to understand domestic violence in the lives of marginalized women” (p. 139).

Failing to recognize how social categories are imbedded in broader power relations and social structures, and how in turn the violence of sexism and heterosexism, the violence of racism, and the violence of material inequality, among others, merge together and impact upon women’s experiences of sexual violence and harassment is to ignore a large population of women who are already marginalized in multiple dimensions of society. In speaking of violence against women, Harris (2016) points out that we cannot understand it “merely as a manifestation of patriarchy and binary and unequal relations of subordination between men and women. It needs to be located in terms of the differentiated masculinities and femininities that are constructed through the syncretic working of interlocking power dimensions of gender, race and class” (p. 161). Indeed, gender inequality is shaped by its intersections with other systems of power, and women’s experiences with violence can only be understood if situated in relation to their other social locations (Sokoloff, 2004). As Crenshaw (1997) writes:

discursive and political practices that separate race from gender and gender from race create complex problems of exclusion and distortion for women of color. Because mono-causal frameworks are unlikely to provide a ready means for addressing the interplay of gender and race in cultural and political discourse on violence, it is necessary to re-center inquiries relating to violence against women from the vantage point of women of color. (p. 247)

Richie’s (2000) analysis and critique of the anti-violence movement dominated by White feminists can be effectively applied here, suggesting that we need to revise our analytical lens in order to develop a more contextualized examination of violence that is located in an understanding of the historical and contemporary social processes which impact racialized women in different ways:

[T]he assumption of “everywoman” fell into the vacuum created by a white feminist analysis that did not very successfully incorporate an analysis of race and class. In the end, the assumed race and class neutrality of gender violence... divorced racism from sexism, for example, and invited a discourse regarding gender violence without attention to class dimensions of patriarchy and white domination in this country. (p. 1135)

Given that societal reactions to women’s experiences of sexual violence are often based on racialized, gendered, and class-based ideologies, applying an intersectional analysis will help link the gendered dimensions of sexual violence with other existing inequalities. It will also help us to further acknowledge the dynamic ways in which women conceptualize sexual violence in relation to their various social locations. It is here that I locate my research and use intersectionality as a critical theory and analytical lens to approach violence against women.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 is an overview of existing literature on sexual violence and harassment within and outside of higher education. I approach this literature and synthesize the findings by categorizing this research under themes which have helped me conceptualize and understand sexual violence and harassment in more depth. Each theme and subcategory in the literature review reveals insight into the significance of gender, race, sexuality, and socioeconomic status, including its intersections, on the experience and understanding of sexual violence and harassment, perceptions of rape myths and stereotypes, and finally, women’s experiences of disclosure. This chapter will also address the gaps and limitations of existing studies.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology I have used to undertake this study, including a discussion of the rationale for conducting research on sexual violence through a

qualitative case-study method informed by an intersectional framework. I discuss the weakness of quantifying experiences of sexual violence and harassment through statistical studies and argue that without hearing the narratives of individual women, the reality, experience, and threat of intersecting forms of violence remain vague. We also miss fully understanding how women's social locations, and their intersections with broader structures of power and oppression, shape their experiences. Moreover, I discuss the significance of addressing my positionality in the context of conducting socially just, feminist research. How I located participants and conducted interviews, and how intersectionality drove my data analysis, will also be addressed.

Chapter 4 focuses on women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in both cross-racial as well as intra-racial contexts. This chapter demonstrates how women drew on the intersections of their gender, race, ethnicity, and in a few cases, religion, vis-à-vis the racial and gendered backgrounds of their perpetrators, as they discussed their experiences of sexual violence and harassment. This chapter reveals that perpetrators in cross-racial contexts often drew on "controlling images" (Collins, 1990, 2004)—racist and sexist stereotypical images which have been crafted at the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality. I argue that any intersectional examination of racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment must be contextualized within a socio-historical context and structural analysis of the interlocking nature of gender, race, sexuality, as well as class. Yet this chapter will also show how qualitatively different the experience of sexual violence and harassment is for racialized women in intra-racial contexts than it is in cross-racial contexts; revealing intersectionality's valuable analytical insight as a conceptual framework to examine the significance of social identities and its intersections in racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment.

Chapter 5 critically examines Ontario's Bill 132, Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, including some of the subsequent sexual violence policies that were implemented by universities across the province in its wake. By using an intersectional theoretical framework, I problematize the limitations of Bill 132 and existing policies for failing to acknowledge the systemic and structural roots of sexual violence and harassment in higher education, while critiquing its failure to address the intersections of social differences on the experience and aftermath of sexual violence. Despite the fact that nearly all universities having a statement on diversity, the absence and limitations of diversity and social differences in university policies will also be addressed in this chapter. This chapter will also overview some of the general reasons why participants chose not to disclose their experiences of sexual violence and harassment to formal campus services. Moreover, Chapter 5 will discuss the significance of social identity, namely race, ethnicity, gender, and religion, in the context of peer disclosure.

Chapter 6 is a continuation of the impact that the intersections of social identity has had on racialized women's disclosure of sexual violence and harassment. However, it focuses more specifically on the subject of culture. The findings of this chapter concur with existing research which has found that there is a tendency among certain ethnic communities to downplay and not speak of personal issues or sexual relations due to concerns for familial reputation and gender norms, which some participants described through cultural frameworks; acting in some cases as barriers to seeking support or disclosing to informal networks such as family, as well as to formal campus services. However, I argue that an overemphasis on culture not only risks further marginalizing and othering minority women, but it also negates how structural dimensions of racism, sexism, classism, and xenophobia, which are reproduced in higher education, shape women's

decisions to not disclose or seek help. However, this chapter will also argue that we should not ignore a discussion of culture, either.

As this chapter will demonstrate, an overemphasis on culture not only further racializes non-White women and their communities, but it prevents universities from having to develop appropriate services. Without having effective policies in place which acknowledge social differences in the context of sexual violence and disclosure, and without having services in place that will cater to racialized women's needs, it is easy to blame 'culture' for why women avoid disclosing and utilizing campus services. Thus, I posit the notion of the *culturalization of silence* to problematize this.

Chapter 7 will conclude this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While studies on sexual violence and harassment among racialized women in Canadian post-secondary institutions may be lacking, there is a solid amount of research and empirical studies from Canadian and American scholars and researchers whose work inside and outside the context of higher education can help conceptualize the experiences women have with sexual violence. A review of this literature consolidates existing scholarship in order to approach and further contextualize an understanding of sexual violence against racialized women in higher education more thoroughly. I thus begin this chapter by reviewing existing literature on sexual violence in higher education, particularly conceptualizations of sexual violence and harassment and the different ways in which violence occurs in universities. Next, my review will focus on studies that have analyzed rape myths and stereotypes that reinforce and normalize sexual violence against all women, both inside and outside of post-secondary institutions, while also examining how this intersects with race and class. Following this, I will synthesize research on the literature focusing on how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class shape women's perceptions and understandings of sexual violence.

The final section of this chapter will discuss literature on how racial, ethnic, sexual, and class factors influence the disclosure behaviours of women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment while addressing the 'code of silence' which shapes racialized women's disclosure behaviours and processes. This section also implicates the criminal justice system and existing social services as institutions which have contributed

to revictimizing women, particularly women who are racialized, Indigenous, and low-income, as well as sexual and gender minorities. Although a review of this literature helps set the foundation for this dissertation, I use this literature review as an opportunity to address the gaps and limitations of sexual violence studies as well.

Sexual Violence in Higher Education

One of the first studies of sexual violence on campus was conducted by Till (1980) who categorized five types of sexual harassment: 1) “generalized sexist remarks or behaviors”; 2) “inappropriate and offensive, but essentially sanction-free sexual advances”; 3) “solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards”; 4) “coercion of sexual activity by threat or punishment”; 5) “sexual assaults” (p. 7-8). Since Till’s influential study, research on sexual violence has increased but its existence on campus has remained. Although few studies have been conducted in the Canadian context, the studies that have been undertaken, coupled with recent media reports, student grassroots initiatives, and recent policy initiatives to address sexual violence in higher education in Canada are formative indicators pointing to the pervasive problem of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses across the country (see Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008; Cairns & Hatt, 1995; Eyre, 2000; Osborne, 1995; Pyke, 1996; Quinlin, Clark, & Miller, 2016; Ricci & Bergeron, 2019; Senn et al., 2004; Todorova, 2017; van Roosmalen & McDaniel, 1998). These studies and accounts, combined with research on sexual violence in the U.S. context, show that for women in higher education, there is a heightened risk of sexual violence (Diagle, Fisher, & Cullen, 2008; Flack, Hansen, Hopper, Bryant, Lang, Massachusetts, Whalen, & Caron, 2016). Research has demonstrated that female students have a noticeably higher risk of being sexually assaulted, verbally harassed, and have sexist remarks directed

towards them. Subsequently, women are more likely to fear the possibility of rape while male students, including male faculty and staff, are more often the perpetrators (Cairns & Hatt, 1995; Fisher & Sloan, 2003; Fitzgerald, Wietzman, Gold, & Ormerod, 1988; Kalof, Eby, Mathewson, & Kroska, 2001; Ménard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003; Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd, 2016). According to Hill and Silva (2005), a majority of college students in the United States experience sexual harassment, and nearly one-third of them will encounter sexual harassment in their first year. This includes being touched and grabbed, and being coerced to do something sexual.

In a formative quantitative study conducted by Cortina and her colleagues (1998) of over 1,000 students, misogynistic comments, pressuring women for dates, and sexual coercion were found to be common occurrences that female students experience while attending post-secondary institutions. They uncovered that half of the undergraduate and graduate women who participated in their study had experienced sexual harassment from an instructor or professor. This study also found differences in how women labelled their experience as sexual harassment. Surprisingly, women who reported the lowest rates of sexual harassment were those who experienced “sexist putdowns and crude remarks,” including unwanted attention, asking for dates, and touching (p. 435). This also coincides with an earlier study conducted by Fitzgerald and Ormerod (1991), who found that students reported harassing behaviours such as sexual propositions, touching, and fondling, but only a small number of them actually said that they had been harassed and saw their experiences as harassment. As Wilson (2000) observes, there are a variety of individual interpretations of what constitutes harassment, finding that sexist remarks and staring were not considered harassment by a significant portion of her participants. She writes that “it may be that this student group considers incidents like these as normal... and an integral part of university

life” (p. 176). These studies point to the complexities of defining sexual violence and harassment, but they also remind us that an empirical analysis of this issue is needed rather than relying on quantitative methodologies, which fail to effectively account for women’s understandings.

Finn’s (2004) study found that harassment on campus occurs not only in person, but online as well, through emails, instant messaging communications, and receiving unwanted pornographic images. There are a few limitations to this study, however. Given that it had been conducted through a quantitative survey analysis, this study fails to grasp the experiences participants have had with online harassment. Their study sample also consisted of students who were largely White (92.7%). An implication of the author’s conclusion that demographics did not factor into any differences in experience on online harassment (with the exception of students who identified as LGBT, who experienced higher rates of online harassment than heterosexual respondents) is that it provides a misguided portrait of the experiences racialized women do have with online harassment, as my own research has found, which goes beyond the issue of gender alone. Finn overlooks this while assuming universalist narratives of women’s experiences as if their harassment is not shaped by structural oppressions and social inequities, which my study addresses.

Post-secondary campuses and related social climates have also been charged with being prime spaces where sexual assault occurs. In the Canadian context, Brennan and Taylor-Butts (2008) have noted that age and attending frequent evening and recreational activities are factors that increase one’s risk of sexual violence, although the reasons for this are not discussed in their report. Additionally, the lack of rigid schedules and supervision, regular parties, and the use of drugs and alcohol have been linked to women’s higher rates of sexual assault (Abbey et al., 2004; Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006;

Quinlin, Clark, & Miller, 2016). Senn et al.'s (2014) study found that drugs and alcohol, as well as the use of force or verbal threats were common strategies used by perpetrators to assault female students. Similarly, 75% of student respondents in Flack et al.'s (2016) study reported that their assault took place in the context of 'hooking up' with other students at parties and other social events (also see Bogle, 2008; Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D'Aureli, Gigliotti, Hall, Kiser, & Stine, 2007).

Canadian students experience significantly higher rates of sexual assault as opposed to those working in the workforce (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). Reportedly one in five students experience some form of sexual violence while attending post-secondary institutions, ranging from assault to harassment (Canadian Federation of University Students-Ontario, 2015; Quinlin, Clark, & Miller, 2016). Both Canadian as well as American studies have noted that it is difficult to determine the number of sexual assaults or harassment incidences on campus for a variety of reasons. Fear of being blamed, having family and friends find out, and fear of retaliation are among the main reasons victims refrain from disclosing their experiences of sexual violence on campus (Burgess-Proctor, Pickett, Parkhill, Hamill, Kirwan, & Kozack, 2006; Rudman, Borgida, & Robertson, 1995; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). Murray and Kardatzke's (2007) study found that college students who were assaulted by dating partners avoided telling health professionals or the police due to fear of not being believed. While the fear of not being believed and being blamed for their assault are concerns which all women have, these studies do not delve into how issues of race, ethnicity, and religion, coupled with familial cultural norms, shape women's reasons for not disclosing, which this dissertation sheds considerable light on.

Harris's (2016) formative study on individuals who work at an on-campus sexual harassment service as mandated reporters shows how people interpret what constitutes sexual violence and harassment based on their gender, race, sexual orientation, and class, arguing that this has implications for students who are minoritized. Indeed, this study concurs with my own in a sense that, as I will show in this dissertation, service providers' social identities shape how they understand experiences of sexual violence and harassment, and ultimately how they respond to student reports of sexual violence and harassment. But given that this study does not extend to racialized students who have experienced sexual violence, my study expands on this by understanding the interactions between service providers and racialized students; the latter of whom felt that the totality of the violence they experienced at the intersections of racism and sexism were not acknowledged by service providers partly because of their racial identities.

Legal definitions of sexual violence and harassment often do not capture the experiences of racialized women, including those who identify as LGBTQ+. In describing her experience of harassment as a queer Chicana professor, Calafell (2014) contends that given her university's failure to recognize the intersections of sexual and racial discrimination in the context of sexual harassment, she was unable to situate her experience as sexual violence or discrimination alone. The failure of universities having comprehensive definitions of sexual violence and policies which recognize the intersections of social identity in shaping experiences of sexual violence extends to my own critique of Ontario's Bill 132. The implications of this for racialized and minority students will be discussed in this study.

Clearly, sexual violence and harassment are pressing problems in universities, but while research has been effective in exposing its implications, neither post-secondary

institutions nor scholarship have given justice to the experiences of racialized women. This is alarming considering that women from marginalized backgrounds and social identities, including Indigenous women and racialized women, are at a higher risk of being sexually victimized (Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, 2015). Moreover, a recent study by researchers from Université du Québec à Montréal found that not only is sexual harassment and sexual assault widespread across Québec's universities, but international students are among the most prone to victimization (Bergeron et al., 2016). Aside from Stermac, Horowitz, and Biance's (2017) study which partly includes racialized student's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Ontario universities, whose limitations I addressed in Chapter 1, racialized students remain under-examined in studies which utilize qualitative methodologies in the context of Canadian higher education.

In DeFour's (1996) chapter on the interface of racism and sexism on college campuses, they demonstrate that women of colour may be more prone to sexual harassment and assault given the existence of racism and sexism on campus and the wider society. Although the author relies on a review of existing scholarship to make their argument, they contend that few studies on campus sexual harassment and violence have focused on race or ethnicity. And, given this, there has been a very noticeable "Eurocentric bias" in the sexual violence literature (p. 49). Cortina et al.'s (1998) quantitative study of over 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students found that not only did racialized women, particularly Black and Hispanic women, report higher experiences of sexual harassment, but that lesbian and bisexual students were more likely to report than heterosexual students. Hill and Silva (2005) have also uncovered that LGBTQ+ students are more likely to be sexually harassed than heterosexual students. Finn (2004) observed in his study of online sexual harassment of university students that sexual minority students were also more likely to

receive online harassment from strangers than their heterosexual counterparts. However, as Garvey, Hitchins, and McDonald (2017) note, studies “neither specifically highlight the experiences of queer-spectrum students nor give indications why these students experience violence at such higher rates than heterosexual students” (p. 156). Thus, there remains a large empirical gap in the literature, but given that most of the participants in my study identified as heterosexual, this present study has not been able to provide empirical findings to help contribute to filling in this gap.

Rape Myths and Stereotypes

Deeply entrenched in social beliefs about aggression and victimization, rape myths, which were initially discussed by Brownmiller (1975) and later coined by Burt (1980), describes the “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists” (p. 217). Expanding on the limitations of Burt’s theory, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) define rape myths as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (p. 134). Others have further expanded on this, noting that rape myths are beliefs that are harmful and produce hostility towards victims of sexual violence and harassment (Bryant-Davis, Chung, & Tillman, 2009).

Best conceptualized as stereotypes, rape myths stem from hegemonic beliefs concerning gender in a given sociocultural context that allows men to justify their actions while blaming women for their victimization. In Burt’s (1980) sex-role socialization analysis, individuals are socialized to adhere to social expectations regarding gender behaviours. While cultural messages encourage men to be dominant, aggressive, strong, assertive, and always interested in sex, women are socialized to be passive, obedient, and

cautious, and expected to refrain from sexual desire in order to avoid being labeled “fast” or “promiscuous” (Abbey, 2002, p. 120; also see Fine, 1988). As Ardovini-Brooker and Caringella-Macdonald (2002) document, rape myths suggest that violence is only enacted towards those who are “bad” and “asking for it,” thus placing the brunt of blame and responsibility for assault on women themselves. By this logic, “sexually loose” women are more likely to experience sexual violence. Germain’s (2016) study also implicates the university in blaming the victim. They note that messages and safety tips regarding preventative measures on campus not only promotes fear in women, but such messages also advise women to regulate and restrict their behaviours in an effort to prevent a potential assault. The author note that in cases where female students are assaulted, universities often participate in blaming and chastising the victim.

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) contend that this postulation that only certain types of women are subject to sexual violence “functions to obscure and deny the personal vulnerability of *all* women by suggesting that only *other* women are raped” (p. 136). In Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney’s (2006) study of party culture at an American university, a friend of an assault victim who was held by her neck, aggressively caressed, and told that she should be raped because she was a “fucking whore” nonetheless justified the assault by saying “Amy flaunts herself. She is a whore so, I mean...” (p. 494). The authors observe that sexual assault is seen as a result of sociocultural beliefs in rape myths about the nature of different gender roles that contribute to creating an environment where rape and sexual assault is a consequence of women’s actions and normalized male sexual aggression. This was also found in Miller’s (2008) study of sexual harassment in the lives of African American girls in high school. Several female peers suggested that “some girls” bring such behaviours upon themselves through their attire, getting into sexual relationships

too quickly, or desiring male attention (also see Rahimi & Liston, 2011). Miller also found that none of these young women explained their own experiences of sexual harassment in such terms, but freely applied such interpretations to the experiences of others.

As Benedict (1992) asserts, rape myths remind women of the boundaries of sexual propriety that they must stay within. Thus, rape myths help police the limits of appropriate femininity as it categorizes women as either “virgins” or “vamps.” The notion that women bring on their own victimization or that they deserve it shifts the responsibility and attention from the perpetrator of the assault onto women themselves, as their sexual history, the clothes they were wearing, and how much they were drinking comes into question. Women’s actions and why they were in a potentially threatening situation in the first place is often subject to scrutiny while perpetrator’s actions are barely, if it all, implicated. Women thus internalize rape myths with the belief that they are not vulnerable to sexual violence as long as they do not make themselves out to be sexually available and put themselves in vulnerable positions (Iconis, 2008).

Rape myths also play a role in whether or not victims will be believed. Research has shown that in experiences where the victim knew the perpetrator, women are less likely to be believed than if the perpetrator was a stranger, which is problematic considering that, in Abbey, Ross, McDuffie, & McAuslan’s (1996) study, it was found that 95% of sexual assaults against female students were committed by an acquaintance. Likewise, Brennan & Taylor-Butts (2008) found that in Canada, most acts of sexual violence were perpetrated by someone known to the assailant. A lack of physical or visible injuries also produces skepticism towards assaulted women (see Schuller, McKimmie, Masser, & Klippenstine, 2010). Given such cynicism and victim blaming perpetuated by rape myths, in Deming, Covan, Swan, & Billings (2013) study of hypothetical vignettes, female students were

hesitant to report assault and were unsure whether they would be believed or treated fairly by the criminal justice system.

Several studies have also found that individuals who adhere to traditional gender roles tend to accept rape myths at higher rates (Johnson, Kuck & Schander, 1997; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). In Hayes, Abbott and Cook's (2016) study of rape-myth acceptance on two college campuses, they found men tended to accept rape myths at a higher rate than women (also see Donovan, 2007). They observed that masculinized subcultures such as fraternities amplify male sex role norms, which celebrate and encourage male aggression towards women. Miller's (2008) study also found that male participants believed that once girls are labeled as sexually available, they deserve the mistreatment they receive. College students who adhere to rape myths are also less likely to intervene or help bystanders in hostile circumstances (McMahon, 2010), which was also found to be influenced by social, cultural, and religious factors (Dougherty, 2006). While these studies are useful, they do not extend to understanding the implications of bystander interventions on racialized women specifically, which can often do more harm than good. This dissertation provides some contribution to this issue.

While it was observed in the literature that men tend to accept rape myths at higher rates than women, ethnic disparities existed between women in regard to their acceptance of rape myths. In Jimenez and Abreau's (2003) study of the effects of gender and race on attitudes towards sexual assault, the authors found that while women overall expressed more empathy towards those who experienced sexual violence and were less accepting of rape myths, White women expressed more positive attitudes towards the assailant than Latinas did. However, White women were also more sympathetic towards White women than Latina women. Velares and Foley's (1998) study discovered that White participants

accredited more blame to perpetrators, which differed from their Black participants who were more likely to blame women. It was also found that East Asian women on college campuses were more prone to rape myth acceptance than White students due to the influence of cultural perceptions (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo, & Rheinboldt, 2005). However, a limitation of Lee et al.'s study is that it was limited to a survey of only 216 college students who identified as White and Asian while failing to delineate between the myriad ethnic and national identities which make up these the subgroups. Moreover, although the authors conclude that cultural factors may have been reasons factoring into the responses Asian participants gave, they base this conclusion on existing scholarship rather than from their own findings. Finally, this survey focused on attitudes rather than actual experiences. This dissertation contributes to filling in the gaps of these limitations.

Sexual violence and harassment is indeed complicated by myths and stereotypes that not only perpetuate its normalization while reinforcing sexism towards all women, but racist and classist postulations are also disseminated, contributing to the hypersexualization of some women, particularly racialized women, while either subjecting them to blame or failing to believe them. "Stereotyping is a pervasive human tendency", where "people routinely process information about others through mental filters based on social categories" (Luthar, Tata & Kwesiga, 2009, p. 23), which includes gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Stereotypes, coupled with rape myths, play a significant role in shaping people's opinions, views, and assumptions about women in the context of sexual violence and harassment.

While rape myths and stereotypes effect all women, race, ethnicity, and class intersect with gender to make some women more vulnerable to them (Maier, 2008). Bertram and Crowley (2012) argue that in the context of sexual violence, notions of

innocence and blame works across social constructions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, finding that women described as innocent are almost always White, middle class, and straight while others are incriminated due to historical and social constructions that divide experiences across racial and economic hierarchies. The notion of the “proper lady” historically applied to White middle class women as morally superior and sexually restrained has often worked against racialized women and poor White women (Collins, 2000; Skeggs, 1997). Moreover, in the context of sexual violence, stereotypes and myths also affect why racialized women are more vulnerable to assault and harassment.

Research has found that African American and Hispanic women in the United States are often stereotypically portrayed as sexually available, loud, and hyper-sexual (Armstrong, Hamilton, Armstrong, & Steeley, 2014; Cortina, 2001; Feagin & Feagin, 1996; McGuffey, 2013), while Indigenous women in the Canadian context have been described as “squaws” and sexually immoral (Razack, 1994, 2002; Jiwani & Young, 2006). According to Donovan and Williams (2002), Black women’s historical subjection to oppressive stereotypes has served to reinforce rape myths, describing that the contemporary Jezebel image of Black women as “welfare queens, hoochies, freaks, and hoodrats” consolidate ideas that they are sexually available (p. 98). Because of the pervasiveness of such images perpetuated in various forms of media, including music videos, pornography, and rap songs, such representations, which Collins (2000, 2004) refers to as ‘controlling images,’ are projected on all Black women homogeneously. Considering the presumption that Black women are naturally “promiscuous,” they are thus at greater risk of being blamed for their sexual assault or harassment, and less likely to be believed (Donovan & Williams, 2002, p. 98). Foley et al.’s (1995) study concurs with this, finding that, “[r]acial history and rape myths . . . make African American women more vulnerable to forced sexual

encounters while simultaneously making accusations of rape more difficult for them” (p. 15). While these students are vital to understanding how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to form how stereotypes are used against Black women, often making them vulnerable to sexual assault and harassment, with some emerging studies also demonstrating this in the context of East Asian women, which I reference in Chapter 4, such analysis has not been extended to Middle Eastern and South Asian women, particularly those who identify as Muslim. Thus, I contribute to this area of research by examining how the intersections of race, gender, and religion factor can make such women vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment in this dissertation.

In a separate study conducted by Donovan (2007) based on the perceptions White and Black college students had of rape scenarios, White male participants viewed Black female victims as more licentious than White victims in scenarios where the perpetrator was White. If the perpetrator was Black, both White and Black victims were perceived to be “promiscuous” (p. 733). White students also suggested that Black date rape survivors were less truthful. Similarly, Foley et al. (1995) found that participants viewed sexual assault as less serious when the victim was a Black woman as opposed to a White woman, noting that this resulted in the trivialization of Black women’s experiences which were shaped by selective stereotypes (also see Conwill, 2010).⁶ These stereotypical presumptions were concurred by Luthar, Tata, and Kwesiga (2009), whose study focused on how race influences the stereotypes people apply to gender. Focusing on White and

⁶ Rape myths about perpetrators are also laced with racial and class undertones. In Varelas and Foley’s (1998) study, White participants were more reluctant to Blame white women for being raped by Black men as opposed to Black women being raped by Black men. Black participants were also more likely to think the victim was responsible for her victimization if the perpetrator was White, thus the myth of the Black rapist and stereotypes of the Black hyper-sexualized woman is often perpetuated (Benedict, 1992).

Black women, the authors discovered that racial stereotypical assumptions of women were an underlying factor in women being targets of assault and harassment while it also influenced how they were acknowledged as complainants.

Studies have also found that class intersects with race, ethnicity, and gender, shaping and reinforcing stereotypes regarding notions of promiscuity and sexual deviance, including how victims of sexual violence are perceived and treated (Phipps, 2009). Skeggs' (1997) research on female respectability provides a historical overview of the making of classed subjects, noting that working class women—both White and Black—were, in contrast to White middle class femininity, sexually aberrant. While White middle class women were observed as possessing proper feminine decorum, working class Black and White women were defined as unclean and dangerous. Such stereotypes continue to shape the boundaries of femininity, morality, and appropriate expressions of womanhood in relation to racialized and classed bodies, which influences how those who possess higher economic status' are able to maneuver and mediate notions of “vamp” and “virgin” more easily. Armstrong and her colleagues (2004) found that the economic advantages of affluent White students in college allowed them more room to maneuver sexually as opposed to less affluent Latina females. Drawing on the notion that young adulthood should be about exploration and sexual experimentation in non-committed sexual contexts, affluent White students were still able to attain a ‘muted, polite and demure femininity’ (p. 115) regardless of their sexual experiences and their participation in sexual exploration on campus. But the sexual exploits of Latina students were condemned as trashy.

As Pietsch (2010) writes:

in reality the evaluation of a woman's experience of sexual violence, disclosure and admission into uncontested “victim” status is not static. Socially-situated constructs of femininity—as well as the gendered constructs of the sexual “advance” as

opposed to sexual assault, “appropriate” sexual behaviour, and the “good” victim—shape our notions of guilt and blamelessness. Consequently, legal understandings of sexual violence against women are less universal and instead are more dependent upon a woman’s ability to meet the requirements of hegemonic femininity. (p. 136)

In the context of violence against racialized women, sexism is conditioned by racial, ethnic, and class stereotypes that invoke notions of hypersexuality, immorality, impurity, and sexual impropriety, which often abates the violence done to them (Jiwani & Young, 2006). As Razack (2002) demonstrates, racialized gendered violence is thus permissible given the zone of depravity under which women are which women are categorized. Jiwani (2006) also contends that while some women are able to mediate the binary between vamp and virgin, and are able to be seen as legitimate victims of sexual violence, others, especially racialized women, are considered unworthy of victim status (p. 19). Thus, women’s bodies “become the vehicles through which dominant society communicates its messages of morality/immorality and hierarchies of worthiness” (Jiwani, 2011, p. 16). Bertram and Crowley (2012) concur, asserting that notions of innocence and guilt work in conjunction with race, class, ethnicity, and gender to marginalize victims of sexual violence:

[r]ace, class, and other forms of social difference serve to support oppressive assumptions that divide women who share histories of sexual violence. Although rape overall may be declared wrong, some women are considered less innocent than others, and thus, the ugly realities of rape, incest, and other forms of sexual violence are minimized by distinguishing between different classes of women. (p. 66)

Rape myths and stereotypes trivialize the structural problems of sexual violence and gender inequality by suggesting that sexual violence can be avoided as long as women adhere to modest and asexual femininity. What women were wearing, how much they were drinking, or why they chose to attend a party have subjected women to blame. But rape myths, coupled with stereotypes regarding race and class, produce qualitatively different effects

for racialized women whose experiences of sexual assault and harassment are shaped by them.

Racialized Sexual Violence and Harassment

Theorists who have explored racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment have postulated notions such as sexual racism or racialized sexual harassment to describe such experiences and to refer to a form of violence and harassment which is interweaves with sex and race discrimination. Murrell (1996) defines sexual racism as "forms of sexual aggression [that] are embedded in a system of interlocking race, gender, ethnicity and class oppression" (p. 56). Cortina (2001) expands on this, noting that such behaviors not only target racialized women, but also "perpetuate stereotypes about women in particular ethnic groups or communication expectations derived from such stereotypes" (p. 168). Buchanan and Omerad (2002) refer to this form of harassment as racialized sexual harassment, which insinuates how racialized women experience a form of sexual violence which references both their race as well as their gender.

In their study of professional African American women, Buchanan and Omerod (2002) found that their participants were largely unable to separate their experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace from racial harassment. In some cases, participants described that they had to endure sexually explicit comments from their White co-workers and supervisors. Some examples included asking women about their sexual lives, which participants stated had racialized undertones. In other instances, women discussed how their clothing was sexualized by co-workers (for example, looking "exotic" or looking like "prostitutes") (p. 114), which again referenced racist and sexual stereotypes applied to Black women. In one case, a participant was called a "black whore" (p. 120). The authors

note that this reflects the “underlying assumption that African American women’s sexual boundaries, both the behaviours they will engage in and their comfort in discussing sex, are looser than those of Caucasians” (p. 114). This coincides with Watson et al.’s (2015) findings that because of racialized sexual stereotypes, Black women are more likely to experience sexually objectifying experiences than White women.

In McGuffey’s (2013) study of sexual assault survivors, several women discussed how their rapists often used racialized sexual stereotypes about Black women, such as the image of Black Promiscuity, either before or after their assault. For example, this image was used to imply that women wanted to have sex. Consider the experience one participant who was raped at a predominately White college had, where she explained that the attacker had said, “stop fighting, bitch, you know you hoes like it rough” (p. 120). As McGuffey writes, “rapists knew how to deploy this image to silence and delegitimize the reactions of their victims. The image of Black Promiscuity also provided the perpetrators with a justification for their own sexual misconduct” (p.121).

As found in Woods, Buchanan, and Settles’ (2009) study, racialized sexual harassment occurred more often in cross-racial rather than in intra-racial contexts for Black women. Such findings concurred with Museus and Truong’s (2013) study of the combined experiences of racism and sexism in the lives of Asian American women, arguing that Asian women are at a greater risk of sexual violence due to men, particularly White men, exoticizing and objectifying them. Seeing Asian women as demure and sexually submissive, the authors found that White men often have “Asian fetishes” (p. 15), which they analyzed through social media accounts and online discussion forums of male college students. These students not only explicitly conveyed their sexual attraction to Asian women, but their desire to sexually assault them as well. It was found elsewhere that Asian

American women who date non-Asian men may also be at a potentially greater risk of sexual violence, finding that sexual stereotypes about Asian women and the fact that they are not as likely as other ethnic groups to disclose sexual assault, especially if they lack proficiency in English, make such women more prone to sexual violence (See Bryant-Davis, Chung & Tillman, 2009). As Cho (2003) writes, Asian American women “are at risk of being racially and sexually harassed because of the synergism that results when sexualized racial stereotypes combined with racialized gender stereotypes” (p. 350). However, most of these studies have not focused on East Asian women’s narratives of sexual violence through an empirical study, which this present study. This study also extends upon Wood’s, Buchanan, and Settles’ (2009) study about the need to examine racialized women’s experiences of racialized sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial and intra-racial contexts to account for the qualitatively different ways to which women experience and interpret their experiences, which has not been extended to East Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern.

Perceptions of Sexual Violence and Harassment

Sexual violence literature has shown that people have conflicting perceptions of what actually constitutes sexual violence and harassment (Fitzgerald, 1996). Bursik and Geftter (2011) found that student participants were more likely to label a behaviour sexual harassment when the existence of power inequality was obvious between the perpetrator and target. For example, if a professor was the harasser rather than if a student was. While debates and disagreements continues to plague literature and feminist theorists regarding what constitutes sexual violence, racialized women have long addressed that contemporary understandings are not only ineffective for racialized women, but undermine their

experiences. They have argued that there is a need to be cognizant of how perceptions and experiences of sexual violence depend on, but are not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

As Welsh et al. (2006) have noted, legal definitions of sexual harassment, which are based on the experiences of White women, remain fruitless for women who experience racialized harassment along with sexual harassment, and the absence of addressing race and ethnicity, among other factors, can explain why racialized women often do not recognize their experiences as sexual violence (also see Luthar, Tata, & Kweisga, 2009; Shelton & Chavous, 1999). Moreover, various social, cultural, and political meanings influence notions of sexual violence, in addition to how communities respond to them (Cahill, 2009). In a study regarding the perceptions of Black and White female university students towards unwanted sexual behaviours involving Black women in the workplace, Shelton and Chavous (1999) found that race affected students' perceptions. Both White and Black students labeled an incident as sexual harassment more often when the perpetrator was White, while they considered sexually inappropriate behaviour displayed by a Black male co-worker or supervisor towards a Black woman as more humorous and appropriate than if a White man were to do it. Woods, Buchanan, and Settles (2009) also found that Black women were more upset in vignettes portraying White perpetrators harassing Black women, which could be a result of the historical relationship between Black women and White men as exploitative. The authors found that racialized sexual harassment in cross-racial contexts produced more severe "stress responses" than when Black women were harassed solely due to their gender (p. 73). Although examining cross-racial and intra-racial experiences of sexual violence and harassment among racialized students has not been empirically examined, I will expand on the findings of Woods, Buchanan, and Settles by

examining how sexual violence and harassment is experienced by women vis-à-vis the racial identities of their perpetrators while extending this to include East Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern women, which the literature has not addressed.

This was also discussed in Richardson and Taylor's (2009) study, which utilized intersectionality to theorize and illustrate how racialized women experience sexual harassment on a gendered and racial basis. They found that African American and Hispanic participants relied on the perpetrator's race to make sense of their experiences and discussed the trivialization of same-race sexual harassment. Both African American and Hispanic women mentioned that African American and Hispanic men may assume that it is okay to harass women of the same racial background and that women would not be offended by their actions due to this apparent "common bond" (p. 260). Richardson and Taylor note that this "common-bond factor" may be unique to racialized women who take this into consideration when perceiving sexually suggestive behaviours (also see Welsh et al., 2006). Since their study is limited to Black and Hispanic women, my study expands on the impact of the "common bond" factor on some East Asian as well as South Asian women in this study.

In Harris' (2016) study of a student advocacy group on campus, her discussions with participants showed how matters of race, sexuality, gender, and class, in addition to matters of power and privilege associated with Whiteness and economic advantages, also shaped how they perceived sexual violence. Student advocates' social locations shaped which reports of sexual violence were considered important or worth reporting. She notes that a participant contended that "[t]hough two individuals may hear about exactly the same incident of sexual violence... those people most associated with privilege – whiteness, heterosexuality, wealth – are least likely to recognize sexual violence as such and thus least

likely to make the required third-party report” (p. 8). As Bogard (1999) asserts, one’s experience of their victimization is only understood in relation to their social locations and the intersections of their social identities, as we have seen throughout the literature, but this can also be said for how social identity influences how people perceive victim/survivors of sexual violence, which has implications for how racialized women are helped in higher education, which will be addressed in this dissertation.

Disclosure

Several studies have reported that sexual violence is underreported in Canada (see Benoit, Shumka, Phillips, Kennedy, & Belle-Islae, 2015; Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008; Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003; Johnson, 2012; Sinha, 2013). There are myriad reasons which shape whether women will disclose their experience of sexual violence or not. Victims who were intoxicated, for example, are less likely to report their incidences out of fear of being blamed for their victimization (Fisher et al., 2003). Universities have also been charged for being an institutional climate that modulates the severity of sexual harassment and assault by normalizing the macro issue of rape culture, which Hayes, Abbott, and Cook (2016) note is a “form of institutional betrayal where the culture discourages reporting and creates an environment that silences the victim” (p. 1551). Given such a climate, students who are victims of sexual violence, or know people who have been sexually victimized and harassed on campus, are less inclined to disclose their incidences to the university (Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016). Other reasons students do not disclose include feelings of shame, embarrassment, guilt, as well as not wanting friends and family to know (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). However, given that a majority of their respondents were Caucasian, their study does not speak to the role of ethnicity and familial cultural norms as

an explanatory framework for their responses, and, thus, the additional barriers to disclosing that racialized students experience are overlooked. The implications of this study is that it reproduces one-size-fits-all approaches to addressing barriers to sexual assault on campus.

In a large national study by Brennan and Taylor-Butt's (2008) Canadian report on why victims did not report their assault, a majority (58%) believed that "the assault was not important enough" (p. 6), while others felt that it was a personal issue or they did not want the police to intervene. The type of sexual violence they reported was also considered, showing that women were more inclined to report violent attacks as opposed to incidences such as being sexually touched or harassed. While victims of sexual assault were less inclined to disclose to the police, they did seek informal support sources, such as friends, family, co-workers, and to a lesser extent, doctors or nurses. However, they do not consider the issue of racial, ethnic, or religious differences among women in terms of disclosure. As my study demonstrates, sociocultural factors shaped whether women were willing to disclose to parents while the gendered and racial identities of their peers shaped who women were likely to disclose to, which existing studies have not addressed.

Women have also reported a distrust towards the Canadian judicial system (DuBois, 2012; Johnson, 2012), and due to negative experiences with service providers blaming victims, being unhelpful, doubting the validity of women's stories, disclosing to the judicial system has shown to have a negative impact on women's recovery following their experiences with sexual assault (DuBois, 2012). As reviewed in the literature, there are a multitude of factors influencing why women refrain from reporting the violence they have experienced. But for racialized women, including women in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions, the criminal justice system, in addition to social services meant to aid victims,

have been charged with harboring prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes as a result of stereotypes and biases of racialized and low-income women, while failing to cater to women's sexual, cultural, and linguistic differences, which deter women from reporting (Bogard, 1999; Conwill, 2010; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Dylan, Regehr & Alaggia, 2008; Maier, 2008; Neville & Pugh, 1997; Ritchie, 2006; Sokoloff, 2004; Washington, 2001). It has been found that lesbian and trans individuals also do not believe that law enforcement can handle their incidences of sexual violence accordingly (See Garvey, Hitchins & McDonald, 2017). However, such studies have not been extended to racialized women in Canadian higher education, and we know less about their feelings towards utilizing on or off campus services in the aftermath of sexual violence.

Racialized women have often been revictimized by the criminal justice system. Ritchie (2006) notes that “[o]ften, police brutality against women of color and their families occur when they seek assistance in the context of domestic or sexual assault” (p. 150). Ritchie notes that interactions with the police are shaped by racialized notions of gender which contours who “legitimate survivors” of violence are and who the perpetrators are (2006, p. 151). Dylan, Regehr, and Alaggia's (2008) study of Aboriginal victims of sexual violence also found that race was relevant to the Canadian justice system, arguing that the “Canadian judicial system is not only both a patriarchal and ethnocentric state structure (having its roots in Anglo-Saxon values), but its frontline has a history of oppressive and abusive practices with Aboriginal people—practices further documented by accounts in this study” (p. 692). Women in their study posited that in their experiences with law enforcement, they were often subject to intersecting racial and sexual stereotypes of “the filthy, licentious “squaw,” who was essentially “asking” to be assaulted (p. 680). Indigenous women's experiences with law enforcement is alarming considering that self-

reported violent victimization among Indigenous women is nearly three times more likely than non-Indigenous women, and sexual assault accounts for one-third of the violence crimes that are committed against them (Brennan, 2012; Also see Benoit et al., 2015).

A women's status or position in the workplace, coupled with their economic vulnerabilities, has also been discussed in relation to racialized women's vulnerability to sexual harassment and makes them less likely to disclose their experiences (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Murrell, 1996; Welsh et al., 2006). As McGuffey (2013) has discussed, African American rape victims tend to assess their social positions and worth in regard to the privileging of some social identities and their own disadvantages when contemplating disclosure. Using a racial appraisal's approach, which is "a social cognitive process that illuminates the ways in which social inequalities manifest in the mental schemas of racially marginalized individuals" (p. 111), she argues that one's perception of themselves within the social and racial schema of society shapes how they respond to their sexual victimization and whether they will report. Thinking that no one cares about their suffering, women use their social positioning as racial, gendered, and classed bodies to assess their worth in the social order which in turn influences their perceptions of whether they think others will believe them or if they are worthy victims, which echoes Washington's (2001) assertion that "survivors' awareness of their social location as Black women influences the likelihood of their reporting sexual victimization" (p. 1255).

Richardson and Taylor (2009) also found that women abided by a 'code of silence', which has been discussed by numerous scholars in the context of sexual violence. African American women may not report their experiences of sexual violence committed by Black men due to the racism that they experience from the larger society (Maier, 2008). The controlling image of women as 'Cultural Protector', where Black women, even those who

have been sexually victimized, must guard against negative portrayals of the Black community which may further perpetuate stereotypes of them by the dominant society (McGuffey, 2013). Yet McGuffey notes that this often works at the expense of Black women as Black men often reap the benefits of women's silence. Crenshaw (1992) also details that the silence of sexual violence in the Black community is rooted in this fear of pathologizing the Black community by White society. Crenshaw notes that this silence:

creates a classic double bind. To speak, one risks the censure of one's closest allies. To remain silent renders one continually vulnerable to the kinds of abuses heaped upon people who have no voice. While many Black women are understandably silent out of a belief that our interests are best served by a singular focus on race, many are beginning to see our silences as costly and ultimately counterproductive to the interests of the entire Black community (p. 1472).

Although less extensively discussed than in the literature on African American women, this code of silence has also been related to other ethnic groups. Sue (1994) found that some Asian Americans have negative beliefs regarding seeking help from services due to the cultural belief that disclosing issues, including violence, is a form of dishonoring their families. Jiwani (2006) has also written that racialized immigrant and refugee populations in Canada often avoid disclosing due to the fear of justifying racist stereotypes about minority communities as innately violent. As Davis (2000) writes, while we need to oppose the "racist fixation" on people of colour as the main culprits of violence against women, there also needs to be a challenge to the violence that men of colour also commit against women, in addition to keeping women silent about abuse. This has proved to be difficult in American and Canadian society where the criminal justice system, service provisions, and the state often perpetuate pathologizing narratives of 'other' cultures and non-White communities that contributes to silencing women and placing barriers for women to disclose. How such 'codes of silence' shape the experiences of second-generation

racialized women, particularly East Asian and South Asian women, in the context of sexual violence and harassment and disclosure in higher education, however, remains under-examined. This present study thus addresses this gap.

Conclusion

Sexual violence and harassment is a widespread problem both within and outside of higher education. The literature reviewed in this chapter is a significant testament to the amount of research that has been invested in studying this alarming social and educational issue, particularly within the United States and Canada, while exposing the systemic reality of violence against women. Indeed, the literature synchronized in this chapter has helped inform my understandings of sexual violence and harassment scholarship, from the rate to which it exists in education and workplaces, the forms of violence women are subject to, to the concerns women have about disclosing their experiences to informal and formal services. Driven by the assertions of racialized women scholars who have argued that racialized women have largely been excluded from sexual violence research, I aimed to address studies which have focused on their experiences in this chapter. However, there continues to remain few studies which account for racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment within higher education specifically, especially with regards to Middle Eastern, South Asian, and to a lesser extent, East Asian women. Although there is a small, but growing body of research which has aimed to examine sexual violence and harassment among East Asian women, most of the research which focuses on non-White women, whether in post-secondary institutions or workplaces, has focused largely on Black or Latina women. Middle Eastern and South Asian women's experiences have also been largely ignored in the literature.

Aside from this, most sexual violence and harassment studies in higher education has been conducted through quantitative research methodologies, utilizing surveys and questionnaires to quantify students' experiences, or using hypothetical scenarios to garner student perceptions, responses, and actions. Few have approached women's experiences through qualitative research methods that considers women's voices. While I will address the limitations of quantitative studies in the context of sexual violence and harassment, particularly with regards to studying the experiences of racialized women in the next chapter, this study will address the limitations and gaps in existing sexual violence and harassment studies in higher education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

With my commitment to challenging enduring social inequalities and my determination to help enable meaningful change in post-secondary institutions and society at large, I undertook an intersectional, qualitative research study to examine racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education—a pressing social issue that has not aroused much attention in the Canadian context. Given the lack of scholarship on this subject, including the limited number of empirical studies, I began this study with a strong desire to approach this subject through a qualitative, intersectional analysis to account for women's experiences through their own voices rather than reducing their experiences to statistics and surveys alone—what most sexual violence and harassment research has tended to do (see for example Foley et al., 1995; Kearney & Gilbert, 2012; Lott, Asquith, & Doyon, 2001).

According to Hunting (2014), qualitative research and intersectionality share in common “the context bound nature of research, the importance of foregrounding voices of differentially situated individuals, and the need to address power imbalances between researchers and those whom research is conducted” (p. 1). A form of research that often takes place in settings and contexts where participants experience their lives, qualitative researchers seek to capture an individual's point of view as they attempt to “make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Coupled with the use of the case study method, which gave me the appropriate

methodological approach to capture how broader structural dynamics shaped social relations and women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment, this study has demonstrated that it is imperative that studies on sexual violence utilize qualitative methods.

Qualitative research is required to not only understand and subsequently tackle this alarming issue, but to also contribute to the development of more effective as well as inclusive policies and campus provisions. Given that most sexual violence and harassment studies in higher education have focused on the experiences of White, middle-class, cis-gender, heterosexual women—which have also informed most campus sexual violence policies and services—the voices of racialized women bring the necessary insight needed to not only expand the field in terms of scholarship, but to also challenge conventional approaches to sexual violence and harassment in policy and prevention efforts and help craft more effective resources and services. Indeed, the experiential knowledge of racialized women can help frame the strategies, approaches, and narratives regarding sexual violence and harassment against all women. Moreover, a qualitative approach to this present study accounts for not only the experiences, identities, and representations of racialized women, but it also brings their voices, subjectivities, and lived realities to the center of the research process. At the same time, given that social identities are social categories that are socially, historically, and politically situated and rooted in relations of power, a qualitative research study informed by an intersectional theoretical framework has helped me account for differences while contextualizing the issue of sexual violence and harassment against racialized women through a broader structural analysis.

I will begin this chapter by discussing my use of the case study method and how it is useful to utilize when conducting research that is informed by an intersectional

conceptual framework. Next, I will provide background information on the participants in this study and the interviews I conducted, which will be followed by a discussion demonstrating how I conducted an analysis of the data that was informed by the tenets of intersectionality. Finally, I will address the importance of acknowledging one's positionality when conducting feminist, intersectional research.

Case Study Method

The present study was conducted through a case study, a research method that is appropriate when wanting to undertake a holistic, in-depth investigation of a specific subject matter (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Given that I interviewed 15 participants who identified as racialized women, I undertook a multiple case study in order to understand and theorize the issue of sexual violence and harassment in higher education (see Stake, 2005) as well as to locate these cases as “complex entit[ties] located in a milieu or situation embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds,” namely, the social, economic, political, and historical context (Stake, 2005, p. 449).

Interviews were the core of my data collection. As Yin (2014) notes, interviews are among the most important sources of case study research and often flow as “guided conversations rather than structured queries” (p. 110). Although I used an interview guide which included a list of topics and questions, my interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for more flow and ease in question and response, where the interviews was more fluid as opposed to rigid and allowed for the development of more effective rapport between myself and the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Most of the interviews were shorter case study interviews, which lasted approximately one hour, although one interview lasted nearly two hours.

Intersectional Case Study

Debates and discussions regarding how we should study intersectionality and which methods are best suited to meet the intentions of intersectionality as a theory as well as a praxis has been subject to recent scholarly attention (see Hancock, 2007; McCall 2005. As Collins and Bilge (2016) write:

a renewed focus on methodology constitutes one outcome of these definitional debates within intersectional scholarship. Students, faculty, and scholars who aim to use intersectionality as an analytic lens wonder whether the methods they are using are in fact “intersectional”. For graduate students and researchers, the core question concerns *how* intersectionality can be conceptualized *within* a particular research design that is simultaneously attentive to the core themes of intersectionality and that makes a good faith effort to deploy intersectionality as an analytic tool in the face of such uncertainty. (p. 104)

Naples (2009) contends that “it is not enough to assert that one’s study is intersectional. To succeed, a researcher must clearly specify what makes the study intersectional and to discuss why certain methodologies chosen for the study are most productive for intersectional research” (p. 567). The core tenets of intersectionality aim to illuminate both the intersecting nature of social identity as well as the broader power structures which inform social identity, inequality, and relations of power. To attend to this, I find that case study has afforded me the opportunity and flexibility to “capture the complexity of social relations, experiences and structural dynamics that shape the diversity of women’s lives, situated knowledges and resistance strategies” (Naples, 2009, p. 566). For Patton (2002), case study “constitutes a specific way of collecting, organizing and analyzing data” with the intention of concentrating on social, political, and historical dimensions of the subject (p. 447). Case study requires ‘concentrated inquiry’ and it is the complexity of a case and its specific circumstances which are important (Stake, 2005, p. 414). Not necessarily defined or limited by the specific methods used to conduct research, the significance of

case study lies in aiming to simply understand the case in its totality, affording researchers the space and suppleness to explore the multiple dynamics of the case at hand (p. 413). In her discussion of intersectionality and case study, Hunting (2014) asserts that case study can “illustrate the complexities of individual and collective identities and social dynamics” (p. 1). Case study requires researchers to dig deeper into a phenomenon, and, given intersectionality’s emphasis on understanding lived experiences within a particular context and its connection to broader structures of power, my choice of theory and method have worked well in dialogue with one other. Given that intersectionality, as a theory, concentrates on “both multiple and conflicting experiences of subordination and power,” case study can be used to attend to the “wide-ranging and complex terrain of analysis” (McCall, 2005, p. 1781) which is needed in order study racialized women’s experiences of sexual violence and harassment within the institution of higher education and the wider structural contexts which inform it.

I situate myself among other feminist researchers who are interested in intersectionality, both in theory and praxis, and have utilized case study “to identify a new and invisible group—at the intersection of multiple categories—and proceed to uncover the differences and complexities of experience embodied in that location” (McCall, 2005, p. 1782). According to Lutz (2014), by using the case study method informed by operationalizing the categories of intersectionality, “[w]e shift attention away from how structures of racism, class discrimination and sexism determine individuals’ identities and practices to how individuals on-goingly and flexibly negotiate their multiple and converging identities...” (p. 12). They go on to posit that by using intersectional analysis in dialogue with case study, we can see how women themselves negotiate their identities and understand their experiences of sexual violence and harassment through multiple,

intersecting, and converging structures of power. Hillsburg (2013), in conversation with Choo and Ferree (2010), also argues “that a methodological strategy for intersectional research must consider how to denaturalize hegemonic norms and champion more dynamic analyses that ‘consider how national and transnational structures of inequality are produced and reproduced in multiple processes such as gender, [and] racialization’” (as cited in Hillsburg, 2013, p. 10). In order to attend to the core principles of intersectionality, intersectionality was weaved into the research process, including my data collection as well as analysis.

Case study, driven by an intersectional theory, provided me with an effective method to empirically research and examine the complexity of ways in which seemingly disparate categories are intersectionally experienced by women in order to understand how women themselves negotiate their multiple and converging identities in the context of their experiences of sexual violence and harassment, including in the aftermath of their experiences with disclosure to family, peers, and on-campus services. But as Christofferson (2017) writes, conducting intersectional research requires that the research be put into context, where the researcher “needs to be aware of the historical and contemporary structuring of inequalities in the wider society” and among subjects themselves (p. 4). Intersectionality thus has to remain in dialogue with the research process to understand the “wider macro dimension in which social identity and inequality are produced and negotiated within a given context, which point to the contextual nature of people’s lived experiences” (Trahan, 2011, p. 3).

Feminist scholars such as Anthias (2013) and Collins (2010) have also called for the need for intersectional research to focus more on the constitutive dynamics of institutions that perpetuate social inequalities. This means that analyzing power dynamics

through an intersectional lens requires us to interrogate how particular social classifications are considered subordinate as opposed to others, how people are framed by larger social structures rather than their own autonomy, and how resources are allocated unequally to certain individuals in specific social groups (Anthias, 2013). Crenshaw's (1997) assertion of structural intersectionality is vital to understanding the significance and importance of acknowledging macro structures in the context of violence against racialized women:

I use the term structural inequality to refer to the way in which women of color are situated within overlapping structures of subordination...An analysis sensitive to structural intersectionality explores the lives of those at the bottom of multiple hierarchies to determine how the dynamics of each hierarchy exacerbates and compounds the consequences of another. The material consequences of the interaction of these multiple hierarchies in the lives of women of color is what I call structural intersectionality. Illustrations suggest that violence toward women usually occurs within a specific context that may vary depending on the woman's race, class and other social characteristics. These constraints can be better understood and addressed through a framework that links them to broader structures of subordination that intersect in fairly predictable ways. (p. 249)

As Collins and Bilge (2016) write, an intersectional analysis of violence reveals how violence not only unfolds in separate systems of power, but how it connects the relationship between colonialism, patriarchy, and racism, among other broader systems of power:

By questioning how forms of violence within separate systems might in fact be interconnected and mutually supporting, intersectionality's analytical framework opens up new paths of investigation. Because violence has long been a concern for feminists, anti-racist organizers, scholars, community organizers and practitioners across multiple fields of study, intersectional inquiry and praxis offers a more robust understanding of violence. (p. 55)

In order to adopt intersectionality as a theory to be utilized as an analytical tool, and to attend to the core tenants and aims of intersectional research, Collins and Bilge argue that this needs to be 1) "rooted in the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised people", and 2) theory needs to be linked with practice in order to aid in the empowerment of communities and individuals (p. 36). The authors assert that "intersectionality is not simply

a heuristic for intellectual inquiry but is also an important analytical strategy for *doing* social justice work (p. 42). Likewise, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) suggest that intersectionality is not a “theory” to be tested. Instead, it is about studying varying dimensions of difference to understand inequality, and intersectional research should maintain a commitment to equality. Collins and Bilge (2016) concur, noting that an important feature of intersectional inquiry is critical praxis, which is “both attentive to intersecting power relations and essentially vital for resisting social inequality” (p. 32; also see Dill, 2002). Indeed, social researchers utilizing intersectionality must do so with the intention of producing meaningful knowledge for the purpose of social justice and equity.

Participants

A total of 15 racialized women participated in this study. A call for participants was distributed through a university recruitment system as well as through online social media accounts run by university students affiliated with the four universities included in this study. I also attended a few university classes to discuss my research and distributed a copy of my research poster to every single student in the classroom. Students were eligible to participate in this study if they met the recruitment criteria: they were a current student at one of the four listed universities in Ontario; were 18 years old or older; identified as a racialized woman; experienced sexual violence and/or harassment on campus or off-campus (at a party, private residence, etc.). Women who were interested in participating emailed me to express their desire to participate, which was followed by setting up a place and time to meet on campus. I must stress, however, that I went into this study fully aware that some women would be reluctant to speak to me as not all women experience the same freedoms to give voice to their experiences. As Bertram and Crowley (2012) write, “[i]n

truth, some are freer to speak than others. Differing constraints on speech reflect social realities such as marginalization, unexamined privilege, and silencing that ought to be included in any analysis of violence, trauma, pathology and power” (p. 69).

Women who participated in this study were either in the latter half of their undergraduate studies or were graduate students. They were enrolled in one of the four universities included in this study at the time in which this research was being conducted. None of these universities will be referred to by name in this dissertation. All of the participants in this study have been given pseudonyms.

1.1 Participants

Lucy	Chinese-Canadian	Undergraduate
Monica	Chinese-Canadian	Undergraduate
Chuntao	Chinese	Undergraduate
Connie	Korean-Canadian	Undergraduate
Christine	Vietnamese-Laotian-Canadian	Undergraduate
Suki	Hispanic-Japanese-Canadian	Undergraduate
Justine	Barbadian-Canadian	Undergraduate
Shivanna	Trinidadian-Canadian	Graduate
Nicole	Irish-Guyanese-Canadian	Undergraduate
Perveen	Afghan-Canadian	Graduate
Aisha	Pakistani-Canadian	Graduate
Sangita	Sri Lankan-Canadian	Graduate
Anitha	Sri Lankan-Canadian	Graduate

Leyla	Palestinian-Canadian	Graduate
Amani	Iraqi-Canadian	Undergraduate

Most of the participants were born in Canada or had immigrated to Canada at a young age. Justine, who immigrated to Canada at an older age, is a Canadian citizen, while Chuntao was an international student.

Participants chose where they were most comfortable meeting on campus for the interview. All of the interviews were conducted one-on-one either in a private study room or an available empty classroom. Prior to the meeting, I had sent participants a form stating the purpose of this study, which I also read to participants again prior to having them sign a consent form in person before I began each interview. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and most lasted approximately one hour. Following the interview, participants were given a debriefing form which went over what the purpose of this study was. The debriefing form also included a list of available on-campus and off-campus support services they could access if they wished to do so. All of the participants were given a \$25 VISA gift card as an appreciation for their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, I transcribed each interview on my own. While I am aware of various computer programs that help with transcriptions, from experience I have found that transcribing my own interviews helps me process interviews better, while it also helps me make further sense of my field notes and observations during the interviews. Additionally, transcribing helps me pay attention to each participants' tone of voice, their hesitations, as well as their silences. Once interviews were transcribed, I began analyzing the data by

coding. Houghton et al. (2015) suggest that it is best to have a temporary “start list” of codes informed by research questions and aims of the study in order to help organize the data (p. 10). These codes are ideas, concepts, or themes that tied into my research focus. For example, early codes were ‘violence’ or ‘racism.’ As I went from one interview transcription to the next, more codes emerged under the “start list” codes. Focusing inductively on refining separate codes into more distinct codes as I made connections between the responses of different participants (for example, new codes which developed as I saw more clear links between the the intersections of sexism and racism), I discovered new themes to not only situate my analysis intersectionally but to help organize my data (see Yin, 2014; also see Bowleg, 2008). Given that qualitative research is interpretive, my analysis of the codes changed as more data was analyzed. I then had to reorganize old codes to determine new codes inductively (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). As Creswell (2007) contends, analysis of data needs to be constantly modified as new data emerges. I returned to my data constantly for further details, clarification, and confirmation throughout the research and writing process.

Intersectional Data Analysis

According to Hunting (2014), researchers conducting an intersectional study must have intersectionality inform and drive their analysis, writing that “[g]iven the task of the researcher is to identify the relevant intersections and scope of a research problem, all analysis must occur while keeping the social and historical context in mind” (p. 13). Data must link micro-level factors and experiences to macro factors of the historical, social, and political intersections of power and oppression. Hunting goes on to write that, “[w]ithout making these intersections explicit, research risks perpetuating individualistic explanations

for complex issues, such as violence, that ignore the intersections of inequity shaping this violence” (p.13). My analysis thus incorporated the two leading principles of intersectionality: social identity and the domains of power. The findings of this study revealed that the most significant social identities discussed by participants were gender, race, and ethnicity, although class and religion were also discussed by several participants.

Collins’ (2000) positing of the concept of “matrix of domination,” an analytical dimension to examine intersectional identities and how power and dominance function on a structural level in intersecting systems, is necessary to undertaking an intersectional analysis. Collins suggests that in order to identify and understand the functioning and operationalization of power, we need to approach it through the analysis and intersections of the four domains of power: *the structural, the disciplinary, the hegemonic (or cultural)* and *the interpersonal*. Not only does an understanding of these four domains of power provide my theoretical position and grounding into what intersectionality is, but it provides sufficiency in using intersectionality as a theoretical tool to analyze racialized women’s experiences of sexual violence and harassment. All of these domains of power need to be seriously examined and analyzed if we are to fully understand sexual violence and harassment conceptually and empirically. Indeed, we must locate this alarming problem beyond the mere micro, interpersonal domain to its roots in the structural, the disciplinary, and the hegemonic/cultural domain. Indeed, this has been the most challenging part of my data analysis.

Intersectionality, Feminism, and Positionality

Given that intersectionality and the case study method encourage researchers to recognize, question, and examine the many different facets within a particular subject or issue,

together they allow for the production of empirically rich data that embraces and appreciates the complexities, paradoxes, oppressions, and power dynamics which exist in the lived realities of racialized women in the context of sexual violence and harassment. From a feminist perspective, I set out to conduct a study that was “rooted in the very real lives, struggles and experiences” of racialized women (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 4). While the contribution of feminist research methodologies has helped generate different ways of collecting data and has challenged traditional positivist approaches, one of its central tenets has been aimed at alleviating power divisions between the researcher and their participants through the development of positive rapport. Feminist research and intersectional practitioners also require us, as researchers, to be reflexive of our positionalities as well as our subjectivities throughout the research process (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Scantlebury, 2005; Stacey, 1988).

Undoubtedly, my epistemological and ontological lens has influenced my concerns regarding racialized women’s experiences of sexual violence and harassment. But it has also affected other aspects of my research as well, from the methods I chose to use and my concerns about making participants’ voices central to this study, to my constant reflection on my positionality, what my role is as a researcher, and finally, what I want to achieve by conducting this particular study. That being said, my ontological and epistemological leanings are influenced by my ‘personal biography,’ where I speak “from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 11). As a feminist researcher, it is my responsibility to reflect on and speak about my identity, including why I am interrogating this specific subject matter (See Weis & Fine, 2000).

I acknowledge my location as a university educated, heterosexual, cisgender female, who, coupled with my fair-skin, my fluent English, and my middle-class background has spared me from potential experiences of discrimination and xenophobia, though I have had my fair share of bigoted attitudes directed towards me following my revealing of being of Iranian descent or my 'ethnic' name; experiences that have subjected me to processes of racialization which I have had no part in controlling. Between being Iranian and a woman, and despite having lived all of my life in Canada and the United States, I have been either racialized and culturalized as a woman who is assumed to be controlled and regulated by the patriarchal customs associated with my country of origin, or subject to a sexual exoticism of Middle Eastern women. Indeed, my experiences with racialization, xenophobia, and sexual harassment have been significant reasons as to why this research matters to me.

Yet my class privilege, my educational background, my sexual identity, and the colour of my skin have saved me from cases where I could have been subject to further bigotry or harassment if I had darker skin, if I were a lesbian, if I had an accent, or if I came from a lower-income background. Given that all my past research endeavors have focused on either racial or ethnic minorities, or women living under oppressive political and social conditions, I have always had to be reflexive of my position as someone who has been relatively privileged in a number of ways. I have had to be open and critical to what these various dimensions of power dynamics meant and what this has raised for me and made me aware of, not only in the research process, but in society as well. While I am aware that my shared gender with participants alone is not enough to fully understand their experiences, considering the disparate social locations which we all come from, as Huisman (1997) writes of her experience as a White woman working with battered Asian women, "there are

two things that helped me prepare me for entry into this research setting; my feminist orientation and my training in qualitative methods” (p. 186).

Rather than ignoring subjectivity to minimize its impact on research and the interpretation of data, feminist researchers consider subjectivity to be an asset (Scantlebury, 2005). Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) note that researchers are encouraged to acknowledge and draw from her location, and to be reflexive of how her positionality can both serve as a “hindrance and a resource toward achieving knowledge through the process” (p. 15). By reflecting on our positions and by ‘working the hyphen’ between researcher and participant, our decisions to write about and for our subjects will help make our work more ethical, and we will be better equipped to contribute to social justice and social change (Fine, 1994).

Given this, I have also been concerned with the implications and possible negative consequences of conducting this research, however feminist, social justice oriented, or well-intentioned my desires to conduct this research are. While Stacey (1988) speaks of the ethnographic methodology, her work nonetheless reminds us that qualitative research can be potentially exploitive. Stacey notes that engaging in and developing rapport with participants places subjects at risk of manipulation and betrayal by the researcher. And even though researchers aim to often alleviate the power imbalance between researcher and researched given the collaborative construction of knowledge and understanding, the final research product is usually the product of the researcher. The write-up is almost always written through the observations, accounts, data, and authority of the researcher, who picks and chooses what is to be included, and how it will be presented. I have done my best to mitigate this in an effort to give power to women’s voices and their experiences, and to alleviate the reproduction of stereotypes. Having approached this research process fully

aware of the unfair research practices conducted on communities of colour, which has helped secure racist and stereotypical representations and social imaginaries, I aimed to conduct a study that does not contribute to reproducing the oppression and victimization of women, and especially of racialized women.

Conclusion

This present study seeks to analyze racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment through an qualitative research study informed by an intersectional feminist analysis that attends the intersections and differences of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion among women; social identity categories that are imbedded in relations of power and conditioned by larger institutions and structures of inequality. While statistical, quantitative analysis might be beneficial to understanding the extent to which sexual violence and harassment occurs in a specific setting, quantifying alarming social problems such as sexual violence and harassment fails to provide any meaningful understanding of either the root causes of the problem or the lived experiences of those who are subject to victimization. By utilizing a case study methodology and undertaking a qualitative analysis of sexual violence and harassment that focuses on racialized women's voices and experiences through an intersectional analysis, I hope to contribute to the field of sexual violence and harassment research in Canadian higher education while helping to inform the creation of more effective sexual violence policies and support services in post-secondary institutions.

Chapter 4:

Racialized Sexual Violence and Harassment

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Black, East Asian, and Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian-Canadian participants' experiences of racialized sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial and intra-racial contexts. In the context of racialized sexual violence and harassment in the present study, the intersections of race and ethnicity with gender, and in some cases, religion, converged together in pertinent ways; revealing much about how their intersecting and marginalized social identities, and broader structures of power and oppression, made women vulnerable to sexual violence and harassment both within and outside of their racial and ethnic communities. As this chapter will reveal, why participants were targeted had as much to do with their race, ethnicity, and religion as it did with their gender; their narratives concurring with scholars, researchers, and anti-violence practitioners who have long challenged traditional feminist conceptions that gender inequality is the sole reason and motive for violence against women (Bogard, 1999; Crenshaw, 1997; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 1994; Richie, 2000; Sokoloff, 2004).

In this chapter, I demonstrate how most women made sense of, and interpreted their experiences, by drawing on the intersections of their race, gender, ethnicity, and in some cases, religion, vis-à-vis the racial identities of their male perpetrators. Yet, as my findings revealed, most women were more inclined to discuss the subject of race, as well as the racist and sexual motives of their perpetrators, in inter-racial contexts rather than in intra-racial contexts. In cross-racial contexts, perpetrators verbally referenced and drew upon

racialized sexual stereotypes, controlling images, and cultural frames of reference in their comments and actions towards women—which was not clearly expressed in the accounts of women in intra-racial experiences. Nonetheless, some participants made sense of their experience of sexual violence in intra-racial contexts by drawing on the intersections of race and gender by referencing internal gender dynamics within their racial and ethnic communities; what Taylor and Richardson (2009) refer to as the “common bond factor.”

I begin this chapter by discussing women’s experiences in inter-racial contexts of sexual violence and harassment, beginning with a discussion of the racist and sexist notion of “exotic” which several women in this study were frequently referred to by men in their harassing behaviours towards them. This will be followed by a discussion of Collin’s (1990, 2004) notion of “controlling images”, which I will repeatedly contextualize through a macro, structural framework and utilize analytically throughout this chapter. Any intersectional exploration of sexual violence and harassment against racialized women must account for, as well as address, the socio-historical context of colonialism, patriarchy, and Whiteness, given that these intersecting structures have contributed to not only constructing race and gender, but shaping the social relations of race and gender while conditioning the ways in which identity is experienced (Dua, 2007; Taylor, James, & Saul, 2007). By ‘Whiteness’ I mean that it is “a social location as well as an ideological and “political construct of power” (Gusa, 2010, p. 468) that ‘systemically deforms—and informs—every aspect of the social world’” (Owen, 2007, p. 208).

I will discuss participants’ experiences of racialized sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial contexts categorically, beginning with the discussion of a Black participant’s experience with the controlling image of Black Promiscuity (see McGuffey, 2013). Next, I will focus on the experiences of East Asian women with what is known as “yellow fever”;

a racist and sexist term which makes women vulnerable to racist and sexist forms of violence. Finally, I will address the experiences Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian participants have had with controlling images and fetishization, where they are assumed to be oppressed by their cultures and religion, yet also sexually erotic.

Throughout these sections, I will address how women have made sense of the range of sexually harassing and violent comments, sexually suggestive behaviours, and unwanted touching they have been subjected to. In most cases, women made sense of such experiences by referencing representations of racialized women vis-à-vis broader historical processes, cultural narratives, and stereotypes which have worked to marginalize, Other, and objectify racialized women, including themselves. How some men simultaneously referenced their own racial and gendered power through their comments and actions will also be examined. As this chapter will demonstrate, in the context of racialized sexual violence and harassment, men exercise their gendered power over women while wielding their racial power over racialized women as well. Given this, I hope to draw attention to the violence of racism women experience as they mediate and operate social constructions and dominant narratives of their sexualities, gender, and race within a dominant society which often values and normalizes Whiteness.

The last section of this chapter will address the few experiences women in this study have had in intra-racial contexts. Although a small number of women experienced unwanted touching and sexual coercion from men who shared similar racial and ethnic backgrounds as themselves, only two participants addressed the issue of race and ethnicity while pointing to the intersections of their race, ethnicity, and gender in order to make sense of why they were targeted. Although the experience of racialized sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial and intra-racial contexts were qualitatively and substantially

different from one another, they both provide valuable insight into the necessity and value of applying intersectionality as a conceptual tool to examine racialized women's experiences of racialized sexual violence and harassment.

Exoticism and Controlling Images: The Sexual Othering of Racialized Women in Inter-Racial Contexts

Race is central to the construction and experience of gender (Collins, 2004), and “[w]hile all people go through gendered and sexualized processes in society, the intersecting racial identity of people of color introduces racial domination into the mix” (Chou, 2012, p. 12). In the context of racialized sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial contexts, the centrality of race in the construction and experience of gender, and its intersections with other axes of domination, is particularly acute; illuminating the potency of macro forces of power and oppression and its impact on micro interactions and women's subjectivities. This was particularly evident through a term that many participants in this study have been called and referred to by men at university parties, on online dating websites, and at bars occupied by students: *exotic*. Although it may appear as a compliment when one is told that they look “exotic”, women, regardless of what race or ethnicity they identified with, were less than thrilled by this comment, and perceived being called exotic as a harassing experience underscored by racist and sexualized connotations. To them, being called exotic was not synonymous with beautiful or attractive, but rather a reminder that they deviate from what is normal—that is, White—while being sought out for their racial differences.

Consider the meaning of exotic. As an adjective, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines exotic as:⁷

⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exotic>

1. introduced from another country: not native to the place where found
2. : foreign, alien
3. : strikingly, excitingly, or mysteriously different or unusual

Foreign and different, even strikingly unusual, the definition above is telling of what is implied when men—namely White men in the case of this study—refer to racialized women as exotic, as the “exotic” features of their skin-tones and physical features are what men are usually referring to. Having grown up in Canada being asked, *Where are you from? Where are you really from? What are you?*—not to mention subject to extensive othering through overt and covert experiences of racism throughout their lives, often reminded of their racial differences especially within the context of schooling—women in this study were well accustomed to their perceived otherness outside of the dominant White status quo which was emphasized by their gender. In their discussions of being called exotic, the word reminded women that they were being sought out for their racialized and gendered bodies, perceived to be different and unusual to what White men are normally used to while an explicitly racialized sexual reference underscored the word. Mukkamala and Suyemoto (2018), in their study of the exoticism and sexualization of East Asian women, found that participants perceived such comments as derogatory.

Shivanna, who is Trinidadian-Canadian, described that much of the harassment she has experienced in cross-racial contexts has often been accompanied by subtle sexual and racial comments such as being called exotic. She explained that in being called exotic, her racial background, coupled with her gender, had been eroticized, racialized, and sexualized by men nearly as soon as she would meet them. Suki, who identifies as Japanese and Hispanic-Canadian, and Monica, who is Chinese-Canadian, also discussed their experiences with being called exotic:

Like you can't use the word exotic. Like I'm not a plant, I'm not a flower, I'm a human being. I mean like if you're at a bar or something, someone will say "Oh, you're exotic looking. What's your background?" Or cat-calling. Umm...yeah, I find that race in those kinds of interactions definitely plays a larger role. (Suki)

I hate it when men describe me as like exotic. Like it makes me like, an animal [laughs]. So, I definitely don't enjoy how like anything other than like White is uhh like a mystical thing to be attained and then thrown away once you're finished with the fetish. Cause like, we're just like people, too, which is like an obvious thing to say but something that some people don't realize. (Monica)

As Shivanna, Suki, and Monica contend, being called exotic is not only a form of sexual harassment, but it also contributes to racializing, sexualizing, differentiating, and even dehumanizing women, while reproducing hegemonic White femininity as normal.

As part of the process of Othering, the notion of exotic unfolds as a "controlling image", which positions Whiteness as the normative standard by which non-White women are sexually perceived and imagined (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Initially coined by Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2004), controlling images are culturally embedded images which shape perceptions people have of racialized women, which includes, but are not limited to, sexual morals, which is rooted in a legacy of colonialism and European imperialist exploitation. As Nagel (2003) asserts, "[t]he history of European colonialism...is also a history of sexual dominance" (p. 149). Linking the colonial ideological apparatus to the formation of gender, race, and sexuality, McClintock (1995) writes that Europeans viewed non-White peoples as "sexually exotic others" (as cited in Nagel, 2003, p. 91). Such depictions of non-Europeans vis-à-vis Europeans helped Europeans construct Whiteness as superior, ideal, and moral, while the bodies of non-White peoples were constructed in stark contrast; imagined to be depraved, immoral, overly sexual, animalistic, and in the case of Africans, barely human (see Collins, 2004; Dua, 2007). In the process of colonial exploitation and conquest of non-White peoples and their land, colonizers simultaneously exploited

women's bodies sexually, what Woan (2008) theorizes as “white sexual imperialism”—its remnants still lingering today.

Today, such historical colonial ideas do not remain locked in a distant past, but have been revitalized and reformed to shape various phases of nation-building and state policies in Canada and the United States, including its institutions and economic structures, while mass media has helped to (re)produce and disseminate representations, images, and stereotypes of racialized and gendered bodies. Together, colonialism, nation-building, state policies and practices, social formations, capitalism, and media channels have converged to help sustain and perpetuate dominant cultural narratives of non-White bodies; working in the service of Whiteness and White hegemony as it shapes people's perceptions of femininity (as well as masculinity) and ideologies of race, gender, sexuality, and class which it intersects with (see Collins, 2004; Dua, 2007; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 1998).

Speaking to African American women, Collins (2000) describes controlling images as representations which work to objectify women while justifying their marginalization. As part of the hegemonic or cultural domain of power (Collins & Bilge, 2016)—“which acts as a link between social institutions (structural domain), their organizational practices (disciplinary domain), and the level of everyday social interaction (interpersonal domain)” (Collins, 2004, p. 284)—Collins (2009) demonstrates how representations, ideologies, and narratives of Black women, which are often disseminated through the media, function as a system of power and plays a critical role in the “operation of domination” (p. 53). Listing four types of controlling images effecting Black women in the American context, Collins writes that the images of “stereotypical mummies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression” (Collins, 1999, p. 142; also see West, 1995). Such images have

routinely been reproduced in music videos, movies, pornography, and other popular culture mediums (Balaji, 2010; Bryant, 2008; Collins, 2004; Gammage, 2016), which are critical agents of socialization that shape our ideas concerning race, gender, and sexuality (Littlefield, 2008).

Moreover, as Skegg's (1997) historical overview of female respectability vis-à-vis the making of the classed subject reveals, working-class Black women, as well as White women, have been historically constructed as sexually immoral while middle-class White women have long been imagined as possessing righteous femininity. Skegg's discussion of provides value to further understanding the damaging and intersecting influence of controlling images on Black women. Together, the controlling images of "welfare queens, hoochies, freaks, and hoodrats" (Donovan & Williams, 2002, p. 98) demonstrates how the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, in relation to broader structures of colonialism, White supremacy, capitalism, racism, class inequities, and sexism, inform racialized sexual representations of Black women; projecting depictions of hyper-sexualization on all Black women homogeneously (Collins, 2000, 2004).⁸ As studies have found, controlling images make Black women vulnerable targets of sexual violence and harassment as racist and sexist images and stereotypes, underlined by classed depictions, are often employed against them (see Buchanan & Omerod, 2002; Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King, & Parks, 1995; Luther, Tata, & Kwesiga; Townsend et al., 2010).

⁸ Armstrong et al. (2004) study found that the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class is also prevalent in how female Latina students in the United States are perceived sexually.

The Controlling Image of Black Promiscuity and Sexual Violence

Discussing the controlling image of Black Promiscuity in relation to sexual violence, McGuffey (2013) writes that “social actors justify the systemic targeting of Black women for sexual violence and exploitation by characterizing women of African descent as always sexually willing” (p. 112). This notion has roots in colonialism, a period where rape endured by African slaves by their White slave owners was not considered rape given that African women were not considered human. Later, such perceptions were institutionalized in American society, where, given that Black women were considered to have a large sexual appetite, sexual violence directed against them was not technically sexual violence because they were perceived as always sexually willing, and therefore, men’s actions were not subject to persecution (Collins, 2004; also see Harris, 1997). With such notions of over-sexualization refurbished in popular media channels, the utilization of the archetype of a hyper-sexual Black woman today contributes to shaping the racialized and sexualized perceptions of Black women and the extent to which men can access their bodies, which often appear in their experiences of sexual violence and harassment.

This was very clear in Justine’s case, a student originally from Barbados. Having been sexually assaulted by a friend prior to her post-secondary studies, and having had numerous uncomfortable encounters with men at clubs and online during her time as a university student, Justine discussed how she now regulates her outing behaviours—not drinking with male friends out of fear of not knowing her limits and being taken advantage of, and not accepting drinks from men out of concern for being drugged. She also mentioned that she explicitly states her intentions to men she associates with so they would not get the wrong impression of her. In other words, Justine made it clear to men that she was not sexually available. Speaking to the experience of unwanted touching and sexual

coercion from a male friend who had attended the same university, but had since graduated, Justine explained that she had gone out for dinner with him to catch up. Although a platonic relationship, Justine reiterated to me that she made it clear to him throughout the night that she was uninterested in pursuing anything beyond having dinner and watching a movie with him at his apartment. Despite her efforts, he kept trying to touch her, even pulling at her pant strings, and tried to cuddle with her although she did not want to. While Justine managed to get out of the situation before it escalated into something potentially more threatening and forceful, we cannot ignore how her perpetrator's perceptions of Black women undoubtedly influenced his attempts to sleep with her, while Justine's consistent efforts to express her disinterest stemmed largely from her reality as a Black woman conscious of larger dominant attitudes regarding the sexual availability of Black women.

Justine was among the participants who exercised a hyper-consciousness of the possibility of being sexually assaulted, which provoked her to take extra precautions to prevent it. This was also expressed by a number of other women in this study who spoke of the laundry list of ways they tried to protect themselves from the possibility of sexual assault and harassment while they were alone in public and walking around campus at night—from walking quickly to and from where they were going; to holding their keys in their hands as a form of weapon; making sure to not unlock all the doors of their cars with their automatic key remotes; walking with only one headphone in their ears; talking to someone on the phone while walking alone at night; and wearing looser clothing. As Collins (2004) rightfully articulates, “not every woman needs to be raped to have the *fear* of rape function as a powerful mechanism of social control in everyday life” (p. 243). But Justine was also very cognizant of both her gendered and as well as her racialized identity

as a Black woman specifically and the vulnerability to sexual violence that this posed for her.

Justine discussed that her perpetrator had asked her earlier in the evening, “Why can Black girls twerk so well? Can you twerk?” A Black subcultural style, the dance known as ‘twerking’ involves women, usually Black women, squatting low and thrusting their hips and butts in a quick motion. As Gaunt (2015) writes, with the dominant society already perceiving Black women’s bodies as symbols of hyper-sexualization, twerking stands as a signifier of this, often justifying their perceptions. Thus, when her perpetrator asked Justine if she could twerk, she responded by saying no:

I’m a Black woman, of course I can twerk! [laughing] But I wasn’t going to tell him that. He said, “bullshit”, and I’m like, “well, you’ll never know.” And he said, “why are you lying to me? and I said, “it’s not a topic we need to talk about.” And then he said, “I’ve always thought Black women are so beautiful.”

Justine was aware of the racialized and sexualized representations of Black women, and the explicit racial and sexual impressions which accompany popular dances such as twerking, which evokes racial and sexual stereotypes. It is clear that Justine knew that admitting to being able to twerk would reproduce and perpetuate the stereotype of the Promiscuous Black Woman, which McGuffey (2013) addresses, and which men often employ as they sexually violate and harass Black women, particularly in cross-racial contexts (see for example Buchanan & Omerod, 2003). Thus, Justine was aware that if she did admit to being able to twerk, it would not only perpetuate dominant impressions of Black women, but it could have potentially put her in an unsafe situation. Although Justine tried to resist the image often inflicted on Black women, her perpetrator nonetheless employed the controlling image of Black Promiscuity which contributed to making Justine vulnerable to unwanted touching. Her perpetrator claiming that he had always found Black

women beautiful also conveyed to Justine that he was less interested in her romantically, and more interested in her in a sexual way, which Justine assumed was due to a racial fetish.

Justine's response to her perpetrator also stems from her experiences of going to clubs and attending parties, which she says she rarely does anymore due to experiences with strange men groping and slapping her butt, which Justine accredited to the perceived assumption that it is okay to touch and grab Black women inappropriately and without their consent. Justine thus practiced her hyper-consciousness by being both aware of male sexual aggression towards all women but knowing that Black women are especially vulnerable to incidents which are devised due to the power of controlling images which continue to contour racialized sexual violence against them.

Although Collins applies the concept of controlling images to Black women specifically, this notion has been adopted by a number of scholars for its value in informing a larger discussion regarding the ways in which all racialized women experience the impact of dominant ideologies, stereotypes, and representations at the intersections of colonialism, patriarchy, Whiteness, racism, and sexism (see Chou, 2012; Pyke & Johnson, 2003). By saying this, I recognize the grave differences between racialized women and the varying historical, political, economic, and social trajectories which condition disparate women's experiences and the ways in which they are gazed upon, objectified, constructed, as well as marginalized. I also do not wish to dislocate the notion of controlling images within the origins and work of Black feminist thought, and one which has a deeply oppressive, not to mention an ongoing systemic impact on Black women specifically; in ways which other racialized women do not experience. But for the value that Collins' notion of controlling images grants social analysis and intersectionality, I extend this concept to other racialized women for the purpose of this study, given that the interplay between images, stereotypes,

and representations help shape perceptions people tend to have of racialized women. As the findings of this study have revealed, controlling images also make East Asian women vulnerable to racialized sexual violence.

Racialized Sexual Violence and Harassment Towards East Asian-Canadian Women

Although growing, there remains a small body of research which addresses the experiences East Asian women have with sexual violence and harassment; the gap overlooking how sexism and racism intersect in women's experiences (see Cho, 2003; Chen, 1997; Buchanan, Settles, Wu, & Kayashino, 2018; Ho, Dinh, Bellefontaine, & Irving, 2018; Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018). The lack of empirical research on this issue is surprising given that in a study conducted in the United States in 2001, it was found that between 1993-1998, the greatest proportion of perpetrators towards East Asian women were non-East Asian, which was not the case for either White or Black targets of sexual violence, where their perpetrators were predominantly of their own race (see Woan, 2008, p. 297); an alarming revelation which begs the question: why? Of course, sexual violence and harassment in intra-racial contexts occurs, which a few cases in my study revealed, but the experience women had with sexual violence and harassment in such intra-racial contexts were qualitatively different than their experience of sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial contexts. This was not only in terms of the form in which sexual violence and harassment took place in inter-racial contexts, but how women also made sense of their experiences as they drew upon the intersections of their social identities as well as the power differences of race and gender between themselves and their perpetrators, which has not been closely studied. While I will discuss intra-racial incidents later on in this chapter, in

this section I will explore the damaging impact of controlling images which vehemently informed East Asian participants' experiences of sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial contexts.

East Asian women made up the largest racial sample as 6 out of the 15 participants who participated in this study identified with at least one ethnicity categorized under the umbrella term East Asian. With the exception of Chuntao, an international student from China, and Suki, who identified as Japanese and Hispanic, participants explained having had at least one experience with what is commonly, but perhaps disturbingly known as “yellow fever,” a racist and sexualized term which refers to the sexual attraction of non-East Asian men—namely White men—towards East Asian women. Emphasized by Zhang (2016), and reiterated by participants, yellow fever is a distinctively racist and sexist term reaped with colonial impressions of White superiority and racist and sexist controlling images which depict East Asian women as compliant and delicate, yet sexually inclined to satisfy the needs of men. As Zheng (2016) writes:

As race *does* make a difference in every other sphere of life, the expressive meaning of yellow fever is that *there is something different about Asian women*, something that must be more than mere phenotype... The more it is known or popularly believed that (White) men have preferences for Asian women, the more difficult it will be for Asian women to be viewed in terms other than as sexual objects. (p. 411)

Racial and sexual stereotypes have long generated racialized sexual impressions of East Asian women—a symptom of what Woan (2008) theorizes as “white sexual imperialism.” This theory holds that “the history of Western political, military, and economic domination of developing nations compelled women of these nations into sexual submission by white men” (p. 277), which continues to inform contemporary relations of power between White men and racialized women. In their discussion of the Orientalization of East Asian American women in the United States, Uchida (1998) traces the origins of the stereotype

and image of the Oriental Woman by adopting Edward Said's (1979) theory of Orientalism; particularly focusing on racial and sexual representations and narratives which have managed to reproduce themselves through a number of historical trajectories and events. Uchida writes that this began with images depicting the sexual impropriety of Chinese women during immigration to the United States, followed by Chinese prostitution in the late nineteenth century, which influenced the characters East Asian women were often typecast as in 1920s Hollywood films—characters which were submissive, conniving, eager-to-please, and sexually desirable (also see Prasso, 2005). Later, military occupation in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam helped further solidify the easy accessibility White men had to women's bodies as they worked as prostitutes while others were taken by American soldiers and business men as wives; both events positioning East Asian women as compliant to the needs of White men and readily accessible (also see Cho, 2003; Woan, 2008).

Moreover, since the 1960s, the “model minority” phenotype has functioned as a racialized and classed stereotype with problematic consequences. Although the notion of the model minority has been used to reference the economic and educational achievements of Asian immigrants in countries such as Canada and the United States, it is underlined by the presumption that Asians are law-abiding citizens who never complain—and rarely discuss or report the racism and violence inflicted against them (Chow, 2017). As Saran (2016) writes, “[t]hrough the term model minority implies prestige and recognition of accomplishments, it originates as a hegemonic mechanism to reduce...racial and ethnic tensions...used to delegitimize the issue of racial inequality” while ultimately working as a discourse to silence and marginalize Asians (p. 9).

In an effort to apply the model minority stereotype as a controlling image, we can see how it positions East Asian women as individuals who know their place and do not make a fuss; which imagines women as compliant and perhaps not likely to speak back nor report the racial and sexual violence inflicted against them. In a case where two Japanese students in the United States were kidnapped, raped, and video-recorded by male university students, the perpetrators admitted that they specifically sought out East Asian women because of their fantasies as well as the sexual stereotypes they held about them. They were also convinced that East Asian women were less likely to report their sexual assault out of fear of dishonouring their families (see Museus & Truong, 2013; Sanchez-Hucles, Dryden, & Winstead, 2012). As Chou (2012) writes in relation to her own experience with explicitly racist and sexist comments, “[t]he stereotype surrounding Asian Americans as “model minorities”—hard working, diminutive, passive people—gives license to these incidences because there is no perceived threat of resistance” (p. viii). Clearly, interweaving historical events and cultural (re)productions of East Asian women in North America, including among university students, are reaped with racial sexual assumptions, leaving East Asian women to juggle broader intersecting racial stereotypes and sexual representations of being demure but sexual, submissive yet eager to please. This contributes to making East Asian women prone to racialized sexual violence and harassment, which findings of this study revealed.

The ease in which men appeared to express their interest in East Asian women, as described by participants in the present study, was rather astounding to listen to. Among the four participants who recounted their experiences, men appeared to unreservedly and openly proclaim or suggest that they had yellow fever; not appearing to be concerned with the innately racist and sexist impressions of their comments and behaviours. Monica

described that some men freely state that they have yellow fever on their online dating profiles, and Monica concurred with Connie's assertion that men are comfortable with readily stating their interest in East Asian women:

It's awful. I hate it. There was this guy who was so proud of the fact that he had yellow fever and that he loved Asian women. He had a thing for me just because I was Asian. He would brag about the fact that he'd go from Asian woman to Asian woman and he only dates Asian women. He would straight-up brag about it. And when he tried to get with me, he's like, "I've had so much experience with Asian women"... Yellow fever makes me cringe so hard.

Christine mentioned that her experience with men who had yellow fever is so pervasive that whenever she is approached by men, she feels it is because they have a fetish for East Asian women: "It happens all the time. [Christine separated the words as she was speaking, expressing her annoyance]. All the time. If a White guy comes up to me, I'm like, he probably has a fetish."

Cultural stereotypes of East Asian women seeped into participants' experiences of racialized sexual harassment within cross-racial contexts as women drew on their race and gender vis-à-vis their perpetrators. Connie extensively discussed the sexual racialized stereotypes that East Asian women, including herself, are often subjected to in their experiences of sexual harassment:

Well, there's...it's a weird stereotype. Asian women are not portrayed as strong, we're sexualized in a very weird way. It's more like, we're sex slaves, but we also cook and clean. We're subservient and that's what's sexy about us, our subservience.

Connie described that such images are often perpetuated through popular culture channels, particularly movies, which helps create and condition ideologies and representations which sustain dominant cultural narratives about non-White women. Contemporary media portrayals, Connie discussed, continue to typecast East Asian women as weak, cute, clumsy, and defenceless damsels who are subservient and willing to do anything to please

their partners. Between being non-assertive and sexually available to men, such stereotypes have greatly contributed to making East Asian women in this study vulnerable to sexual violence as racialized presumptions intersect with sexist ideas. Lucy's experience with a man she encountered while riding public transportation is telling of this:

This White guy goes, “kon'nichiwa,”⁹ and I go, “I'm not Japanese.” And he's like, “where are you from?” It made me uncomfortable... Well, anyway the guy on the train, he's like, “oh, I know a lot of Chinese girls, they make a lot of cute noises when they get intimate.”

Sexual harassment not only occurs in-person, but on the internet as well (see Barak, 2005; Leemis et al., 2018). The experiences female East Asian university students have with online sexual harassment has been well documented by Museus and Truong (2013), whose review of racism and sexism in cyberspace directed towards East Asian women and men by university students points to the considerable racial and gendered stereotypes that male students harbour on the internet, where they either directly harass women or post sexually and racially explicit comments on online discussion forums. For example, students from the University of California, Berkeley created a discussion forum where one of the forums was entitled, “How do I get an Asian sorority chick to *&@!# me...?” Museus and Truong found that multiple comments posted under this forum not only reinforced stereotypes about East Asian women as sexually willing, but also encouraged men to drug and sexually assault them (p. 17). As the authors contend, “because higher education institutions are a microcosm of society, racism and sexism also permeate college campuses and shape the experiences of Asian American college students” (p. 15), arguing that racial stereotyping, racial isolation, hate crimes, and sexual violence are rampant issues that East Asian women experience in higher education.

⁹ Japanese for ‘hello’

Museus and Truong describe how racism and sexism not only manifest in interpersonal, face-to-face interactions on university campuses, but also within “the digital aspects of their campus environments” (p. 15). Likewise, Connie explained how men, on multiple occasions, have made sexually suggestive and derogatory comments to her online which included remarks such as “I love Asian women” and “they have such tight pussies.” She recounted another incident with a man she met online:

We got a coffee as friends, and it started off normal, and then he thought it was appropriate to tell me about lewd, sexual things, specifically pertaining to Asian women, that we will doing anything for a man. Apparently as an Asian woman I have to do anything he wants and, I’m just like, is anyone else hearing this? Like, am I going crazy right now? He said he always had a thing for Asian women, and it became less that I’m a young woman, but a young *Asian woman* [she emphasized this] ... Not everyone is really creepy. But some of these guys think that my panties are going to melt off and I’m going to jump on them [laughs]. Some of the guys say like, “Asian women are so tiny and adorable.” Oh, and it becomes a thing where they just like, “Asian women, they’re so into kinky things.” Like, I’m not kink-shaming. If you’re into kinky things, that’s great, but don’t just be like, “Oh yeah, I wanna dominate you and throw you around. Asian women love a strong, forward such and such man.” Like, please don’t say that to me.

Participants explained that most of the harassment they have experienced has been racialized, and tends to come from random White men who not only make sexually direct comments, but explicitly reference their own gendered and racial superiority:

Like, Tinder or when we get bored, we go on OKCupid.¹⁰ Sometimes guys think it’s okay to message you and say, “I love this and this about Asian woman” or “Do you want my big White cock?” Like, oh wow, you’re a White man, yeah, that’s totally a turn on [being sarcastic]. Like, they have this assumption that because they’re a White guy like, “Oh, you’ve never been with a White guy, right? Like, you know White guys have it best?”

In the comment above, men not only addressed their own racial and gendered dominance over Connie, but also emasculated East Asian men while doing so. Connie concurred with

¹⁰ Tinder and OkCupid are online dating channels

the sentiments of other participants as she described the superiority complex that they feel

White men tend to have over East Asian women as well as East Asian men:

The big White cock thing...like, okay? I don't know why they say these things. They brag about being White. And it becomes a thing like, do you think I'm attracted to you because of your race? My friend called it like sexual racism, but it's different from your day-to-day racism. It makes you feel offended and vulnerable and angry and also like, it puts you into a weird self-conscious moment. I'm not a self-conscious woman. I'm proud to be Korean, I'm proud of my culture. I don't know if it's just engrained racism, but I have this split second of embarrassment for being who I am. I shouldn't be, but that split second, I'm like, "oh, jeez."

This superiority complex, and the racialized sexual harassment that East Asian women are subject to, has resulted in experiences of feeling demeaned, embarrassed, and often objectified. It perpetuates the dichotomy that East Asian women are forced to negotiate between being submissive and strong, and assumptions that their gender and race are weak and in need of men, particularly White men. The crude fixation on East Asian women made participants uncomfortable and upset; their displeasure echoing the frustrations of other East Asian women who have taken to the internet to express their tiredness and disdain for the racialized sexism, exoticism, and fetishism they are frequently subject to, while discussing how controlling images and stereotypes contribute to putting East Asian women in danger and risk of sexual violence and harassment.¹¹ Such intersecting sexualized and racialized comments also reproduce an internalized form of racism, which not only

¹¹ Ren, Y. (2014, July 1). 'Yellow fever' fetish: Why do so many white men want to date a Chinese woman? *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10935508/Yellow-fever-fetish-Why-do-so-many-white-men-want-to-date-a-Chinese-woman.html>
Kuo, R. (2018, December 25). 5 ways 'Asian woman fetishes' put Asian women in serious danger. *Everyday Feminism*. Retrieved from <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/12/asian-woman-fetishes-hurtful/>
Wong, K. (2018, February 5). I give up on trying to explain why the fetishization of Asian women is bad. *Huff Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/i-give-up-on-trying-to-explain-why-the-fetishization-of-asian-women-is-bad_n_5a6a34e7e4b01fbbefaff9a2
Hyun, J. (2019, April 9). Dear men with yellow fever, you aren't flattering, just a little rapey. *Next Shark*. Retrieved from <https://nextshark.com/yellow-fever-fetish-white-men/>

reinforces power dynamics, but reminds women of their racial and gendered difference and otherness.

Although, as mentioned above, East Asian women are expected to be demure, quiet, and not speak back, some participants nonetheless challenged such racialized and gendered stereotypes by calling out men for their racialized sexual harassment towards them:

They are like, “Why are you getting upset about this? I’m saying things that are good, I’m saying positive things”... They totally think it’s a compliment, that they, a strong White guy, would be attracted to an Asian woman like me that I should be so flattered. I should be so flattered that I should let them do anything.

Connie illuminates the sexual and racial stereotype that attention from White men towards East Asian women would and should be met with flattery. Christine mentioned her concerns that when men express interest in her, it is because “they have this fetish with Asian women. They think I’m submissive, quiet”; this stereotype ultimately suggesting to White men that women are unwilling to say no to them and their sexual advances. This creates repercussions for women who do respond to men who sexually harass them. Christine had explained that “[i]n bars, guys think that if they buy you a drink that they deserve your time. Or if you say, “no, I have a boyfriend”, they will be like, “you’re such a bitch, I wasn’t even hitting on you.”” This points to the implications of responding to harassers, as East Asian women who are meant to be quiet and docile are subject to being physically assaulted or verbally berated for turning down advances (also see Pyke & Johnson, 2003).

Like calling a woman exotic, proclaiming that one has “yellow fever” is often relayed by men as a compliment or a preference. Yet what gets lost in such rhetoric is how the fetishization of East Asian women not only contributes to perpetuating racism against

women while reminding them of their ‘perpetual foreignness,’¹² but it also puts women at risk of harassment and sexual assault as they are racially and sexually objectified. This works to make East Asian women vulnerable to not only racial violence, but sexual violence and harassment as controlling images are deployed against them.

The findings of this study coincide with what Chen (1997) concluded in her study of Asian American women’s experiences of sexual harassment:

racial inequality is as much a dimension of the sexual harassment experiences of Asian-American women as is gender inequality. White and non-Asian men, holding stereotyped notions of Asian-American women, may subject Asian-American women to more extreme sexist attitudes and behaviors, which the men would not expect from their White or non-Asian counterparts. (p. 59)

Contoured by historical power relationships between men and women, including perceptions of non-White women, racialized and sexual stereotypes and images are often invoked and used in the context of enacting and normalizing violence against East Asian women. This illuminates how the intersections of social identity, which are mediated and shaped by larger power structures, influence how some men may perceive East Asian women, and how gender is ultimately constructed for East Asian women. The intersections of East Asian women’s gender and race, vis-à-vis that of their perpetrators who drew on the power of patriarchy and Whiteness to enact violence against women, is telling of how intersectionality lends itself as a useful theoretical framework to contextualize and examine the violence of racism and sexism in the context of sexual violence and harassment against East Asian women. The intersections of race and gender were also pertinent in how Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian participant’s experienced sexual violence and harassment.

¹² Perpetual foreigner refers to the presumption that ethnic minorities will always be considered “other” in predominately White societies, regardless of how long they have been living in the society (Huynh, Devos, & Smalarz, 2011).

Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian-Canadian Women's Experiences of Racialized Sexual Violence and Harassment

Unlike Black and East Asian participants' experiences of racialized sexual violence and harassment, which largely focused on race and gender, some Middle Eastern and South Asian participants dealt with another dimension of social identity which intersected with their gender and race as they described their experiences: religion. As Selod (2019) writes, “[w]hile South Asians and Arabs have already been racialized as a result of their ethnicity, there are newer racial meanings imparted to their bodies of their religious identity that is guided by their gender” (p. 552). For Muslim women, these racial meanings are mediated by the intersections of their social identities as gendered, ethnic, and religious bodies, and, together, play a salient role in their racialization, which, like all forms of racialization, occur through both macro and micro processes (Omi & Winant, 1986).

Colonial occupation across the Middle East and North Africa, coupled with Western literature, travelogues, and narratives throughout the nineteenth century produced sensationalized accounts of the seeming backwardness of Muslim peoples. This helped construct White European superiority while marking the danger and repressiveness of Muslim men, and the oppression—as well as exoticism—of Muslim women, signified through their veiling practices. Such depictions still hold much cultural, racial, and ideological currency today, as events in a post-9/11 era, rationed by the United States' political and ideological mission to combat the “Islamic Threat” (Spurles, 2003, p. 43) through military intervention and war in the Middle East, has reawakened what Said (1979) theorizes as ‘Orientalism’ across the West. Orientalism refers to the Wests' historical and ongoing use of demeaning, dehumanizing, and fetishizing images of the East, which works in the service of creating and solidifying differences between White and non-White peoples

in the context of power and domination. In contemporary society, Orientalist images pervade dominant Canadian and Western media outlets and news accounts; not only reinforcing the apparent fanaticism, violence, and backwardness of Muslim peoples, but at the same time, constructing sensationalized narratives of Muslim women as victims of their conservative families, oppressed by forced veiling and forced marriages, and vulnerable to violence and honour killings (see Hirji, 2011; Macdonald, 2006; Meeto & Mirza, 2007; Scott, 2007; Razack, 2004; Wilkins, 1995). Such racialized and sexist images and discourses have shaped recent politics in Canada, namely in Québec, which has translated into discriminatory and exclusionary practices and state policies in the name of gender parity and secularism (Abdmolaei & Hoodfar, 2018). The heated and controversial debates which have followed veiling politics in Québec has not only reminded us of the significant social and moral discussions that the veil continues to ignite in the West, but the persistence of colonial narratives which assumes that Muslim women are in need of saving has barely shifted (Abu-Lugod, 2013; Hoodfar, 2001, 2003).

As Jiwani (2014) writes, “[i]n Orientalist thought (permeating the media), the narrative of the Muslim woman or girl has coalesced around a bifurcated construction: the exotic, erotic Other verses the oppressed and victimized Other” (p. 31); highlighting that while Muslim women are subject to a sexualized, erotic gaze, they are simultaneously depicted as victims of their ultra-orthodox, patriarchal, and repressive families, and their innately oppressive religion. Although only two participants who identified as Muslim discussed their experiences with racialized sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial contexts in this study, their experiences coalesce between these two opposing yet interconnecting images and reveal insightful findings, especially given that Muslim women

have rarely been the subject of sexual violence and harassment research in higher education or outside of their ethnic and religious communities.

Aisha is a Pakistani-Canadian woman who grew up in a religious family and identified as a devout Muslim woman, although she had stopped observing the veil once she entered university. She explained that this was partly due to episodes of racism, Islamophobia, exclusion, and avoidance she experienced not only in public, despite the multicultural city in which she grew up in, but in school as well. This concurred with sentiments expressed by participants in Zine's (2006) study, whose narratives of racism and Islamophobia were contextualized by referencing how their veils made them hyper-visible as it attracted negative attention; echoing Rahmath, Chambers, and Wakewich's (2016) assertion that the "[t]he hijab is an over-determined sign of 'otherness'" (p. 34). Because educational institutions are largely "a microcosm of society and reflect the prevailing sociopolitical climate" (Bajaj, Ghaffar-Kucher, & Desai, 2016, p. 483), racialized images of Muslim women are often reinforced in structural and interpersonal interactions in the context of schooling (McDonough, 2003).

Rezai-Rashti (1994) found that teachers stereotyped Muslim students as both culturally and intellectually backwards and uneducated, while Zine's (2001) research revealed that Muslim students were placed in lower academic streams. Between being placed in ESL classes in school (despite being born in English Canada); having university instructors spread Islamophobic views on their private social media accounts; being excluded from group projects and social interactions; or assumed to be international students, Muslim participants in this study have experienced a broad range of discriminatory incidences while attending educational institutions. The findings point to

the detrimental impact that the violence of racism, sexism, and Islamophobia together produce for Muslim women; what Zine (2006) refers to as “gendered Islamophobia”:

Central to the analysis of Muslim women and girls in Western diaspora is the notion I refer to as “gendered Islamophobia.” This can be understood as specific form of ethnic-religious and racialized discrimination levelled at Muslim women that proceed from historically contextualized negative stereotypes that inform individual and systemic forms of oppression. Various forms of oppression, for example, racism, sexism, and classism, are rooted within specific ideological/discursive processes and supported through both individual and systemic actions. In the case of gendered Islamophobia, the discursive roots are historically entrenched within Orientalist representations of Muslim women. (p. 240)

Racialized students are often forced to navigate and mediate White cultural norms, something that some East Asian participants, particularly Connie, Christine, Lucy, and Monica discussed as well. As Handa (2003) writes of South Asian-Canadian female youth’s identity negotiations, “identity is negotiated in relation to “white” as the normative reference point, which means not being too different from the white norm” (Handa, 2003, p. 70). In her discussion of the impact of gendered Islamophobia on Muslim women, Perry (2014) writes that it “is not uncommon...for Muslim women to change activities, habits, and ways of being the world” given that, as victims of hate crimes, “they are forced to rethink their visibility” (p. 85), further writing that “[s]adly, the risk of victimization often means that women are forced to prioritize their safety over their expression of identity and over their independence” (p. 85). In her efforts to fit into her nearly all-White university program, and to mitigate both open and subtle forms of hostility, Aisha stopped observing the veil upon starting her undergraduate studies.

While at a party during her undergraduate studies, Aisha’s White male friend—a classmate—groped her and touched her butt. Not accustomed to interacting with men on a social basis prior to this, let alone being touched without her consent by a man, Aisha explained that she was visibly upset and shaken, but avoided responding to his unwanted

actions, and she did not distance herself from him following the incident, either. However, Aisha described his behaviour around her after this event, where he would ask her questions such as: “What would your mom do or say if she knew you were talking to me?” or “Who can you marry, who can’t you marry?” Aisha expressed her annoyance to me: “Like, if I was a White girl you wouldn’t be asking me those things. Like, it felt like he thrived on the fact that it was rebellious for him or for me.” This man later attempted to make a move on Aisha while they were alone at his place—getting on top of her without her consent—but told him that she was not feeling well and left before it progressed into anything more.

There was a level of excitement and fetishization that shaped this student’s interest in interacting with Aisha. Now whether this excitement was due to the obvious power imbalance between the two of them—gendered, racial, and religious—is unclear, the questions he asked Aisha convinced her that this was in fact the case. The questions he posed to her points to the ways in which Muslim women are often perceived and stereotyped at the intersections of their identities as gendered, raced, ethnic, and religious bodies, which together, depict them as passive and submissive victims of their families; suppressed by patriarchal traditions and limited by their interactions, while they are assumed to be restricted to the boundaries of their strict cultures (Abu-Ali & Reisen, 1999). This is coupled with the impression that unmarried Muslim women are sexually repressed as they are expected to be virgins who must avoid interacting with men (Baccus, 2017; Couture-Carron, 2017). The tantalizing and enticing danger of a White male interacting, and perhaps having a sexual relationship with a young unmarried Muslim woman thus cannot be ignored in Aisha’s experience. Aisha made sense of the unwanted behaviours and questions from her perpetrator, which she perceived as a sexually harassing behaviour, by situating his actions and comments through a gendered, religious, and racial lens.

Indeed, the assumption that Muslim women are in need of saving from their cultures functions as a controlling image, as it is imagined vis-à-vis their obedience and submissiveness; working to entice the sexual male imagination reaped with racist and sexist impressions and relations of power, but the notion of controlling images has not been extended to Muslim women in the context of sexual violence and harassment. Stereotypical notions of Muslim women's victimhood and need for being saved have worked in tandem with the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion to inform their racialization. This is compounded, though, by sexual fetishes evoked by the veil, the passivity of Muslim women, and the tantalizing mystique and allure which is imagined vis-à-vis patriarchy and Whiteness which revealed itself not only in Aisha's experience, but also in Amani's experience of sexual violence on campus, the latter of whom is an Iraqi-Canadian, veiled Muslim woman.

Although historical and contemporary discussions of the veil in the West have often been limited to the seeming backwardness and oppressiveness that the veil represents, it has also been recognized as an aesthetic which works in the service of male fantasy. In colonial narratives, travelogues, and historical accounts, veiled women were often positioned through the lustful eye of White European men who sexually objectified the veil and their physical seclusion and separation from men in Muslim majority countries (Alloula, Godzich, Godzich, & Harlow, 1986; Ghaderi & Yahya, 2014; Kabbani, 2009; Mabro, 1991). As Hoodfar (2001) discusses, this has partly sprung from colonial writings of gender segregation and the *harem*, where women were "depicted as prisoners, frequently half-naked and unveiled, at times sitting at windows with bars, with little hope of ever being free" (p. 426). Although writings of this time were largely exaggerated and fantastical characterizations of Muslim women and Muslim cultures, such characterizations have, and

continue to, evoke sensations of the sexual imagination as the veil acts as a tool of mystery as the female, non-White body remains hidden.

For Amani, the exoticism of the veil, she felt, affected why she was targeted while studying on campus. Amani described the incident like this: a male student came up close to her and leaned over her while she was sitting at a desk studying. Ignoring him, not wanting to make eye contact or acknowledge him, the male student proceeded to sit down next to her:

And then he sat down, and he had his chair positioned towards me, and he was just watching me, staring at me. And a while went by before I noticed what he was doing. Umm and then I looked and then I saw what he was doing...his hands were down his pants, and I got up and left.

While Amani was studying in a common area on campus, she saw that the male student sitting next to her was masturbating while staring directly at her. Although the incident itself was deeply upsetting and disturbing, Amani explained that her anger towards the perpetrator was largely tied to his Whiteness. She made sense of her experience by referencing the historical racial colonial gaze, where White men have historically exoticized veiled, Middle Eastern women. Coupled with the use of veiling in the contemporary pornography industry, Amani described how some men have a sexualized fixation of the veil, and perceive Muslim women as objects of mystery and sexual conquest. To make sense of why she was targeted, and to make sense of the specific act that the male student engaged in—not touching her, but pleasuring himself from a distance—the racial dynamics between herself and the perpetrator was paramount:

It was very angering to be honest. And I remember distinctly. When I was sitting there, when he was sitting there facing me, I remember thinking, that I'm sure there is plenty out there in the pornography industry about Muslim women. And I don't know, I was just thinking, this guy probably watches that stuff, who thinks that Muslim women are out here, just as objects of desire, conquest, you know...exotic whatever thing to be fetishized.

As Amani explained, the exoticism of the veil is a sexist and racist imaginary which works to other women while imagining them as an object of sexual consequent. This was concurred by Leyla as well, a visible Muslim, Palestinian-Canadian student. Although she did not disclose having had any direct experience with sexual exoticism, Leyla, too, expressed an awareness of the fetishization of the veil, explaining that “the veil adds a level of mystery, and it makes for a challenge, and that they [men] want to explore that.”

In her review of magazines such as *Penthouse*, *Playboy*, and *Hustler*, which “exploit the erotic image of the veil” (Shirazi, 2001, p. 42), Shirazi questions what facilitates Western fetishes of sex and the veil, writing that “[c]enturies of Western misrepresentations of Middle Eastern sexuality and culture have led to an image of the Middle East as a world of virgin pleasures and unbridled passions” (p. 42). Functioning as an “object of desire,” Shirazi continues to write that the veil is “a fetish signifying oriental submissiveness” with the purpose of sexually arousing the male gaze (p. 55). Working in the service of fetishization and male sexual fantasies, the pornography industry has capitalized on the tantalizing appeal of the veil with the rise of ‘*hijab* porn,’ where porn stars appear in veils and usually have sex with White men. According to May (2005), Middle Eastern women in pornography films are portrayed as innocent yet sexually compliant and available to men’s sexual needs, writing, “[i]n these scenes, the hijab or headscarf is used as an insignia for “Middle Eastern girl,” a way to tell the viewer that this girl is a sexually repressed “Arab” ready and willing to bow down to her Western master.”

Orientalist depictions of Muslim women gains value by positioning Muslim women vis-à-vis structures of Whiteness, colonialism, domination, and patriarchy. Since the nineteenth century, the veil has stood as a symbol of the inferiority of Muslim women, and discourses about veiling, in particular, as Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) contend, “have

functioned to confirm particular beliefs or Orientalist truths about Muslim women's oppression and, more generally, Islam" (p. 419). Yet, the depiction of the Oriental woman as "mysterious and exotic... feminine, always veiled, seductive and dangerous" has justified imperialist desires of domination and control (Lentin, 1998, p. 155). As Hoodfar (2001) contends, "[t]he mostly man-made images of oriental Muslim women continue to be a mechanism by which Western dominant cultures recreate and perpetuate beliefs about their superiority" (p. 421-2). This reveals itself in myriad social and political trajectories today, shaping structural inequities and interpersonal interactions, even in racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial contexts, which little research has focused on.

Although the veil is often adopted by Muslim women as a religious proscription to emphasize bodily and sexual modesty while diverting the gaze of men, it is also adopted in an effort to challenge the sexual objectification of women while also protecting themselves from harassment (Ali, 2005; Ruby, 2006).¹³ Yet, as Amani's experience shows, it can in fact have the opposite effect. Amani not only understood her experience by reflecting on her gendered, racial, and religious identities, but she situated her identity in relation to the racial identity of her perpetrator, which caused her to understand the incident as both racially and sexually driven as she drew on broader historical constructions and contemporary relations of power.

Muslim women remain a population that have not been closely studied with regards to sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial contexts or among university students. In

¹³ As Zine (2006) rightfully recognizes, though, "this notion places the burden of responsibility for avoiding sexual harassment upon women, who are expected to regulate their bodies to avoid eliciting the negative sexual attention of men, rather than placing the onus on men to regulate their behaviour toward women" (p. 243).

fact, we know very little about the experiences Muslim Middle Eastern or South Asian women have with sexual violence and harassment outside of intimate partner violence, dating violence, or domestic abuse. Moreover, while the controlling image of Black promiscuity and East Asian passivity has been addressed in scholarly research, the fetishization of Muslim women and the controlling images I address in this chapter have yet to be addressed in the context of sexual violence and harassment. Aisha and Amani thus provide insight into not only the forms in which racialized sexual violence and harassment may take place against Muslim women, but also how Muslim women make sense of their experiences through the intersections of their gendered, racial, and ethnic identities vis-à-vis the racial and religious identities of their perpetrators and the larger structural contexts of racism, sexism, and gendered Islamophobia. It is because Muslim women occupy these marginalized and intersecting identities, shaped by structural formations, that they are vulnerable to racialized sexual violence and harassment. As Razack (2008) asserts, “Muslim women have been singled out as needing protection from their violent and hyper-patriarchal men” (p. 4) but rarely has the discussion extended to the varying forms of violence, including racialized sexual violence, from White perpetrators.

Racialized Sexual Violence in Intra-Racial Contexts

Most of the participants in this study experienced sexual violence and harassment from men who were racially different from themselves and discussed the explicitly racialized dimension of their experiences. Not all women who experienced sexual violence in cross-racial incidents perceived their race or ethnicity as a factor in why they were targeted for sexual violence and harassment, though. In fact, Anitha and Sangita, two Sri Lankan-Canadian participants, did not contextualize their assault within a racial power imbalance

despite their perpetrators being White men. This may partly have to do with the less verbal cues they experienced during their incidents of sexual violence, whereas participants discussed above referenced the intersecting racist as well as sexist comments, questions, and actions directed towards them in cross-racial contexts. Why several participants in this study were more inclined to speak of race and ethnicity in the context of their cross-racial experiences could partly have to do with their awareness of power differences between themselves and their perpetrators as well. In Woods, Buchanan, and Settle's (2009) study, they found that their Black female participants were more likely to perceive their experience of sexual harassment more negatively in cross-racial contexts rather than in intra-racial incidents, explaining that participants reported feeling more offended, frightened, and disturbed in cross-racial experiences.

Less participants in this study experienced sexual violence and harassment from a man who identified as a similar racial or ethnic background as themselves. Among the five women who were subject to sexual coercion or harassment by men who shared a similar racial and ethnic background as them, only two women, Nicole and Aisha, discussed the significance of race and ethnicity during their experiences. Lucy, who had experienced both sexual violence and harassment from men who identified as East Asian-Canadian as well as White-Canadian, was more inclined to speak of race and ethnicity within a cross-racial context rather than within an intra-racial context.

Aisha was among the few participants who had disclosed more than one episode of sexual violence and harassment to me. Aside from the experience she had with a White male student discussed earlier, Aisha also recounted how she had woken up to a hickey on her neck after a night of drinking at her male friend's home during her undergraduate studies. Although she explained that she did not remember the event clearly, she believed

that he must have forced himself on her without her consent while she was asleep. To make sense of the situation, Aisha explained that the shared ethnic background between herself and the perpetrator, as well as the unequal gender dynamics within their community, made her vulnerable to his actions:

In our society, in Pakistani society, women are considered less. Women have to serve their husbands. I feel like because we're both Brown, the rules have changed. He thinks it's okay for him to say sexist things towards me, to treat me less because I'm Brown...I don't think he would've done that if I was a White girl.

Nicole, who is Irish-Guyanese-Canadian, expressed a similar sentiment as Aisha. While hanging out in her dorm room, Nicole's perpetrator began touching her. Although she explained that there was no penetration, she repeatedly told him to stop and she eventually managed to leave. She explained how sharing a similar race as her perpetrator made her more vulnerable to his actions, and felt that the perpetrator was more inclined and comfortable to make physical advances:

The guy that it happened with was African. I think a lot of it was even why we became friends maybe or why he targeted me. It may sound weird, but I was thinking in my mind, would he have done this to an Asian or fully White? I feel like it wouldn't have happened.

In both of their accounts, Aisha and Nicole's comments demonstrate that they contextualized their experience through a cultural, racial, and gendered understanding, and pointed to how the shared racial and ethnic background between themselves and their perpetrators may have shaped why the men felt it was okay to sexually violate them; what Richardson and Taylor (2009) refer to as the "common bond" factor.

In their study on Black and Latina women's experiences of sexual harassment, Richardson and Taylor found that some of their participants believed that Black and Hispanic men felt that there was a "special bond" between themselves and women who shared a similar racial background, making it more likely to experience a sexually harassing

comment from them. These participants discussed how men may assume that women would not be offended by their actions while there was a “window of ‘okayness’” to engage in sexually suggestive behaviours since they shared a similar racial background (p. 260). This was also found in Shelton and Chavous’ (1999) study. The authors found that Black and White women both perceived unsolicited sexual behaviour from a Black man towards a Black woman as less serious than if it were between a Black woman and a White man, writing that “[t]his finding seems to be consistent with the stereotype that Black women and men often behave in a sexual manner towards one another” (p. 610). In Welsh et al.’s (2006) account of sexual harassment in the Canadian context, the authors found that Black women who experienced harassment from Black men were less likely to consider it harassment and instead accredited it to the issue of sexism in the Black community.

Although Nicole did not delve further into this ‘common bond’ factor nor addressed the issue of sexism in the Black community, which may partly have to do with her identity as a biracial woman, Aisha was more inclined to situate her perpetrators actions as an issue of unequal gender dynamics within her ethnic community which may have influenced her perpetrator. This common bond factor may have shaped the perpetrators presumption that since they share a similar ethnic background, that Aisha would be more understanding of the gender dynamics between men and women and therefore accept male domination while their shared ethnicity made her more accessible to him.

Given that Aisha described experiences of sexual violence and harassment in both inter-racial as well as intra-racial contexts, she provides unique insight into how women perceive their experiences of sexual violence differently based on the racial dynamics between themselves and their perpetrators. Although Lucy did not address race and ethnicity within the context of her experience of intra-racial sexual violence, she did address

the issue of race and ethnicity within her experience of a White male. Both Aisha's and Lucy's experiences, from an intersectional perspective, speaks to how there are socio-cultural variations on the basis of women's social locations as well as that of their perpetrators which shape how women perceive actions in cross-racial and intra-racial incidences of sexual violence and harassment.

Conclusion

The myriad forms of sexual violence and harassment experienced by racialized women in this chapter is telling of how the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and in some cases, religion, inform not only why women are targets of sexual violence—challenging the common feminist narrative that gender is the encompassing reason for violence against women—but how racialized women make sense of why they were targeted by drawing on power relations of gender, race, ethnicity, as well as religion, within inter-racial and intra-racial contexts. Out of the 15 participants who took part in this study, nine of them expressed that their gender had as much to do with why they were targeted as much as their race, ethnicity, and religion did. These identities did not work as separate structures, as their narratives demonstrated, but intersected to inform their unique experiences as Black, East Asian, Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian women in both inter-racial as well as intra-racial contexts.

In inter-racial contexts, this chapter found that women were often subject to racialized forms of sexual violence and harassment—which encompassed exoticism and fetishization, and emerged through sexually and racially explicit and suggestive comments, behaviours, and questions from men racially, ethnically, and religiously different from themselves. Indeed, most participants were unable to separate acts of sexism from acts of

racism as they expressed their awareness of how women of similar racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds were often perceived by the larger dominant society, and how this in turn shaped impressions men often had of them. The form in which their experiences of harassment and violence occurred also contoured how women understood their experiences at the intersections of their social identities. Although only a few participants who experienced intra-racial sexual violence discussed the role that race and ethnicity played in their experiences, their comments nonetheless illuminate how women make sense of their experiences through racial, ethnic, and gendered lenses. For some of the minority of women who experienced sexual violence by men who were of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds as themselves in this study, they too made sense of why they were targeted by suggesting that the “common bond” factor must have made it okay for their perpetrators to act upon their bodies, while their narratives simultaneously problematized the internal gender dynamics of their racial and ethnic communities.

The results of this study has found how racial and religious differences among and between women and male perpetrators affected how women understood and interpreted situations of sexual violence and harassment, as participants used racial references to make sense of what happened to them and why they were targeted. The present study has revealed that racialized women tend to experience sexual violence from men outside of their racial and ethnic communities differently than if they experienced sexual violence from men within their own communities. Indeed, common approaches to sexual violence and harassment which focuses solely on gender contributes to overlooking the myriad structures of violence racialized women face in their experiences of sexual violence and harassment in both inter-racial as well as intra-racial contexts. Through an intersectional framework, we can see how women understand their experiences of sexual violence and harassment

through multiple, intersecting, and converging structures of power, as well as how men also draw on racial as well as gendered power differences in their behaviours toward racialized women.

Chapter 5:

Disclosing to Peers, Accessing On-Campus Services, and the Limitations of Sexual Violence Policies

Introduction

Disclosing sexual violence and harassment to formal on-campus services is alarmingly low. Students fearing the possibility of being blamed for their assault is among the leading reasons as to why students rarely report, while feelings of guilt, anxiety, fear, and stress have also been driving factors discouraging women from accessing services. Instead, most women have opted to disclose to informal networks, such as family and peers for support (Halstead, Williams, & Gonzalez-Guarda, 2017; Paul, Walsh, & McCauley, 2013; Stermac, Horowitz, & Bance, 2017). Yet racialized women incur additional concerns as well. Feminists of colour, activists, and scholars have long demonstrated that disclosing to and seeking the support of formal institutions is often ineffective given the historical maltreatment of communities of colour by the criminal justice system as well as sexual assault services (Bertram & Crowley, 2012; Dylan, Regehr, & Alaggia, 2008; Washington, 2001). As Pietsch (2010) has written, perceptions of innocence and guilt are shaped by the social constructions of gender, where its intersection with race, ethnicity, and class have shaped people's assumptions as well as treatment of victim/survivors of sexual violence; marginalizing racialized women and other minorities when they have turned to formal services for help and assistance.

Sexual violence policies, within and beyond the university, have also failed to clearly address the unique experiences and concerns of racialized women; often

approaching the issue of sexual violence, disclosure, and support services through one-size-fits-all approaches that often fail to account for social differences among women. Indeed, as the findings of this present study reveals, participants reasons to disclose or not to formal campus support services were not linear, but laid at the intersection of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, as well as their classed positions, which were mediated by larger structural inequities and relations of power. This also shaped which of their peers women in this study were willing to disclose to.

I will begin this chapter by critically analyzing Ontario's Bill 132, which has required all public universities in the province to implement a policy on sexual violence. I will specifically take issue with the Bill's failure to approach sexual violence through a structural understanding of history and systemic inequities while absenting any consideration of race, ethnicity, religion, and class. Following this, I will briefly overview several of the post-secondary policies implemented in the wake of Bill 132 in an effort to problematize the implications such policies have for racialized women specifically. I must stress, however, that it is beyond the scope of this study to conduct a discourse analysis of current policies or do an exhaustive overview of each. Nor is it my intention to deconstruct and analyze each section included within these policies, either.¹⁴ Using an intersectional theoretical framework to analyze policies in this chapter is done so with the intention of examining how some universities in Ontario address and define the issue of sexual violence and the extent to which they account for diversity and social differences in relation to definitions as well as available services and resources. As my overview of these policies will reveal, sexual violence is often framed as an individual issue rather than a systemic

¹⁴ See Lee and Wong (2019) for their comprehensive examination of sexual violence policies in Canadian universities

problem, while most negate a serious consideration of racial, ethnic, religious, and class differences and how services will cater to a diverse range of students. I argue that this negation reproduces structural forms of violence against racialized women in higher education as universities fail to acknowledge the implications of social differences on not only students' experiences of sexual violence and harassment, but on their ability to disclose and access campus services confidently.

This discussion will be followed by outlining some of the general reasons why some women in this study chose not to disclose their experiences to formal campus services, while discussing how the intersections of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and class factored into their decisions. Next, I will address the experiences of a few participants who did disclose to formal campus services, which in this study includes professors, residence managers, on-campus sexual violence services, and on-campus police. While some participants chose to disclose to professors for the sake of academic accommodation, the experiences of those who disclosed to residence managers, on-campus sexual violence services, and the police reveals problematic findings. Indeed, their experiences shed light on the failure of such services to address and acknowledge the realities and needs of racialized women while overlooking racial and cultural dimensions of their experiences, resulting in a 'second victimization' (Symonds, 1980). The final section of this chapter will examine the significance of peer support while also delving into the implications of confiding in peers.

Intersectionality, Sexual Violence Policies, and Higher Education

As Johnson and Dawson (2011) contend, theories help us make sense of the many complexities surrounding sexual violence while the theories we employ facilitate how we

explore and interpret policy (also see Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield, & Lee, 2014). In other words, the theoretical background which informs our understanding of how and why sexual violence and harassment occurs, and what options are available to those effected by it, underpins the way in which we analyze institutional responses to the problem of sexual violence. Using intersectionality as theoretical framework to analyze sexual violence policies in Ontario's institutions of higher education is particularly useful as it warrants attention to how policies are framed and worded, as well as what is omitted—both of which reveal many critical insights.

Intersectionality has been utilized by social justice scholars, activists, as well as policy makers to challenge and inform policies (see for example Campbell, 2016; Hankivsky, 2014; Lombardo & Verloo, 2009). In the context of sexual violence, intersectionality has been adopted to promote more inclusive and equitable policies which recognize women's disparate lived experiences in an effort to challenge one-size-fits-all approaches (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2010) and to problematize the short-sightedness of privileging one inequality over another (Ferree, 2009). But as Iverson (2015) points out, sexual violence policies are texts which are shaped by political motivations, bias, and ideologies. In order to challenge this, I use an intersectional analysis to critique as well as to illuminate the exclusionary practices apparent in some sexual violence policies in Ontario's universities implemented in the wake of Bill 132.

The changing makeup of post-secondary institutions in Canada over the last several decades—in which women are more present and students and faculty more racially and ethnically diverse than any other point in the country's history—has presented universities with the need to address and account for diversity and social differences (Chan, 2005). Imagined as a 'hallmark' of Canadian society (Berry, 2013; Thuraiajah, 2017), the popular

image of racial and ethnic diversity has been written into official university statements while some post-secondary institutions have installed equity and human rights offices. However, university statements and offices alone, like policies, do not stand in nor account for the university's commitment to equity, despite the polished language and rhetoric often used. As Ahmed (2009) writes, "to add 'diversity' to a mission statement does not necessarily add anything, other than just putting an educational mission in different terms," given that more often than not, the politics of diversity is about "image management" (p. 45). Ahmed's (2012a) work on racism and diversity work within the context of institutions, including the university, is useful to my discussion here. They argue that the use of diversity in many institutional policies and official statements is largely about "maintaining rather than transforming existing organizational values" (p. 57). While institutions such as the university often adopt buzzwords such as diversity as part of their efforts to account for difference in an effort to appear as inclusive, the adoption of such rhetoric often times conceals inequities while failing to do much in terms of institutional change.

Yet, one has to wonder why sexual violence policies recently implemented across Ontario's post-secondary institutions have rarely accounted for this diversity that universities otherwise have no problem addressing in glossy statements. Despite virtually every university in Ontario having some form of diversity statement, similar sentiments are not echoed in many of the sexual violence policies implemented in the wake of Bill 132, while most of those who have do not effectively cater to the unique histories, concerns, and needs of racialized women. Bill 132, arguably the most important piece of legislation implemented by the Ontario government on sexual violence to date, also fails to hold any post-secondary institution accountable to address or to constructively consider how sexual violence is experienced differently based on social identity. Bill 132 also fails to address

how structural forms of oppression, such as sexism and racism, shape and condition sexual violence and harassment while limiting women's opportunities to disclose and access services.

As will be discussed in the next section, Bill 132 reproduces universalizing definitions of sexual violence and harassment as a personal, individual issue rather than a systemic problem, while the gendered, racial, ethnic, and classed identities of those targeted are absent, which has implications for racialized and minority students, as well as for the larger goal of tackling sexual violence on a systemic level. The university, “[n]otwithstanding the promise of equity...is a racialized site that still excludes and marginalizes non-White people, in subtle, complex, sophisticated, and ironic ways” (Henry, Dua, James, Kobayashi, Li, Ramos, & Smith, 2017, p. 3). Indeed, when racialized women are excluded from policy, both the government and the university perpetuate and reproduce institutional forms of racism and sexism, including other forms of structural inequities.

Bill 132 and its Implications for Equity

Ontario has been a leader in addressing the issue of violence against women in Canada. Although there have been various phases of addressing sexual violence on campus in the province since at least the early 1990s,¹⁵ since 2013, Ontario has taken the lead in addressing sexual violence and harassment in post-secondary institutions, starting with the introduction of *Developing a Response to Sexual Violence: A Resource Guide for Ontario's Colleges and Universities* (Ontario Women's Directorate, 2013). The Guide was developed

¹⁵ Government of Ontario. (2018). Women's issues timeline. *Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services*. Retrieved from <http://www.women.gov.on.ca/owd/english/about/timeline/milestones.shtml>

by the Ontario Women's Directorate in collaboration with a number of governmental bodies, sexual assault services, and student organizations, including the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario, the College Student Alliance, and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. In 2015, the *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence* was introduced to address sexual violence by raising public awareness and investing in prevention and response efforts and resources with the intention of building safer campuses, communities, as well as workplaces; promising \$41 million in funds over the course of three years (Government of Ontario, 2015). This led the Ontario government to introduce Bill 132, *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act*, in 2016 (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2016). Requiring all Ontario post-secondary institutions which receive regular funding from the government to have a formal sexual violence policy in place by January 1, 2017, each public university and college in Ontario has been expected to comply with Bill 132's outlined stipulations. Broadly, these stipulations demand that each sexual violence policy:

- (a) addresses sexual violence involving students enrolled at the college or university;
- (b) sets out the process for how the college or university will respond to and address incidents and complaints of sexual violence involving students enrolled at the college or university, and includes the elements specified in the regulations relating to the process;
- (c) addresses any other topics and includes any other elements required by the regulations; and
- (d) otherwise complies with the requirements set out in the regulations

Bill 132 also outlines other general requirements and expectations for post-secondary institutions to follow. This includes providing data on reported and disclosed sexual assault incidences and ongoing investigations, what support services have been accessed by the

university community, and how support services and resources have been promoted to the university community. While each public post-secondary institution in Ontario is expected to provide resources, programs, as well as educational and prevention training initiatives, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) has found that it does not appear to be mandatory.¹⁶ And while each institution is expected to provide information on this to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), they have also found that there is actually no division within the Ministry which focuses on sexual violence in post-secondary institutions, nor does it oversee, review, analyze, or produce recommendations to post-secondary institutions.

However, my concern in this present study is with the policies themselves. Indeed, it is important to focus on the gaps and silences in policy, what a participant in Diem et al.'s (2014) study referred to as “white spaces”, which refers to “what policy says and doesn't say, looking at how problems and solutions are defined and not defined, what voices are included and not included, and looking for voices in the margin” (p. 1077). Looking for “white spaces” in Bill 132, we are faced with a number of pressing concerns, particularly the absence of acknowledging structural and systemic reasons for the persistence of sexual violence and harassment against women as well as a negation of diversity and social differences. Consider, for example, how Bill 132 defines sexual violence:

sexual violence means any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism and sexual exploitation

¹⁶ Bellotto, S., Deshpande, R., & Siekanowicz, M. (2018). Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. In *Shared perspectives: A joint publication on campus sexual violence prevention and response* (pp. 16-23). Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/1625/attachments/original/1525788337/1-Shared_Perspectives_English_document.pdf?1525788337

Despite an exhaustive list of studies demonstrating that most acts of sexual violence are perpetrated by men towards women, the Bill's decision to omit this is striking. Bill 132 also fails to mention how issues of race, ethnicity, and class, among other social identities, are pertinent factors, which not only intersect with gender and sexuality, but has implications for why women are targeted and how they experience acts of sexual violence.

While Bill 132 only refers to a genderless, raceless, classless “person”; rendering victims of sexual violence through the use of neutral language, as Wooten (2017) contends, “we are never neutral actors” (p. 408). Wooten writes that:

sexual violence is imbued with cultural specificity and historical context for different communities. Such histories shape the way that different racial and ethnic communities of women and men move through the world, shape public response to incidents of rape and sexual assault, and impact what resources are made available and to whom. (p. 409)

Speaking to how women have been absented from some policies on sexual violence in select European countries in favour of the broad term “gender”, Hearn, Strid, Husu, and Verloo (2016) found that this “degendering” of violence in one sense serves as a means to make policies more inclusive. However, in the effort to be inclusive, we risk overlooking how structures of patriarchy and sexism condition violence against women, while at the same time, reinforce universalist tendencies which, either intentionally or unintentionally, fail to take into account the significance of social differences. Likewise, the absence of race or ethnicity in sexual violence policies “privileges and normalises Whiteness while masquerading as the equalisation of all races” (Wooten, 2017, p. 406). Bill 132 does not reference the plethora of research referencing the overwhelming rate at which Indigenous women, racialized women, and low-income women experience sexual violence in contrast to White, middle-class women. Nor does it recognize how historical and macro-structures

of colonialism, immigration, racism, sexism, and socio-economic conditions have shaped contemporary relations of power which shapes experiences of sexual violence and why women are vulnerable to abuse in inter-racial as well as intra-racial contexts. The Bill also ignores how these structures shape women's access to available support services. Indeed, "[t]he complex links between violence, power and inequalities are rarely expressed explicitly in policy" (Hearn et al., 2016, p. 553). Negating these obfuscates the structural specificities and significance of social differences in addressing sexual violence effectively within each university, as well as in prevention and response efforts.

Failure to address this also gives power to unequal structures of oppression which privileges male dominance and Whiteness. The implication of Bill 132 not addressing and approaching sexual violence through a framework which recognizes social differences and structural inequities is that no post-secondary institution is held accountable for having policies, resources, services, reporting procedures, and educational training initiatives in place to sufficiently address sexual violence against women or to cater to the unique realities and needs of underrepresented groups. It also fails to actually challenge structural conditions and circumstances which perpetuate sexual violence on campus and within the larger Canadian society, which does little to help eradicate sexual violence on a systemic level.

Indeed, this also has problems for educational equity. While universities do have autonomy, given that Bill 132 has left it up to each university to implement sexual violence policies with few required stipulations, we run the risk of not providing equal access to students depending on which post-secondary institution they choose to attend. On one hand, allowing universities to develop their own sexual violence policies may be effective, given that universities can devise their policies with consideration to its own institutional makeup

while attending to the racial, ethnic, gendered, classed, and sexual diversity of its student body. Bill 132 explicitly states that post-secondary institutions “shall ensure that student input is considered, in accordance with any regulations, in the development of its sexual violence policy and every time the policy is reviewed or amended” (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2016). By bringing students into the policy development process, their unique experiences and input, informed by their social identities and experiences, can help inform policies that are more inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the student population. On the other hand, however, this can have implications for racialized women and other minority students who may be underrepresented in their universities, particularly those attending predominantly White universities or institutions where LGBTQ+ issues are not particularly acute, for example. Given the disparities in terms of diversity between each post-secondary institution, including *who* is ultimately devising the policy and *who* is part of the final policy-writing process, post-secondary institutions can risk overlooking—or intentionally turning a blind eye to—disparities of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Without having a larger policy in place that both identifies how structural inequities such as racism, sexism, and classism sustain and contribute to sexual violence, as well as the implications this has for individuals accessing campus services, post-secondary institutions ultimately do not have to address these matters within their own policies nor develop services and resources that would cater to a diversity of student’s lived experiences, needs, and concerns. My review of several university sexual violence policies in Ontario (although not exhaustive) in the wake of Bill 132 demonstrates how differently universities have approached the issue of sexual violence, how social differences are addressed or not addressed, and what services are in place to cater to a diversity of students.

Post-Secondary Sexual Violence Policies in Ontario

A number of sexual violence policies implemented post-Bill 132 do not refer to social identities beyond those addressed under the definition of sexual violence in the Bill. For example, Brock University, Trent University, and the University of Ottawa only refer to gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality in framing their sexual violence policies—using either the direct definition of sexual violence from Bill 132 or rephrasing it. Likewise, Carleton University asserts that it is committed to “combatting broader societal attitudes regarding gender, sex and sexuality that normalize sexual violence and undermine equality.”¹⁷ In neither of these policies are women acknowledged as the main targets of sexual violence, nor do they make any reference to racial, ethnic, class, or religious differences. These policies negate rooting the issue of sexual violence and harassment within larger historical and structural conditions which shape the perpetuation of sexual violence on and off-campus by failing to acknowledge power and oppression vis-à-vis patriarchy, colonialism, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, and racism; reproducing sexual violence as an individual problem. Their micro-level emphasis also reinforces intervention methods which include training and educating staff, professors, and students to combat sexual violence rather than recognizing and seeking to challenge the broader structures which maintain it. Eyre’s (2000) discussion of common university approaches to sexual harassment can be applied here, as she notes that incidences of sexual harassment on university campuses “typically take an individualistic and legalistic perspective. Attention is given to the behaviour of the accused as if it were deviance, separate from its social surroundings” (p. 296).

¹⁷ <https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Sexual-Violence-Policy.pdf>

By focusing solely on gender and sexuality, these policies also contribute to perpetuating universalizing experiences of single identity categories and one-size-fits-all narratives which has implications for racialized students, including sexual and gender minorities.¹⁸ This translates into ineffective services, resources, and disclosure processes which do not account for racialized women and their unique histories, concerns, and needs. Given that racialized women have often been revictimized by service providers due to their failure to be properly trained to help racialized women, having ineffective services can be harmful to students who do turn to campus services and resources for help. The general concern that racialized women face between experiencing racism from service providers and being further victimized can also prevent women from accessing such services, which speaks to institutional forms of violence, including institutional racism, that ultimately contributes to pushing women into silence.

Several policies do, however, mention ‘intersectionality’ or at least state how factors of race, class, sexuality, and ability, among others, shape people’s experiences of sexual violence as well as how this may inform an individual’s willingness to disclose and access campus services. For example, Western University states that:

The University understands that each individual’s experience of sexual violence, including the level of risk they face and how they access services and supports, is unique and can be based on, or influenced by, the intersection of sexual violence with discrimination and harassment including, but not limited to sex, ancestry, race, ethnicity, culture, language, ability, faith, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In particular, Western recognizes that sexual violence often intersects with acts of racism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia.

Although McMaster does not use the notion of intersectionality, it acknowledges that:

¹⁸ Although a limitation of this study is that none of the participants identified outside of a cis-gender identity, and only one identified as bisexual (although they did not address the subject of sexuality in their interview) I do recognize the limitations of these policies as perpetuating a cis-gender, heteronormative norm which has implications for gender and sexual minority students.

Individuals face different risks of Sexual Violence related to, among other factors, race, disability, Indigeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, religion, spirituality, age, citizenship and socio-economic status. The University is committed to ensuring that its supports and services are attuned to these systemic differences in order that all Community Members can access them and be received with care. The University will support Survivors in their decision-making about how best to proceed and ensure their own safety and integrity.¹⁹

Both Western and McMaster recognize how social differences shape why individuals are targets of sexual violence and how this may influence how individuals access support services. While McMaster assures us that these “systemic differences” are acknowledged and will be mediated in order to help each student depending on their concerns and needs, Western does not identify how social differences will be accounted for and how campus services will help minority students specifically. The services and resources individuals can access does not delineate which services are best equipped to meet the needs of certain communities of people, nor does it identify what form of training will be undertaken to help racialized students.

Ahmed’s discussion of diversity within institutions is relevant to this discussion. Although Western and McMaster address social differences, the language of their policies nonetheless creates the impression of equity without actually practicing what they are stating. Acknowledging that individuals face different risks and vulnerabilities to violence based on their social identities, without actually working towards addressing why this may be the case and what the university intends to do to help mitigate this, can be described as what Ahmed (2012a) refers to as “non-performatives”, which are statements of commitment that “do not bring into effect that which they name” (p. 119). Instead of

¹⁹ https://www.mcmaster.ca/vpacademic/Sexual_Violence_Docs/Sexual_Violence_Policy_effec-Jan_1,2017.pdf

actually transforming and challenging institutional Whiteness, which is maintained in universities as they fail to challenge inequitable structures, declarations of inclusion through policy language ultimately does nothing other than convince the university itself that they are “doing good” (p. 71). In other words, sexual violence policies that include different social identities can convince the university that this inclusion alone may be enough, and that there is nothing more to be done. The implication of this is that it hinders equity and diversity within post-secondary institutions (also see Ahmed, 2006).

This is evident as neither Western’s nor McMaster’s policies state how they will challenge structures of oppression which allow for sexual violence to perpetuate on campus as they fail to not only specifically identify women as the main targets of sexual violence on campus, but that racialized and minority students are at a much higher risk of being sexually victimized. While both universities do locate the vulnerability and susceptibility to sexual violence as different for individuals based on gender, race, and sexuality, for example, they do not specifically outline how this will inform campus resources, as well as educational and training initiatives. Indeed, when race and ethnicity are not seriously engaged with and written into policy effectively, with appropriate services in place, we can assume that racialized women do not feel self-assured that they will interact with campus officials who are sufficiently trained to respond to their unique needs and concerns, as the findings of this present study have shown. McMaster’s policy does state that:

Survivors of Sexual Violence may have different degrees of confidence in institutional services and remedies (e.g. courts, police, and official authorities) because of their associations of such institutions with sexism, colonialism, racism, and other forms of systemic oppression. For example, women from racially diverse and Indigenous communities may be reluctant to disclose Sexual Violence to institutional authorities due to concerns that racism may impact whether an institution will take their disclosure or complaint seriously, or that their disclosure or complaint may reinforce racist beliefs about men from their communities. The University is committed to building confidence in its services, supports and

remedies and responding to Sexual Violence in a manner that is fair and does not reproduce discriminatory dynamics.

While acknowledging racialized women's fears and concerns about disclosing to institutional authorities is an important dimension of a good sexual violence policy, McMaster's policy appears to place women's lack of confidence in authorities and services as existing outside of the university. Indeed, negating the university as an institution that women experience as sexist and racist, and one which sustains and reproduces structures of racism and sexism which racialized women experience in multiple ways, downplays the university as an institution which maintains oppression. This is not uncommon as Bacchi (1998) has argued that institutions often separate themselves from the problem of sexual violence. How universities remove themselves from the perpetuation of violence against women and their barriers to disclosure is quite telling, as if the history of gender discrimination in higher education, an androcratic and White-dominated curriculum, a lack of representation of women and racialized faculty, and the targeting and marginalization of women and feminist studies does not contribute to making women vulnerable to violence (see Henry et al., 2017; Ng, 1993; Osborne, 1995).

Ryerson University has perhaps the most comprehensive sexual violence policy I have reviewed.²⁰ Their policy has an entire section devoted to Sexual Violence and Identity, and notes how an individual's experience with sexual violence is not only shaped by multiple and intersecting social identities, but that the issue of sexual violence needs to be rooted in an understanding that it is a systemic problem that overwhelmingly targets

²⁰ <https://www.ryerson.ca/policies/policy-list/sexual-violence-policy/>

minority women and is conditioned by larger systems of oppression. Consider the following statements:

every effort to address issues of sexual violence needs to be grounded in an understanding that each person's experience will be affected by many factors including but not limited to sex, ancestry, race, ethnicity, language, ability, faith, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. It must be acknowledged that acts of sexual violence can also be acts of systematic oppression, including but not limited to sexism, racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, and/or transphobia

women who experience the intersection of multiple identities such as, but not limited to Indigenous women, racialized women, black women, trans women and women with disabilities...Due to the complexities of violence experienced by people with intersecting identities, the university is committed to ensuring that its responses, prevention efforts and supports take an anti-oppressive and trauma-informed approach so that all community members can access these supports and services with care

Unlike other university policies, the on-campus and off-campus services and support systems that Ryerson lists clearly outlines which ones would be specifically useful to those who identify as women, racialized peoples, as well as LGBTQ+. This allows for those who have experienced sexual violence to feel more confident accessing appropriate and relevant services; services which are trained and informed to help racialized and marginalized individuals with their concerns while hopefully mediating any chance of racism and discrimination that often prevents racialized women and marginalized peoples from disclosing to services and being helped.

Although Bill 132 has left it up to each post-secondary institution to devise their own sexual violence policies with few stipulations to follow, my overview of some policies in Ontario demonstrates the significant disparities that exist between universities, as well as the failure of most to comprehensively address the issue of sexual violence in consideration to differences among students in higher education—both of which have implications for equity.

Intersectionality as a Policy Buzzword

Intersectionality is often used as a popular buzzword to account for the recognition of social differences (Harrison & Patton, 2019). Although I have been critical of policies that fail to address social differences and dislocates sexual violence and harassment from intersecting oppressions, mentioning words such as ‘intersectionality’ in policy does not automatically translate to a commitment to equity on part of the university, either. While such policies appear to be well-worded, well-intentioned, and hopeful to those who read it, a policy does not necessarily mean it will be effectively practiced or enacted, nor attain equitable outcomes simply for including certain words and statements, as Ahmed (2006, 2012a) has reminded us. Indeed, simply naming inequality is perhaps the weakest form of inclusion in the effort to create inclusive policies (Strid, Walby, & Armstrong, 2013). Likewise, simply naming intersectionality in university sexual violence policies without being prepared to transform the university and tackle the issue on a systemic level is perhaps the weakest form of ‘doing intersectionality’. As Bilge (2013) asserts, the use of intersectionality in policy risks depoliticizing and dislocating the theory “as an analytical lens and political tool for fostering a radical social justice agenda” to one that becomes “diluted, displaced, and disarticulated” (p. 407) if those implementing such policies are not actively aiming to change the institutions and structures which help sustain and perpetuate sexual violence against women. This includes addressing how it intersects with racism and other systems of oppression which are reproduced and maintained in the university and larger society.

Moreover, we cannot address the subject of sexual violence through a gendered framework in policy without “accounting for the intersecting factors that shape the lived realities of affected women and determining their needs and help-seeking patterns”

(Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011, p. 217). Using intersectionality beyond just a buzzword requires consideration of the complex association between mutually constituting factors of social identity and larger structural contexts in order to attain equitable outcomes. Indeed, institutions who do use the word intersectionality have a responsibility to promote “social justice and social change by linking research and practice to concrete holistic approaches to the eradication of disparities and to changing social and higher education institutions” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 5). Ahmed’s (2007) point on the implications of a university stating their commitment to anti-racism in official documents is relevant here. She argues that statements of commitment in institutional documents ultimately clears the university from having to do anything about the issue of racism as an institutionalized problem in the university:

Being good at writing documents becomes a competency that is also an obstacle for diversity work, as it means that the university gets judged as good because of the document. It is this very judgement about the document that blocks action, producing a kind of ‘marsh mallows feeling’, a feeling that we are doing enough, or doing well enough, or even that there is nothing left to do. (p. 599)

Similarly, as Hearn et al. (2016) writes with regards to sexual violence policies, on the rare occasion that policy actions do address the consequences of intersecting multiple inequalities, “the prognosis and policy actions are not aimed at transforming the discriminatory structures” (p. 560). Indeed, recognizing the root causes of sexual violence or simply naming social differences does little if the university itself is not actively working to challenge structural circumstances that do operate within the university and shape interpersonal relationships. It will also do little when the university does not take steps to develop comprehensive policies, followed by effective services and resources that will cater to the unique concerns, fears, and needs of racialized women and minority students. Otherwise, both policies and the university itself will continue to perpetuate institutional

forms of racism and discrimination. According to the Macpherson Report (1999), institutional racism is:

the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (as cited in Holdaway & O'Neil, 2006, p. 350)

Institutional racism is a pertinent outcome of post-secondary sexual violence policies and subsequent practices that either intentionally or unintentionally fail to address multiple identities and experiences, or provide effective services for all. Yet, as Ahmed (2012a) writes, recognizing institutional racism is a struggle on part of universities given that racism is often perceived as an individual issue rather than a systemic one; a problem of a few racist people rather than one imbedded within the structures of the institution itself. The implications of such thinking is that it not only “underestimates the scope and scale of racism...leaving us without an account of how racism *gets reproduced*” (p. 44), but that institutions themselves reproduce racism, which shiny diversity statements and documents cannot alone save.

As Hearn et al. (2016) assert, for a sexual violence policy to be effective, “it matters what inequalities are considered, and how these inequalities and their relations are conceptualized and linked to violence” (p. 553). This requires universities to seriously consider the consequences of intersecting multiple identities which shape why people are targets of sexual violence, what structural factors help sustain and structure various forms of oppression, and how together these shape how victim/survivors will access formal services. By taking Ahmed's (2006, 2012a) theoretical insights on institutional Whiteness into consideration, universities also need to be committed to transforming and challenging

institutionalized Whiteness and White normalcy which are perpetuated in their policies and practices—not only through their failure to provide effective services and resources for racialized women, for example, but by giving lip service to diversity and equity through nonperformative “speech acts” (2006, p. 105) that do more harm than good to racialized and minority students. As Strid, Walby, and Armstrong (2013) write, “the naming of inequalities in policy should not be understood as the goal of policy. It is important to think in terms of methods and end results” (p. 560). Indeed, this has implications for racialized women as they contemplate disclosure.

DISCLOSING EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Reasons why Women Chose not to Disclose to on-Campus Services

Women in post-secondary institutions are less likely to disclose their experiences of sexual violence and harassment to formal university authorities, services, or the police than to informal networks such as peers (Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce, & Thomas, 2015; Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Hayes, Abbott, & Cook, 2016). Findings of this study demonstrates a slew of reasons as to why women chose not to disclose their experiences of sexual violence and harassment incurred while attending post-secondary to formal on-campus services, which in the present study includes professors, residence managers, sexual violence services, and campus police. For example, Connie addressed the power differentials between herself and her perpetrators in terms of status and occupation, which influenced her decision to not disclose. She noted that because her perpetrators were students—not professors or staff—disclosing would not be relevant or effective. This is concerning given that research has shown that sexual

harassment from peers is much more prevalent than from faculty or staff (Huerta et al., 2006; Rickert, Wiemann, & Vaughan, 2005). Suki was also convinced that since her perpetrator did not attend her university that she would not be helped, which calls into question what sort of education she was receiving through her university with regards to accessing sexual violence services on campus.

After a night of drinking during homecoming with a group of friends, Suki woke up to being fully undressed, with her friend pushing his genitals into her mouth. Despite the sense of sheer panic that came over her when she realized what was happening, Suki chose not to disclose what had happened to her to any formal service, confiding instead in a few trusted friends:

It wasn't something where I was considering pressing charges or anything like that. It wasn't anything really like...it sounds stupid to say but I'm lucky that it wasn't super violent or super forceful. He also wasn't a student here. Also, it's like this whole other thing because we were drinking, and oh, like you know, you were planning on sleeping in the same room together.

Suki's reasons for not disclosing to on-campus services or the police expresses the myriad negotiations and factors which play into university student's reasons for not coming forward while illuminating women's understandings of the inequalities they face in a society which often blames women for their assault. It is indeed troubling given that even before speaking to the police or to any formal sexual violence service, Suki had evaluated her actions, convinced that since she was drinking, partying, and shared a room with her perpetrator—contexts in which university students are most often assaulted in, but contexts which are also most often dismissed by the university and police (Abbey, 2004)—that disclosing would be pointless. Being intoxicated during their assault (Ahrens, 2006; Fisher et al., 2003; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012), coupled with whether their clothes were “promiscuous” (Moor, 2010), are two pertinent factors which often work to distinguish

“true victims” who are worthy of support versus those who are devoid of empathy. Both of these factor into women’s concerns about whether disclosing would be helpful or damaging.

Equally troubling is Suki’s perception that her assault was not “super serious”. It is not uncommon among university women to evaluate the seriousness of their experience of sexual violence to decide whether disclosure is worth it (Bachman, 1998; Spencer, Mallory, Toews, Stith, & Wood, 2017). In fact, Justine expressed similar feelings as she did not believe that her perpetrator, despite his touching and clear attempts to have sex with her, warranted a violation that required disclosing to a formal service. Women’s inclinations to rate their experiences on a sort of scale can be partly explained through an understanding of rape mythologies which imagine “real victims” as those who have been violently assaulted or raped, with physical bruises on their bodies as evidence of “real” victim status. Both Suki and Justine’s assumptions are telling of a systemic issue where women are often forced to evaluate their actions and the severity of the violence inflicted against them. This is deeply concerning and a matter which only works to silence women and normalize violence against them.

Findings of this present study also suggests that women were concerned about disclosing to formal on-campus services due to the fear of disrupting their education, potentially staining networks and relationships they formed within their departments and academic circles, and possibly damaging their future career prospects. This was also expressed by Sangita who feared the consequences of disclosing when she was sexually assaulted by her former boyfriend during her graduate studies. Given that her boyfriend was well-known in their university’s department, Sangita was concerned about staining professional relationships and not receiving recommendation letters from professors for her

future academic and career prospects if she did come forward. She further elaborated on the unique circumstances and difficulties women face coming forward in the context of the university and respective departments and programs. Speaking of the context of law school, she said:

There are very specific things that happen in the law school that make it very hard for survivors. For example, the legal community is very small, so if you do disclose, you're probably disclosing to someone who is going to become a peer or a colleague later down the line, and that can influence your validity to get jobs...I think the biggest thing is the prevalence of violence within institutions is so alarming and students feel so disempowered by virtue of whether it be their future job prospects, their future educational opportunities, to be able to do anything about it.

As women, participants in this study recognized how broader perceptions of sexual violence and harassment limited the extent to which they felt they could disclose; convinced by the abundance of media stories of women and students expressing the lack of justice they received when did come forward to their universities. Yet for racialized women, there are myriad dimensions which influence why they choose not to disclose, pointing to how the intersections of social identity and larger structures of sexism, racism, as well as economic vulnerabilities, shape women's decisions to not disclose.

For Connie and Christine, their experiences of racialized sexual harassment were so common and so normalized that they were convinced that disclosing would be ineffective. As East Asian-Canadian women, both explained their numerous encounters with men who expressed explicitly racist and sexist remarks to them; comments which they felt have become typical and routine in their interactions with men—namely White men—who rarely face any repercussions for their harassment towards East Asian women. Connie spoke of this when she discussed why she felt disclosing would be pointless: “Like, sometimes you feel defeated. Like, what is this going to accomplish? I don't think it's going

to do anything.” Christine concurred with Connie, unsure of whether disclosing to formal on-campus services would be beneficial or would achieve any substantial outcome.

Racialized women had other reasons for why they did not disclose. For Aisha, Perveen, Anitha, and Chuntao, a combination of self-blame and cultural norms shaping how women are expected to behave affected their willingness to disclose to formal services, which I will address in the next chapter. But Aisha also expressed her frustration with the lack of support she felt was available to racialized women as she spoke of her unawareness of support services that would be helpful to her—on as well as off-campus; one which would not be judgemental of her as a Pakistani-Canadian Muslim woman, but at the same time, understand her unique concerns and needs as a Pakistani-Canadian Muslim woman. Aisha’s statement speaks to the lack of existing resources which would have women’s unique cultural circumstances in mind. Indeed, her response implicates the university for its failure in providing effective, culturally responsive services, which I will problematize in Chapter 6.

Leyla was one of two women in this study who identified as lower-middle class and among the few participants who addressed the impact of socioeconomic vulnerabilities on their decision to not disclose. A Palestinian-Canadian, visible Muslim woman now pursuing her graduate studies, Leyla relied on herself for financial support during her undergraduate degree, working at an on-campus job. Having experienced several instances of sexual harassment from her boss during her time working there, Leyla expressed her concerns about being unsupported if she had disclosed his harassment. This partly had to do with her experiences with overt and subtle forms of discrimination and Islamophobia from students, teaching assistants, and professors, and the feeling that her university perpetuated Whiteness. In this regard, Leyla felt that disclosing would be ineffective,

unsure if she would be adequately supported or even believed if she came forward to a university which she perceived as racist. Given that there are a lack of studies which have documented Muslim women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education, Leyla's concerns about disclosing sexual harassment to her university is revealing in many ways; illuminating how experiences of racism manifested within interpersonal interactions in university discourages women from utilizing and confiding in on-campus services, which has implications for universities and their efforts to help students. Indeed, this demonstrates the difficulties non-White women experience with regards to disclosure while exposing the persistence of 'institutionalized Whiteness' (Ahmed 2007, 2012a) which permeates universities and structures who can ultimately disclose.

Although her colleague had reported her own experiences with harassment by the same man to her university, nothing was done and this also convinced Leyla that reporting would be useless. Yet what Leyla feared most was the possibility of losing her job if she did disclose. Leyla knew that her boss's harassment and behaviour towards her—from making sexual innuendos and sexual jokes, to giving her gifts, asking her to hang out alone outside of work, and even attempting to kiss her—was inappropriate. However, she neither responded to her boss, often brushing off his advances or pretending to not understand his sexual "jokes", nor did she call out his harassment. Nor did she report him or disclose to any campus service. Given Leyla's financial constraints, she feared that either move would have compromised her job, which she needed:

My parents didn't give me any money. I had to depend on myself. I could've worked somewhere else, but this was just more convenient for me because it was on campus and I didn't have a car. The only method of transportation was the bus, so I thought it was more convenient and it was actually a good job to put on my resume.

Financial constraints often keep women from disclosing and seeking help following experiences of sexual violence (McNair & Neville, 1996; Sable et al., 2006). For Leyla, the intersections of her identity as a low-income, visible Muslim woman constrained her ability to not only disclose, but to seek work elsewhere.

Disclosing to on-Campus Services

As the findings of this study show, the decision to disclose sexual violence and harassment to formal on-campus services is not a linear one. For participants, it was largely a mediation between their location as women as well as racial and ethnic minorities. This was further complicated by some participants who also experienced discrimination based on their religious identities and those who faced financial constraints. Participants located these aspects of themselves, as well as the identities of their perpetrators, within the larger social schema of a sexist, racist, and classist university climate and society; all intersecting and working together to various degrees to shape their willingness to come forward. Among the 15 participants who participated in this study, only two disclosed to a formal on-campus service. One additional participant was pushed into disclosing despite her discomfort, and two others disclosed to their professors without going into detail about what specifically happened to them. Formal on-campus services in this study consist of professors, on-campus residence managers, sexual violence services, and the police. Women's decisions to disclose to these formal services were due to their concerns about being triggered in class; their hopes to avoid their perpetrators for the sake of their education; their concerns for their mental health; and their need for academic accommodation.

In this section I am concerned with why racialized women turned to varying on-campus support services and what their encounters were like, given that existing studies

have found that racialized women are often revictimized when they turn to formal services to disclose sexual violence and harassment; albeit outside of university contexts (Bogard, 1999; Johnson, 2012; Neville & Pugh, 1997; Washington, 2001). Although I do not suggest that women should be expected to disclose to formal authorities on campus, I agree with Spencer et al. (2017) that “understanding barriers to reporting will provide insight into what universities can do to help survivors feel safe and empowered” to disclose (p. 168).

Lucy was the only participant who involuntarily disclosed her experience of sexual violence after a friend she had confided in told their residence’s managers. Given that Lucy’s perpetrator was a member of her on-campus residence, the resident managers pried Lucy about the circumstances of the incident and expected her to retell her story without much concern for the toll it was taking on her or whether she even wanted to discuss the incident. As a Chinese-Canadian woman, Lucy explained that she did not feel comfortable discussing the episode given the debilitating sense of shame and guilt that she was dealing with, which she located through a cultural framework—something she did not want to feel, Lucy said, but was “raised to feel” as she referenced how cultural norms regarding gender and sex outside of marriage shaped her feelings of shame. I will address this further in Chapter 6.

Yet cultural reasons alone were not what made Lucy uncomfortable with retelling her experience of sexual violence. It was the racial dynamic between herself and the all-White female residence managers who lacked any cultural awareness or sensitivity in speaking with Lucy that made it difficult for her. Lucy described how the residence managers failed to sense the discomfort and demoralization she was experiencing by talking about her experience unwillingly, while ignoring the concerns Lucy had about speaking of her experience from a cultural standpoint. To Lucy, the residence managers did

not understand her cultural concerns nor did they empathize with the difficulty she faced as a racialized woman speaking out about her experience. As a Chinese-Canadian woman, Lucy felt that the resident managers neglected to reflect on the difficulties she must have been feeling while speaking about her experience—where on one hand, she was dealing with the sense of guilt and self-blame for being sexually victimized, while on the other, dealing with the cultural emphasis on silence about personal issues. Indeed, this provides insight into the unjust practices of forcing students to disclose their experiences of sexual violence unwillingly and the psychological stress of this on students. But it also reveals the difficulties that racialized women experience when having to speak of their experiences to individuals of the dominant group.

Monica also struggled with opening up about her experience of having had a classmate kiss her and give her a hickey while she was intoxicated, which she explained was conditioned by the cultural perception emphasized by her Chinese parents which demanded her to be strong and to not express weakness. Despite her fears of disclosing, worried that she would appear as “weak” or a “burden” for speaking about personal issues, she turned to a trusted female professor given her growing concern for her academics after becoming disengaged from her classes following her experience, although she did not fully discuss the details of what had happened between herself and the student. Sangita, too, turned to a professor about how some subjects in her law classes which addressed sexual violence cases were triggering for her, and caused her to stop attending the class given that the professor appeared to speak about such cases frequently and without warning. Although Sangita, too, did not disclose to the professor what had happened to her, both of her and Monica’s professors helped accommodate them. Given that Monica’s perpetrator was in the same specialized program as her and was in all of her classes, her professor was able to

help ensure that she did not sit next to him or work with him in group assignments, while Sangita's concern was taken up with her law professor.

Monica was less reluctant to seek the help of any formal campus service, however. She had a previous experience with a university's counsellor about her struggles with mental health, where the counsellor said to her: "All of you Oriental kids have a problem with mental health." Aside from the obviously insensitive, not to mention deeply racist comment made from a professional hired by the university to help students like Monica, this presents us with a number of notable implications that is vital to not overlook. For one, Monica's experience with the counsellor coincides with existing research documenting the racist attitudes racialized women are often confronted with by service providers which discourages racialized women from accessing such provisions (Bogard, 1999). And second, it points to how stereotypical constructions of non-White peoples can serve as an obstacle to women receiving proper help as they are perceived as victims of their cultures. Their experiences of racism and sexism, conditioned and reproduced by the larger society—which in the case of Monica, contributed to her issues with mental health—are also often ignored (also see Burman, Smailes, & Chandler, 2004). I will discuss this further in Chapter 6.

Nicole and Amani were the only two participants in the present study who formally disclosed to an on-campus sexual violence service. During the first couple of weeks of her undergraduate studies, a male friend of Nicole's touched her inappropriately despite her pleas not to while they were at her on-campus residence. Although she managed to get out of the situation before it escalated, the incident inflicted a heavy emotional and psychological impression on her. Nicole first turned to a professor who taught a women's studies course and was teaching about sexual violence against women in society, hoping

that she could connect Nicole to any available sexual violence service on campus. Surprisingly, this professor was unfamiliar with resources on or off-campus, but told Nicole that she would email her regarding anything she could find. The professor never got in touch with her.

Black women often avoid speaking of their experiences of sexual violence when their perpetrators are Black men in an effort to not perpetuate negative stereotypes that the dominant society often has of Black men as innately and intrinsically violent and aggressive (McGuffey, 2013). As Collins (2004) writes, “African American women grapple with long-standing sanctions within their communities that urge them to protect African American men at all costs, including keeping “family secrets” by remaining silent about male abuse” while women also fear that their family, friends, as well as their community will abandon them (p. 226). This did not appear to shape Nicole’s decisions as she did not address this, which could partly be due to her biracial identity, including her lack of interactions with Black people prior to entering university. Indeed, Nicole’s response provides some insight into how biracial Black women may approach their decisions to disclose sexual violence from Black men differently than women who are not biracial, which requires further empirical examination.

Once she learned of a service on her campus, Nicole revealed to them her experience of sexual violence by a male student. Yet, Nicole explained that they did not provide her with any effective resources or counselling services—which prompted her to find counselling off-campus. Nor did they take any serious measures against the perpetrator, who was a student at the same university. Although they did contact the perpetrator, advising him that he could not enter Nicole’s on-campus residence building or be anywhere near her, these measures were not strictly enforced:

Like I guess it was kind of like a restraining order but not legally. It was just through the school. But I would still see him around a lot. And when he'd see me, he'd look at me and laugh. I never talked to him. I'd just be walking to class and I'd see him. Or I'd go to parties, and I'd see him, and I'd leave right away...I find it really annoying that I had to lose my own freedom. Like I said, I would see him at a party and I'd want to go home and start crying again. Or just like little things, like, I'd be in residence and he'd be in my residence. Like, I couldn't even feel comfortable in my own home. Because I don't know if I'm going to walk out and he's going to be there and the schools not going to do anything about it. Initially they were like, what do you want out of this? And I said well, I don't want this to happen to another girl or I don't want him to think that this is okay to do. Like, he's allowed to go around and live his life and do whatever, and three years later, there are times when I'm completely fine and something triggers me to feel a certain way.

Nicole went on to explain that she was told by the sexual violence service that she could “either report it [the incident] to the police and press charges or we can't do anything about it.” As Nicole explained, the university did not take any strict measures to reconcile Nicole's emotional and psychological concerns which had risen due to her experience of sexual violence, which was amplified by triggers she would experience when she saw her perpetrator around campus. With the university not effectively doing anything to discipline the perpetrator, the university's failure to help Nicole contributed to her fear of being on campus, which triggered Nicole's emotional and psychological health as well as her lack of desire and ambition to attend her classes or do course work, which caused her to fall behind in her studies. Nicole shared similar experiences with Sangita and Perveen, both of whom had trouble concentrating in school following their own experiences and had to resort to therapy off-campus.

In many ways, the treatment Nicole received, she explained, was due to broader perceptions of how Black women are perceived in society:

Race played into how the services treated me, I feel like...it was a negative. It worked in a negative way... I feel that when I went there, I don't know, because of mass media and the belief systems that have been instilled in us, I think that people still view racialized women as something that they are not compared to White women. They are viewed as more sexual and like...you know what I mean? I feel

that when I went to that office, you can't deny that they looked at me and saw, they could tell that I'm not a White...like if they saw my name on paper they probably would've thought that I was White, but like when they were faced with me I feel like they, like I think it's bad to say but I feel like I would've been treated differently if I was White or the advisor was not White because she could have sympathized more or something.

As Collins (2004) writes, “[w]ithin the structures of dominant gender ideology that depict Black women’s sexuality as deviant, African American women have difficulty speaking out about their abuse because the reactions that they receive from others deters them” (p. 230). The fear of being blamed for their assault, coupled with the fear of being stereotyped as promiscuous, hinders the likelihood that Black women will disclose their experiences of sexual violence to formal services (Donovon & Williams, 2002; Foley et al., 1995; McGuffey, 2013).

Nicole was aware of broader racist and sexist social representations and controlling images of Black women which imagines them as hyper-sexual and effects how others perceive and treat them. It is a damaging reality that has consequences for how services cater to and help racialized women given that notions of innocence and guilt are shaped by the interplay of social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Given that White middle-class women are almost always demarcated as the epitome of innocence (see Bertram & Crowley, 2012; Piertch, 2010), Black women have long been subject to historical constructions where attributions of concern do not extend to them. With regards to how jurors have largely perceived Black victims of sexual violence, Crenshaw (1992) writes that “black women are different from white women and that sexually abusive behavior directed toward them is somehow less objectionable” (p. 1470). This is telling of why Black women, including other racialized women who are met with insensitive

interactions and racist presumptions from service providers in this study, are often unwilling to access and disclose to formal services. As Bertram and Crowley (2012) assert:

This also helps us understand why some women may prefer to avoid health-care and counselling services after experiencing sexual violence, since survivors may perceive these institutions not as sources of help or advocacy, but as locations of blame and additional trauma. (p. 67)

This was also experienced by Lucy and Monica, as well as Amani, the latter of whom explained that she was revictimized following her disclosure to on-campus services.

Amani reached out to the sexual violence service available on her campus following her experience with a male student who was masturbating while sitting next to her in the library—staring straight at her while doing so. A traumatic and upsetting experience, Amani explained that she could not study for her exam nor focus on the conference she had to prepare for the next day. Needing accommodation, Amani filled out a report online through her university's website. She was contacted the next morning, but rather than having an informal discussion with her regarding options, available services she could access, and how she could be accommodated, Amani was advised to see campus police to file a formal report instead.

Amani's interaction with the on-campus police officer did little to ensure her that they would find her perpetrator, nor did they provide her with sufficient support and resources:

Like, they told me about all these services that it exist, but it wasn't like, listen on this day and you're on campus and feel overwhelmed, you can go to these drop-in hours or you can make an appointment with this person, to just actually put me in tune with these things. Because it wasn't just the academics...it wasn't the only thing I cared about. Just because I'm in university, it doesn't meant that the only thing I care about is my university obligations. I wanted to be okay being in university.

The police also failed to ever get in touch with her again or even check-up on her, appearing to be seemingly unconcerned with her wellbeing.

But what was at the heart of Amani's discussion was the revictimization that she felt when the police officer failed to acknowledge the racial as well as religious dimension of the experience she had, despite Amani, a visible Muslim woman of Iraqi descent who wears a veil, describing the perpetrator as a White male. To Amani, the police officer's indifference to religion and race limited and downplayed the extent of the violence that she felt she had experienced; an act of violence which she perceived as both sexist as well as racist. Amani felt that the officer's lack of concern contributed to further victimizing her, as the totality of the violence she experienced was not fully acknowledged. This was disconcerting for Amani, who expressed how difficult it was for her to come forward to the police, not only as a victim, but also as a woman of colour, as a Muslim, and as low-income; having experienced various degrees of socio-economic vulnerabilities, as well as hostility, racism, sexism, and Islamophobia throughout her life in Canada, in school and during university. When the police failed to acknowledge the racial dimension of the incident or to effectively help her, Amani felt powerless in pushing the university or the police to do more to locate and discipline the perpetrator or seek further help given her minoritized social identities and the perpetrators privileged identities.

As found elsewhere, women may "decide not to report their sexual assault to university officials because speaking out against a male (especially White, middle to upper class) perpetrator in a patriarchal society means risking blame, scrutiny, and disbelief" (Grubb & Turner, 2012 as cited in Spencher, Stith, Durtschi, & Toews, 2017, p. 168). As a racialized woman, attempting to hold a White male accountable for his actions weighed heavily on Amani, who had to consider whether she would be helped given her multiple

and intersecting minoritized social identities and the privileging of the perpetrators gender and race not only within the institution of the university, but in the dominant society as well:

When I hear about, especially across North America, sexual violence taking place against women, and how the cases are taken. All North American White people will see that Brock Turner was let off. I interact with White men with that understanding that they have seen that. That they look on the news and they see themselves getting let off for rape and assault on campus.

Amani went on to explain that:

The entitlement that comes from their wealth on top of the entitlement that comes from their Whiteness is very scary to a woman who is a visible minority, Muslim, Brown—all of the things that the world hates. I don't have the same resources as these White guys, and society doesn't love me the way that it loves them.

For Amani, the intersections of racial, gendered, and economic privileges afforded to White males in North American society, including within the university, were personified through Brock Turner, a wealthy White student who had his prison sentence reduced to only three months for assaulting an unconscious female student at Stanford University in 2015 (Grinberg & Schoichet, 2016). The mild discipline and charge given to Turner was due to a judge claiming that “a prison sentence would have a severe impact on him” (Fantz & Wills, 2016). Amani felt that the Brock Turner case acted as a precedent for any sexual violence case against White males in university, whom she described as having a sort of prized status in Canadian and American society, which the dominant society has prioritized, saying:

Especially when they are like, in university. Like, *they* are the golden boys, *they* are going places, *they* are taking society with them. Society is so excited for them and they don't want to damage their reputations.

How White men are socially perceived, within and beyond the university, suggested to Amani that any charge against them would be ineffective. The fact that she was a racialized

woman made coming forward against a White male even more hopeless as she described the implications that disclosing has for racialized women who occupy a disadvantaged position in society. Her comment clearly describes the myriad concerns and sentiments echoed by other racialized women in this study, particularly for those who had perpetrators who were White men:

I think there are so many reasons that racialized women don't come forward. One of them being that they will be met by people that don't understand their needs for sure. The other is that they are aware that they live in a society where White men are favoured. So, coming forward, I know I will be talking to a White person, hopefully a woman, but I'm still going to be talking to a White person, a White woman who looks more like my perpetrator than she does like me. So, it's that awareness that I'm talking about a crime committed by a male, by a blonde White guy to a blonde White woman, and it's like, that understanding that...what if I offend her? By telling her that he was White...like why should I be worried about that at the end of the day?

Amani's comment illuminates and provides significant insight into the barriers which shape racialized women's decisions to not come forward about their experiences of sexual violence to formal campus services. Firstly, as racialized and gendered minorities, women in this study have felt that their unique concerns and needs would not be satisfactorily met by either service providers or the police had they disclosed. For those who had been subject to sexual violence and harassment by White men, participants were also aware of their disadvantage vis-à-vis male and White privilege which convinced them that disclosing, and pushing the university to do more, would be useless. And finally, women having to relay their experiences to members of formal services who are often racially different than themselves have implications for racialized women who have felt revictimized in the face of racism, sexism, culturalization, and indifference, which shaped not only the failure of such services to effectively help women but acts as a barrier to those who are in need of help.

It is useful and necessary to examine racialized women's experiences of disclosure, as well as their lack of disclosure to formal campus services by situating disclosure in a larger discussion of institutional Whiteness which permeates institutions of higher education. When we speak of institutional Whiteness, we are not speaking of skin colour alone; but "how spaces...take on the very 'qualities' that are given to such bodies" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 156). Ahmed goes on to contend that:

Spaces acquire the 'skin' of the bodies that inhabit them. What is important to note here is that it is not just bodies that are orientated. Spaces also take shape by being oriented around some bodies, more than others...When we describe institutions as 'being' white (institutional whiteness), we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others. (p. 157)

Between experiences of hostility and racism in interpersonal interactions on campus, coupled with policies and services which fail to consider racialized women's needs and concerns, contributing to the reproduction of institutionalized racism and exclusion, the university maintains and reproduces Whiteness. The implications of this is that it contributes to not only making racialized students feel uncomfortable and different in such spaces (Ahmed, 2012a, 2012b), as the findings of this study show, but that it also shapes their experiences of utilizing campus services as well as their interactions with service providers. A consequence of this is that the privileging and normalizing of certain knowledges, coupled with an absence of acknowledging diversity and difference, impedes upon racialized women's decisions to access campus services and have their needs satisfactorily met. Gusa's (2010) theorization of "White institutional presence" is useful here:

In addressing the sources of chilly campus climates, White institutional presence illustrates the relevance of race in contemporary higher education. Institutions of higher education must be more forward with intentionality (Harper & Quaye, 2009) regarding policy and practice on their campuses. Tackling a noninclusive chilly campus climate is not simply about developing a checklist of embellishments.

Rather, it requires rigorous work of informed critical introspection that sees one's performance of Whiteness, as well as sees the performance of Whiteness in the practices of others. (p. 480)

In the context of sexual violence and harassment, a lack of appropriate campus services, an underrepresentation of non-White service providers, and interactions with campus services which perpetuate either explicitly racist narratives or ignore racial dynamics, contributes to women's understandings of who is accepted and who belongs. In turn, campus climates and institutional practices which normalize Whiteness factor into women's disclosure decisions. Indeed, any discussion of racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education requires an understanding of the implications of institutional Whiteness.

Disclosing to Peers

Women who experience sexual violence are more likely to disclose to informal sources of support than to formal services (Ahrens & Campbell, 2000; Fisher et al., 2003). Although a number of participants in this study discussed the difficulty of disclosing, every woman disclosed to at least one friend, with most stating that close female friends functioned as their prime support network (also see Orchowski & Gidycz, 2012). Speaking to this, a general consensus among women was that friends helped care for them following their experience of sexual violence, reassuring them that it was not their fault, while others discussed how friends continue to help them deal. Studies have also found that social support tends to help women who have experienced sexual violence recover (Ullman, 1999). However, these studies are limited given that they do not consider the significance of social identity beyond gender as a factor shaping who women are willing to disclose to. This section thus contributes to the literature on peer support by demonstrating how race,

ethnicity, and religion also factors into racialized women's decisions.

A number of participants in the present study discussed how their social identities influenced which of their friends they were willing to disclose to. Regardless of whether they shared the same racial or ethnic background, most women explained that they disclosed to racialized women. Some explained that their shared experiences of racism and sexism produced a level of comfort and ease which helped them to open up to their racialized peers. Participants explained that the experiences of sexual violence that racialized women are often subject to, where they experience a combination of racism and sexism, created a level of relatability with other racialized women. Women also agreed that their racialized friends are more sensitive to the peculiarities of their experience of sexual violence, referencing how their peers would empathize with their concerns from a cultural standpoint, acknowledging the difficulties of speaking about their harassment or assault as racialized women; something that they suggested non-racialized women could not fully understand nor relate to. Soon after Amani caught a male student masturbating while staring directly, she told her friend, a White woman, what had happened:

So when I told her she was like, 'Yo, that's messed up' and she laughed. And I laughed too because I was like, what is going? Like, she wasn't the kind of support system that I needed in that moment. Like...she wouldn't understand...or I wouldn't feel comfortable mentioning that he was White.

Amani eventually told her sister and cousin, with whom she has a close relationship with, what had happened to her. Although she had filtered down the exact details, they understood enough of what happened to recognize the sexist and racialized implications of the event:

When I talked to my sister and cousin, I told them that something bad had happened and I was here and in this place. I didn't necessarily tell them what had happened, and it was this White guy. And I'm free to say that with them because they'll

understand that. Because in that moment I was experiencing something ugly from a White male. And for them, it was like, “of course” and they said, “I’m so sorry this happened to you, and these guys have this entitlement issue and have a gross outlook on the hijab” and we could talk through it, and we could skiff through this experience on a deeper level, on a level that actually made me feel like I could reflect on it in a proactive way.

Telling her White friend felt uncomfortable for two reasons, Amani explained. For one, Amani felt that as a White person, her friend could not understand the deeply troubling intersection of racism and sexism that unraveled in her experience, as a Brown Muslim woman who had been subject to a gross sexual incident that had as much to do with her gender as it did with her race and religion. The fact that the White male was not physically touching her, yet proceeding to masturbate from a close distance illuminated a unique racialized and sexualized experience for Amani that registered to her the deeply sexualized and racist dimension of the incident, which for her was conditioned with orientalist imageries of White men’s fantasies about veiled, mystical, exotic female “others” (Shirazi, 2001). And secondly, Amani was generally concerned about mentioning that the perpetrator was White to her friend. Likewise, Amani was concerned about naming her perpetrator’s race to the White police officer she eventually disclosed to.

Lucy, too, had mentioned that speaking to other racialized women—not only about her experience of sexual violence, but her lived experiences as racialized women within their predominately White university—has provided her with considerable support and feeling that she is less alone; knowing that others have experienced similar incidences of racism and marginalization. Initially, though, Lucy had first disclosed her experience to her White friend, hoping for trust and secrecy. Given that Lucy’s perpetrator was a student, her friend expressed her discomfort about the incident and was prompted to tell the resident managers what had happened to Lucy despite her pleas not to. When she had first disclosed

to her friend, Lucy's sexual assault was still fresh, and she was caught between a paralyzing triangle of guilt, shame, and confusion from the events that had occurred just days before—unsure if she had fully consented while having her feelings compounded by cultural norms of blame and shame. Lucy explained the deeply entrenched stigmas attached to Chinese women who have sex before marriage and women who are sexually assaulted; the latter of which is assumed to be the fault of women themselves. Her friend reported the incident to their residence's managers.

Having been involuntarily pushed into disclosing her assault, the retelling of the incident took on a debilitating reality for Lucy. This was amplified by the fact that students in her residence had also found out about the incident. Lucy went into more detail about the implications of her friend's insistence on helping her:

It was the interference of a White individual who felt that I was in need of her saving and being completely oblivious to my differing experiences as a racial minority. It was through her White lens that led to the worsening of my experience. In some ways she put a white blanket over my experience and it perpetuated the stifling nature of White superiority.

As Lucy explained, her friend was unable to understand the implications of her actions given the racial disparity between them, causing her friend to be indifferent to the cultural repercussions and difficulties of speaking about one's experience of sexual violence as a racialized woman, especially with people who Lucy said she did not identify with racially or culturally, and could not empathize with her situation which went beyond sexual violence alone. For Lucy, the normalcy and naturalness granted to Whiteness blinded her friend from recognizing the unique circumstances of sexual violence for racialized women; women who often find it difficult to discuss such experiences openly, partly due to cultural reasons and partly due to structurally embedded relations of power between themselves and White individuals. Moreover, Lucy emphasized that her friend choosing to speak and

disclose on her behalf contributed to revictimizing her; not only by coercing her into disclosure, but perpetuating the controlling image and stereotype of demure, quiet, and passive East Asian women who are in need of the help—and saving—of White individuals.

Although Lucy was the only participant in this study to reveal the negative consequences of revealing one's experience of sexual violence to friends, her experience with her friend provides us with valuable insight into the implications of peer support, as well as the implications of an increasingly popular initiative within post-secondary institutions and sexual violence research, what is known as bystander intervention (see for example McMahon, Postmus, & Koenick, 2011; Moynihan, Baynard, Cares, Potter, Williams, & Stapleton, 2015). Bystander intervention asks student bystanders to identify harmful situations, intervene when they see sexual violence occurring on campus, and offer help to individuals targeted. As Haaken (2017) critiques, "Bystander programs often ignore, however, the various subject positions of observers—and how interventions readily reproduce patriarchal rescue narratives" (p. 24). I would go further to argue, as Lucy's case shows, that bystander intervention programs can potentially contribute to further harming racialized women who may not feel comfortable disclosing their experience of sexual violence due to cultural reasons, or speaking to individuals who are racially and ethnically different than themselves. Bystander interventions can, therefore, potentially do more damage than good, as racial, ethnic, and religious dynamics can be overlooked as students who think they are being helpful may inadvertently contribute to revictimizing women.

Although confiding in peers who were racial and ethnic minorities was helpful to participants in this study, Anitha and Aisha discussed how the added dimension of cultural socialization, not to mention self-blame conditioned by this, effected their willingness to disclose to peers regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds, which brings us to another

critical theme that we have to consider in our efforts to understand racialized women's willingness to disclose to peers. Although some participants described the stigmatizing nature of sexual violence by referencing their familial and community emphasis on gender norms and sex outside of marriage, which limited their ability to disclose to their parents or formal support services (which I will discuss in the following chapter), this did not stop women from disclosing to their peers with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds. The only exceptions were Anitha and Aisha. Aisha explained that she was unable to disclose her experience of sexual violence or reveal that she was no longer a virgin to her Muslim friends; friends who shared the same religious background as her. Speaking to her feelings following her assault, Aisha said:

I just couldn't believe that I let my values go and the thing with this was that I couldn't tell anybody. I couldn't tell my mom, or my sisters, or my friends, who are mostly a Muslim group of women. I couldn't have that judgement on me. I really thought it was my fault. I went to his house. Yes, I said no, but I didn't just walk out. But I feel like the support system for racialized women doesn't really exist, even among your own peers. You can't have this conversation with anybody. You're like the third person I've talked to...I just feel like there's so much judgement attached to that. Like, you're a Muslim girl and you're sexually active. And it's like, are you even Muslim?—Yes, I am Muslim. I didn't want to have those conversations. I knew that when I opened up about this, I would have to talk about my identity because it's really related. I didn't want my identity up for questioning.

Aisha confided in only a few people about what had happened to her: her boyfriend, myself as the researcher, and a friend who was not part of the Muslim community. For Aisha, turning to a White friend who was not Muslim was more comforting and easier for Aisha; relieved that her friend would not question her religious convictions or morals for having been sexually assaulted and having compromised her virginity.

Anitha was unable to disclose to any of her peers at first, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity, partly because neither her friends nor her family believed her when she disclosed her prior experiences of sexual harassment, and partly because of the cultural

rhetoric that she should not disclose personal issues. Fearing re-victimization, Anitha explained that she learned to not go outwards for help and support. Although she eventually spoke to some friends and later her husband about the incident several years after her experience of sexual violence as an undergraduate student, Anitha expressed her hesitancies to disclose to peers:

Beyond even talking about it to my friends, and even in those situations I didn't because I'm just so used to people not believing me... or I also feel like sometimes too...like people have been socialized in such different ways [that] I don't know what kind of advice I would get. I'm just not a type of person who goes outwards for emotional support, because nine out of ten times I just don't trust what people are going to say. Like, talking about my assault at the club, someone could make it into a bigger deal and make it harder for me to get passed it because they've victimized me more. Somebody else could blame me and say that it was my fault, someone else could just dismiss me like it's not even a big issue. So, depending on the mood I'm in and where my headspace is at, encountering any of those different responses could trigger me or make me worse, so I find it safer for me personally to just not do that.

For some women, then, even disclosing to peers, a support system most often utilized by women who experienced sexual violence, was difficult. The fear of how peers would respond, and the potential revictimizing impact of it is a valid reason why women choose not to disclose to peers.

Conclusion

As women, participants in this chapter were cognizant of the wider societal pervasiveness of violence against women, and the lack of support and justice, especially in North American institutions of higher education, that women often received upon disclosing to formal services such as the police or on-campus sexual violence services. This was a sentiment that participants expressed during their discussions about whether disclosing to service provisions on campus would result in any fruitful outcome as it was compounded

by the fear of victim-blaming as well as the consequences disclosing would have on their education, their academic networks, their future career prospects, and their mental stamina, including their concern for a tumultuous adjudicative process with no positive end in sight. As racialized women, though, disclosure was, for some participants in this study, an active negotiation between the normalization of violence against racialized women specifically and the understanding that men, particularly those who occupy a privileged racial, gendered, and classed position, rarely face repercussions and questioned the relevance of disclosure as a result. Indeed, as this chapter revealed, the identity of the perpetrators, vis-à-vis that of women, often shapes whether racialized women feel like they can disclose, access available services, or experience a positive outcome.

Other participants drew on their lived experiences of racism, xenophobia, and economic vulnerabilities as reasons which limited their opportunity to disclose. Unsurprisingly, racialized women often have to reflect on their intersecting social locations as gendered, raced, and classed subjects as they consider whether they can access services and be effectively helped. For those who did disclose to formal campus services, namely residence managers, sexual violence services, and the police, this study revealed how women felt revictimized in a number of ways, which reveals alarming findings. This included a lack of consideration on part of White service providers to empathize with the difficulty racialized women face for speaking about personal issues which are frowned upon from a cultural standpoint, which I will expand on in the next chapter; how the racial dimension of their experiences of sexual violence was ignored as women felt the totality of the violence they experienced was not acknowledged—pointing to the insufficient training of campus service providers; and the internalization of controlling images regarding Black women was also addressed as a participant felt that racist and sexist perceptions shaped

how she was treated. The findings of this study concur with existing research that the fear of revictimization due to racist beliefs of service providers often hinders not only the likelihood that women will not disclose their experiences to formal services, but be effectively helped. As the findings of this present study reveals, racialized women face alarming burdens and obstacles when contemplating disclosure and interacting with formal on-campus services.

This chapter also demonstrated that most women chose to disclose to their peers rather than to formal campus services, while race and gender shaped women's decisions with regards to which peers they were more likely to confide in. Several participants stated that they felt more comfortable disclosing their experiences of sexual violence and harassment to other racialized women while some expressed their discomfort with disclosing to White women on the basis that they could not relate to nor empathize with their difficulties following their experiences of sexual violence. However, some participants also drew on their race, religion, and culture as they spoke of the difficulties of disclosing to peers who shared a similar cultural and religious background as themselves and found it easier to confide in peers who were not of the same religious or ethnic background as them.

The findings of this study indeed has implications for the limitations of Bill 132 and many post-secondary sexual violence policies that have been implemented in its wake. Using an intersectional analytical framework to examine how the Bill and university policies define, address, and account for diversity and social differences, what I found is alarming. The Bill and most of the policies I reviewed largely fail to contextualize and locate sexual violence in higher education as an issue in which women are the primary targets. In addition to this, most fail to address how race, ethnicity, religion, and class factor

into a student's experience of sexual violence and how this shapes the likelihood they would utilize the services the policies promise. The lack of consideration for social differences has resulted in universities dislocating sexual violence from oppressive histories and structures of colonialism, patriarchy, Whiteness, racism, and sexism which makes women, and racialized women specifically, vulnerable to sexual violence while hindering the likelihood that they will disclose and access support services.

Chapter 6:

Examining Accounts of Culture in the Context of Disclosure

Introduction

The extent to which racialized women can disclose their experiences of sexual violence and harassment to informal networks such as family and friends, as well as to formal supports and services, are shaped by the intersections of their gender, race, ethnicity, and class with other dimensions of their social identities (Thiara & Gill, 2010). Although existing scholarship on South Asian and East Asian women has largely focused on sexual violence in the context of domestic and intimate partner violence, particularly within first-generation immigrant communities, these studies have revealed that ‘culture’ often acts as a barrier for women to access service provisions while constructions of culture also shape the perceptions service providers often have of women (see for example Ahmad et al., 2009; Burman, Smailes, & Chandler, 2004; Kallivayalil, 2007). As Cowburn, Gill, and Harrison (2015) note, cultural background is important to how individual women respond to sexual violence and harassment, how they feel about themselves following their experiences, as well as why they are not likely to disclose (also see Raj & Silverman, 2002; Reavey, Ahmed, & Majumdar, 2006). However, given that few studies have examined disclosure patterns among second-generation Canadian racialized women outside of domestic, dating, and intimate partner violence, the present study provides new insight into the significance of culture and the role it plays in shaping women’s feelings of blame and their options to disclose in the context of sexual violence and harassment in higher education. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, though, overstating culture alone is insufficient and risks othering racialized women and their communities.

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of culture in the literature on violence and problematize both the overemphasis on culture as well as the efforts of racialized feminist scholars to avoid speaking of culture in favour of critiquing structural inequities. Following this, I categorize participants' narratives of 'culture' under two subsections. By drawing on their gendered, ethnic, and for some, religious identities, I will first discuss the role that cultural norms have had on women's perceptions of self-blame, shame, and guilt following their experiences of sexual violence and harassment. The second subsection focuses on the impact that this has had on shaping women's decisions to disclose and remain silent to both formal and informal support services. Most participants contextualized this through a discussion of gender at the intersections of ethnicity, and for one, religious persuasions, as they negotiated familial and cultural expectations, as well as concerns about tarnishing their family's reputation by disclosing. This discussion will also address the cultural disavowal of personal issues to family members as well as to external services.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how racialized women draw on the intersections of their social identities to understand their experiences in the aftermath of sexual violence and harassment, as well as how women drew on their identities to negotiate the options available to them in the context of disclosure. Although several women contextualized their concerns regarding disclosure within a cultural understanding, I do not reduce this analysis to the problem of "other" cultures alone. Diminishing women's barriers to disclosure as yet another example of the patriarchal nature of minority communities and the oppression of minority women only contributes to further racializing women, isolating them, and making them vulnerable to marginalization and silencing both within their communities as well as the larger society. Blaming culture alone would be futile without

analyzing how racialized women caught between familial cultural norms are simultaneously entrapped by the larger Canadian society—systemically sexist, racist, classist, and patriarchal—which often shapes the fears and behaviours of racialized peoples while pushing women into silence (see Bannerji, 2000; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 1994, 1998). That being said, ignoring culture would fail to address, problematize, and challenge systems which maintain gender inequalities within racialized communities, while also failing to constructively help racialized women who have experienced sexual violence. Given that most studies have either perpetuated culturalist narratives of violence against racialized women or challenged such arguments in favour of critiquing structural inequalities, this chapter will not only problematize both explanations but argue that we need to consider both simultaneously—acknowledging unjust cultural norms without losing sight of structural inequities which often condition racialized women into silence. With regards to this, the final section of this chapter will address what I refer to as the *culturalization of silence* and the implications of this for post-secondary institutions.

Discussing Culture in the Context of Violence Against Racialized Women

In Raj and Silverman's (2002) review of the definition of culture across disciplines, they define culture as "social doctrines taken on by a group" (p. 369). These are the "norms, roles, rules, customs and expectations" of members of particular ethnic, religious, and national origin (Bercheid, 1995, p. 531). However, over the course of the past several decades, racialized feminists, scholars, and activists have challenged dominant conceptions of culture—what they see as an often limited, essentialist, and Eurocentric understanding of culture. As Volpp (2003) writes, culture is often used in tandem with ethnicity while it is "not understood as a descriptor explaining all kinds of social interactions" (p. 394).

Culture has also been largely assumed to be the byproduct of non-White peoples, whose ‘conservative’ and ‘traditional’ practices, customs, and values are static and persistent, unmoved by larger historical and structural forces (Piedalue, 2017). As Razack (1998) contends:

[i]ndeed, the notion of culture that has perhaps the widest currency among both dominant and subordinate groups is one whereby culture is taken to mean values, beliefs, knowledge, and customs that exist in a timeless and unchangeable vacuum outside of patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and colonialism. (p. 58)

In the context of a racially and ethnically stratified and hierarchical society such as Canada, where the celebration of the myth of multiculturalism has been projected as a national identity, what is often ignored in multicultural rhetoric is that cultures and cultural norms are in fact constantly contested and constantly changing in response to a myriad of factors, including immigration, racism, isolation, class structures, and marginalization as experienced in historical and contemporary trajectories. What is also often absented in the context of multicultural discourses is the reduction of racial differences to cultural differences, which have, as a result, heightened cultural differences “against the backdrop of an invisible white dominance” (Jiwani, 2006, p. 91). In other words, against the backdrop of Whiteness as both dominant and normative, any discussion of culture risks exacerbating and highlighting differences among racialized peoples while sounding the alarm of the fear of multiculturalism, where there is a presumption that minority groups often do not share the same values and lifestyles of the majority (Aujla, 2000). “Discussions of culture,” Handa (2003) asserts, “have been open to Eurocentric and racist conclusions....cultural incompatibility and difference remain a justification for partial treatment of non-white peoples in the Western world” (p. 19). It is in such a context, then, that there are risks of

speaking about culture, particularly within the context of violence against racialized women.

In the West, the notion of honour as a defining element of cultural values of some ethnic communities has perhaps gained the most salience in the discussion of violence against non-White women. As Olwan (2013) observed in her review of gender violence, cultural otherness, and honour crimes in Canada, violence deemed as “honour crimes”—that is, violence committed against women within their ethnic communities at the hands of family members and husbands—has contributed to culturalist and racist discourses which have influenced policy approaches by the Canadian government. Olwan contends that gendered violence is often perceived as rooted in the foundation and cultures of minority communities, who are presumed to exercise a form of patriarchy that is innately violent and oppressive towards women, and one which forces women into remaining silent about their abuse; a narrative which has also been used to justify the dominant society’s fears and rising concerns over multiculturalism while reminding them of Western civility. This notion of honour has also stood as signifier for the innately oppressive nature of minorities who threaten the values of gender parity in liberal democracies such as Canada, while justifying calls to “save” women from their own communities (Abu-Lughod, 2013). Feminist and human rights groups have also been at the forefront of contending that women’s rights are often undermined by the cultural customs of ethnic and religious minorities (see Okin, 1999).

This tendency to see honour as a fundamental characteristic of minority communities has caused us, however, to negate that notions of honour are also part of cultures and religious dictations of White Christian communities (see for example Inglis & MacKeogh, 2012; Brown, Baughman, & Carvallo, 2017). In fact, in both White and

racialized contexts, honour has functioned as a defining element to which gender norms are constructed, adhered to, and practiced. Women in particular are regulated and expected to be sexually modest, follow familial cultural and religious norms, and refrain from behaviours that would be considered taboo or shameful for themselves as well as their families (Gill, 2004; Sanghera, 2017). But in the contemporary imaginary of Canadian society, honour has most often been associated with the violent and patriarchal practices of certain communities, namely South Asians, Middle Easterners, and East Asians, with Muslim communities arguably bearing the largest burden of these generalizations (Jiwani, 2005; Meeto & Mirza, 2007). However, as Olwan (2013) pointedly asserts, while the dominant society is quick to charge the various forms of violence minority women incur as a cultural phenomenon, a cultural basis for crimes committed against White women is not extended to White husbands or boyfriends. For non-White peoples, culture is perceived as the driving force shaping their behaviour, while in White communities, men are envisioned as individuals who are in control of their own lives. As Dustin (2007) contends, “[t]his not only reduces the degree of agency in minority groups, it also attributes too much agency to majority ones, ignoring the social, economic, psychological and other constraints that all individuals live with” (p. 45).

The tendency to apply culturalist narratives to racialized communities is not uncommon, even among racialized women themselves who often internalize a “death by culture” narrative (Nayaran, 1997). In her efforts to inform Canadian policy on violence against South Asian women, Papp (2010) has claimed that it is culture which causes and allows for the abuse and silencing of women in South Asian communities, and argues for efforts that would “serve to blunt the effect of these detrimental and destructive cultural traditions” while encouraging “a systemic acceleration of Canadianization with regard to

gender equality” (p. 10). According to Papp, violence against women in Western societies is infrequent and often a result of sporadic episodes of psychological issues attributed to White perpetrators rather than one underlined by a cultural motive and conditioned by the systemic inequities of sexism and patriarchy. However, the proclivity to violence against women in ‘cultural’ communities, for Papp it seems, is due to an innate attribute of the patriarchal structures of such communities which conditions and allows for violence against women to flourish. Indeed, in the context of violence against White women, we rarely root such violence in the misogyny of Western cultures, especially in light of liberal discourses of “autonomous individuals who exist outside kin and community” (Razack, 2003, p. 91).

As Dustin (2007) remarks:

There is a tendency to credit culture with defining, even controlling, the behaviour of members of minority ethnic or religious groups. In contrast, members of the majority ethnic group in Western societies are not perceived as having a ‘culture’ that identified them; they are regarded as individuals who change and develop within a similarly changing society over time, and for whom culture is a resource or set of activities to enjoy—literature, art, music etc. The result is a simplistic ‘us and them’ discourse in which some individuals appear as rational and autonomous beings while others are victims of their culture without individual agency. (p. 10)

In such a context, “whiteness has no culture, but culture becomes the signifying badge of difference for people of colour” (Jiwani, 2006, p. 14), which, even for racialized peoples, can and does become internalized. It is not unusual for racialized peoples in the context of a predominately White society to negotiate their identities in relation to Whiteness; the latter of which is often perceived as normative and ideal (Handa, 2003). My own study also found that some participants often located themselves vis-à-vis Whiteness, and often attempted to mould themselves in ways which would mimic their White peers in their efforts to not only fit in, but to also hinder acts of racism and marginalization, particularly in the context of schooling. As Razack (2003) contends, racialized women often “fall prey

to seeing ourselves through the white gaze. That is, we learn to see the dysfunction without seeing the strengths of our cultures. These factors may fuel the telling of an oversimplified story of a violent culture” (p. 91).

This assumption on part of some racialized peoples that White individuals do not have culture can be partly understood as a normalizing mechanism. The dominant society no longer needs to remind racialized peoples of their inferiority or subordination as internalized forms of racism often manage to successfully maintain hierarchal and unequal relations of power which causes Whiteness to go unchallenged (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). This indeed shapes the ways in which racialized women have tended to perceive ‘culture’ as only belonging to non-White peoples. Such perceptions also influence assumptions that culture is the encompassing reason for either why women are subject to violence or, as found in my own study, why silence regarding sexual violence and other personal issues is often expected of them (also see Ahmed, Reavey, & Majumdar, 2009). Indeed, we cannot ignore how processes of boundary-making and othering occurring within the larger Canadian society can inadvertently advise women to root their problems within a cultural framework.

I am aware of the debates among scholars such as Bannerji (2000), Jiwani (2006), and Volpp (2003, 2011) who have attempted to problematize the notion of culture in an effort to direct our energy towards charging structural oppressions in the context of violence against racialized women instead, to argue that structural circumstances shape the experience of culture, and to also explain why women are often unable to access formal services or are forced to remain silent about their abuse. These scholars make vital and important points that I do not at all dismiss. However, disregarding culture as an explanatory framework for violence against women, including the silences they are

obligated to respect, can also be harmful and counter-productive to our efforts to develop more inclusive services for racialized women, both within and outside of higher education. And I also disagree with the assertion that structural factors alone should be accounted for when trying to understand the forces of culture in racialized women's lives, particularly in the context of internal gender dynamics and violence.

I vehemently disagree with essentialized narratives of racialized communities having a proclivity to violence or encouraging the silencing of women, as Papp (2010) has repeatedly postulated through one-sided narratives which she does not extend to White communities. However, revelations made from her work with South Asian victims of sexual violence—women who have located culture as a pervasive element in their lives and why they have been subject to silencing—cannot be ignored, either. The same conclusions made in Papp's work about women's use of culture to make sense of their experiences and their silences regarding disclosure has also been found in other studies (see for example Cowburn, Gill, & Harrison; Reavey, Ahmed, & Majumdar; Stermac, Horowitz, & Bance, 2017), including in my own. Some participants in my study drew on cultural frameworks as they discussed familial regulations and gender norms, including the pressure to remain silent about personal issues in the name of reputation. Indeed, we must think about what the implications are on part of racialized feminist scholars for undermining or ignoring articulations of culture in women's narratives, especially when we are expected to value women's voices and account for differences among women in an effort to challenge universalizing conceptions of gender and lived experiences.

This predicament has weighed heavily on me as I have admittedly struggled with how I was going to address and weave a discussion of culture into my analysis without giving further justification to the prevalence of racist stereotypes of minority women and

minority communities. As Razack (1994) reminds us, bringing any discussion of culture to the attention of White society is ultimately risky. We do risk perpetuating discrimination towards women and their communities while validating deeply held racist views about non-White peoples, given that “it is the dominant group who controls the interpretations of what it means to take culture into account” (p. 869). But not speaking of culture has its own implications as well. In the context of self-blame and family honour vis-à-vis disclosure, as this chapter will reveal, racialized women do face obstacles that are rooted in cultural specificities, matters which, if overlooked and ignored, will undoubtedly leave unchecked cultural practices that inform and maintain unjust internal gender dynamics which do harm women. As Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2008) pointedly write in response to the construction of veiled Muslim women and girls in education:

while we argue for the need to move beyond, and indeed to interrupt, reductive and simplistic attempts to cast the Muslim subject in terms which reign and invoke binaries of impugned fundamentalist Islam and the idealized West...it is necessary to address the internal dynamics of gender relations for men and women on both sides of this problematic Orientalist divide. Anti-racist approaches to addressing equity and social justice issues in education must be able to deal with such tensions and internal forms of hierarchal power relations within minority communities involving homophobia, heterosexism and sexism, while still addressing broader systemic forms of oppression perpetuated by the imposition of Orientalist and neo-colonialist frameworks for thinking about the marginalized/racialized *other*. (p. 419)

As Martino and Rezai-Rashti contend, what is needed in order to challenge simplistic and persistent Orientalist narratives of racialized women is to direct our energy towards addressing the larger systemic inequities which work at the expense of othering and discriminating against women and their communities, but doing so without obscuring or overlooking the internal gender dynamics which indeed inform racialized women’s experiences within their communities. In the case of violence against racialized women, including disclosure, assuming culture as the sole reason for why women remain silent or

experience the unsolicited burden of guilt and shame overlooks how systemic processes and structural inequities of sexism, racism, and racialization often intersect to shape familial concerns over having their daughters discuss personal issues outside of the family or to access formal services. It also prevents and ignores the concerns minority communities do in fact have in terms of exacerbating racism and discrimination against them.

As will be discussed in this chapter, some participants struggled with disclosing their experiences of sexual violence, which most experienced from outside of their communities, with their families and formal services, contextualizing their reasonings through a cultural framework which codified their feelings of self-blame, guilt, and shame, including the fear of reprisal from their families, and tarnishing theirs and their family's reputation. However, I must stress that no participant disclosed any threat of violence nor any experience of violence from within their families. My reasons for outlining literature on sexual violence, cultural rhetoric, and honour-based violence here is partly due to the absence of research on second-generation Canadian women's disclosure practices within and beyond higher education, but also because this research points to how dominant society often perceives and constructs racialized women at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. As Razack (2003) writes, we cannot avoid speaking of culture because the dominant society already sees racialized women in an inferior, Orientalist light anyway.

Second-generation racialized women, which most participants in this study are, are also situated at a very peculiar intersection. In the face of White normalization and myths of liberated Western women, they are imagined and often marked as women who experience a "culture clash" as they mediate the norms of their 'traditional' families with

the ‘freedom’ offered to them by the dominant society (Stroink & Lalonde, 2009; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). They are also often assumed to be fearful of their communities, silenced, passive, and subject to control, regardless of whether or not that fear or regulation is a real fact. And this not entirely without justification, either. Some minority communities do in fact adopt cultural practices to regulate and silence women, which leaves women who have experienced sexual violence from within and outside of their communities with the heavy burden of remaining silent and not utilizing services that are intended to help them. As research has shown, women in communities do often bare the burden of protecting and carrying on the customs and traditions of their families, as well as perpetuating sexual codes in the context of ideal femininity, while those who challenge and resist parental structures are subject to repercussions (see for example Bakshaei & Henderson, 2016; Espiritu, 2001;). In this context, “gender and ethnicity work together in establishing definitions of identity, and notions of cultural authenticity helps to maintain regulations around “appropriate” femininity” (Handa, 2003, p. 117).

However, women are also subject to the overbearing and persistent Orientalist gaze of cultural difference, female oppression, and patriarchal control which often prevents them from utilizing and engaging with the trajectories presumed to be available in Western democracies. In this sense, “the focus on culture frequently ignores social conditions of power, privilege, and prestige” (Anderson & Collins, 1995, p. xiii) and how larger structures of oppression have shaped the experiences of racial and ethnic groups. As Razack (2003) pointedly states, “[w]hile I show that to consider the violence as emerging from culture is to reproduce racism, I also argue that avoiding culture is not practical when the inferiority of non-Western cultures is what is on everyone’s minds” (p. 81).

Impact of Familial Cultural Norms on Disclosure

There are myriad reasons as to why racialized women either delay disclosing or opt to remain silent about their experiences of sexual violence and harassment. This includes both cultural as well as structural factors, such as social stigma, gender norms, and lack of access to institutionalized social support, including the fear of being met with racist presumptions and not being effectively helped. As Gill (2004) writes:

One barrier to disclosure is victims having to decide what to do in light of what they believe are their options. They have to understand who might be able to help them (Smith 1993), and this understanding can be affected by the notions of their homes and community. Such norms might include loyalty to family members, protecting the privacy of the family and its honour, and not trusting those outside one's own ethnic or social group. (p. 478)

Several participants who identified as South Asian and East Asian in the present study readily discussed and referenced how their family's emphasis on cultural norms, including appropriate gender norms, shaped how they internalized notions of self-blame and guilt while also limiting their decisions to disclose to their families as well as to social provisions.

However, it is important to note that not every participant who identified as one of these two subgroups discussed the prevalence of culture or even mentioned how their family's ethnic backgrounds effected how they felt following their experience of sexual violence and harassment, or the impact either had on disclosing. For example, among the six East Asian participants in this study (the largest subgroup of participants), three identified as Chinese and each of these participants referenced how culture affected their experiences of sexual violence, from self-blame and guilt, to disclosure. The other East Asian participants, one who identified as Korean, and two others who identified as Vietnamese and Laotian, and Japanese and Hispanic, did not reference how parental culture influenced their experience of sexual violence or their disclosure processes. The same can

also be said about how some South Asian participants contextualized much of their responses within a cultural framework while one participant did not. These notable differences are important to consider, shedding light on the impossibility of generalizability as well the need to refrain from clumping subgroups together. Existing research on the experiences and disclosure behaviours of East Asian and South Asian women in North America has been unhelpful in delineating between women participants, largely discussing women together without identifying ethnic differences. Although a recognition of socio-economic differences may have provided some value here, the limitations of my study, including participants' lack of discussion regarding class, could not give further support to this. Indeed, this has implications for our efforts to not only develop culturally applicable services for racialized students in the context of higher education, but it also has implications for our efforts to theorize and understand the impact and intersections of social identity on the experience of sexual violence, self-blame and guilt, and disclosure.

While essentializing the myriad cultural, geographical, religious, economic, and ethnic differences within and between South Asian and East Asian women into one surely risks minimizing the unique experiences and different circumstances of various racial and ethnic groups, the low number of participants from each subgroup included in this study, including time constraints and the limitations of a doctoral study, has put limits on my ability to fully traverse the disparities within and between each group. However, the results of my study reveal that despite cultural, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic differences between participants who addressed the issue of culture, their responses illuminated similar patterns and identified parallel reasons regarding the impact of familial cultural values and norms. This included cultural disavowal of personal issues for the sake of family reputation; cultural beliefs in regard to interactions between unmarried men and women; cultural

beliefs regarding women and sex before marriage; and family honour (also see Bacchus, 2017; Reavey, Ahmed, & Majumdar, 2006; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000; Yamashiro & Matsuoka, 1997).

In “collectivist cultures”, which the literature has described in relation to South Asian and East Asian communities, there is a general attitude that the behaviour of one person reflects the actions of the entire family (Maiter & George, 2003; Lu, McGinn, Xu, & Sylvestre, 2017). This “family and group-oriented structure views the individual as a representative of the family...and there is considerable pressure to maintain harmony and minimize any actions that would potentially jeopardize the family and community” (Abraham, 2000, p. 19). As Somerville and Robinson (2016) write of the conflicting educational values of second-generation South Asian-Canadian children and their parents, their study illuminates the larger attitude of parents that non-compliance to family values and aspirations brings dishonour to the family, which places pressure on children to act in culturally appropriate ways. In the present study, family emphasis on reputation and ‘saving-face’ expected some extent of silence from them as they negotiated the implications of disclosing sexual violence and harassment to either their families or formal services, among other personal issues, and acting in culturally applicable manners for the sake of their families and their own reputations.

Having been socialized to downplay or ignore sensitive or taboo subjects, women were conditioned with the presumption that any concern that could be viewed as a blemish to one’s reputation and family was best to avoid speaking of or bringing attention to; minimizing the chances of private matters becoming public revelations. For women specifically, this included not speaking of premarital sex, mental health, and sexual violence, which interlocked together in several of the participants’ narratives. This

undoubtedly influenced some women's personal feelings following their experiences of sexual violence and harassment, as well as their decisions to disclose to family, peers, and formal services. For several of the participants in the present study, a combination of cultural expectations and pressures to remain silent, including the obligation to act according to cultural proscriptions, increased their feelings of self-blame, guilt, and shame, as well as their concerns for being socially stigmatized in their communities—to the extent to which several women felt that disclosure was not an option available to them (also see Ahmad et al., 2009).

Self-Blame, Shame, and Guilt

As Harrison and Gill (2019) contend, given the strong association between a woman's behaviour and her family's honour:

guilt, honour and shame are intimately connected: if women transgress boundaries in the eyes of their families, they are often considered shameful, guilty and dishonourable. This prompts dichotomized thinking in terms of what is acceptable and what is shameful (e.g. 'virgin' versus 'whore'), often leading to masculine and feminine stereotypes being encouraged in an attempt to control sexual behaviour. (p. 513)

Self-blame and shame, and feeling as though they had somehow deserved their abuse are common responses felt by all women regardless of ethnic, religious, or racial background in the aftermath of sexual violence and harassment, which often discourages women from disclosing (McCormack et al., 2005; Sable et al., 2006; Smith & Cook, 2008; Sudderth, 1998; Weiss, 2010). However, in the present study, some participants situated their experiences within a cultural framework which interconnected with gender, ethnicity, and religion; pointing to how cultural norms emphasized by their families shaped their feelings of self-dispraise and shame due to notions regarding appropriate male-female interactions

and gender norms, and acting in culturally and religiously appropriate ways. This was particularly emphasized by Aisha, Perveen, Anitha, Chuntao, and Lucy.

A devout Muslim who attended mosque, Aisha had strong convictions about keeping her virginity until marriage; a religious principle which was reinforced by her Pakistani family from a young age. Any interactions with men, such as shaking hands, hugging, and even socializing were frowned upon by her family's emphasis on cultural and religious values, which contributed to shaping her identity as a Muslim woman. By university, though, Aisha began testing the boundaries of her family's restrictions, partly to fit in with her nearly-all White classmates, and partly as a response to the racism and exclusion she experienced throughout her education and her experiences with the larger public. As Zine (2001) writes of Muslim youth in Canada, "[c]ompounded by racism and Islamophobia, these challenges fundamentally target the maintenance of Muslim youths' religious, racialized, ethnic and gendered identities" (p. 401). Aisha stopped wearing the veil, began socializing with men, and started dating. Nonetheless, her feelings about her virginity persisted. As a critical signifier of her cultural values and religious convictions, Aisha's virginity mattered to her, and she was unwilling to compromise it even when her boyfriend would pressure her into having sex. Despite her attempts to stop him, though, she was eventually pressured into sex, and lost her virginity.

Aisha did not immediately process this incident as an assault, and explained that it was only after she confided in a friend at a much later time that she realized the extent of the violence that she had experienced. When I asked Aisha why she was initially resistant to accepting that she had been sexually assaulted, she explained the heavy burden of deeply entrenched cultural stigmas and negative connotations that being a sexually assaulted woman carried; something that was undoubtedly negotiated through the intersections of her

identity as a woman, a Muslim, as well as Pakistani. Perhaps what was equally concerning for Aisha was that she had lost her virginity, a central marker of her self-identity as an unmarried woman, and a symbol of her religious convictions. Although Aisha had experienced various degrees of sexual violence prior to this specific incident, which I discussed in an earlier chapter, she explained that previous instances were:

awful and a violation of everything...[but] I could still say that I'm a virgin. At least it didn't go all the way...he took part of my identity away. It wasn't just about being a virgin. He took part of my identity away. And it took me a long time to realize this.

Aisha's response above can be partly explained through a religious understanding, given that in Islam, premarital sex is frowned upon and forbidden (Chakrobarty, 2010). Coupled with cultural norms and familial values which expect unmarried Muslim women to remain chaste and to refrain from having sexual relations with men, it is not surprising that Aisha would reflect on her sexual assault, and the loss of her virginity, as being an affront to her identity as an unmarried woman, which intersected deeply with her identity as a Muslim. She also feared that disclosing to her family or Muslim friends would not only put her Muslim faith into question, but she would also be blamed, which I also discussed in the previous chapter. This factored into why Aisha was unable to disclose to her family, Muslim peers, or formal services.

For others, sexual violation also triggered feelings of self-blame; a sentiment which participants contextualized through a cultural understanding. Perveen, a second-generation Afghan-Canadian who is now pursuing a graduate degree, explained that since her undergraduate studies, she has been subject to several episodes of inappropriate interactions with men that were sexual in nature and deeply emotionally and mentally distressing for her. This ranged from inappropriate touching, pressures or expectations to have sex or

“hook up”, and receiving sexually explicit comments from men, male friends, and an ex-boyfriend. Recounting one of these troubling incidences, Perveen explained how her ex-boyfriend had grabbed her chest in front of his male friend to make the claim to his friend that she was a “size B”, which prompted the friend to reach across to grab her chest before Perveen pushed his hand away. Although both her ex-boyfriend and his friend played it off as a mere joke, this incident contributed to the already distressing feelings Perveen was experiencing. Her numerous experiences with harassment, inappropriate touching, sexual jokes, comments, and pressures to have sex began to take a severe toll on her mental health as she evaluated her actions and her position as a woman through a cultural understanding,

I feel grimy. I feel like... sometimes I feel gross. Like, I tell myself that I shouldn't have engaged in situations like this. Like, my family is very liberal, but most Afghani families are not, that I know, at least in my community, so even interacting with guys, like, it's a no-no. You shouldn't be hugging guys, you shouldn't be hanging out with guys. And I'm like, okay, well, am I bad person for doing that? Do I deserve this treatment because I'm putting myself in these situations? I know that's not true, but sometimes I still, my mind, when I'm anxious, like, that comes into my head for sure, and I can admit that it does.

Perveen explained the impact of cultural rhetoric and norms as she contemplated why she was the target of these multiple incidences, which led her to internalize a sense of shame which was illuminated by feelings of ‘griminess’. This resulted in her feeling as if she was somehow ‘tainted’ as a consequence of her actions and behaviours; internalizing the onus of blame upon herself. Given the cultural belief that it is inappropriate for unmarried women to interact with men, the perception of her interactions with men convinced her to evaluate her actions and perpetuate feelings of self-blame. Perveen’s comment above demonstrates the conflicting nature of her feelings—knowing that the incident was not her fault, but still trying to grapple with the possibility that her experiences were somehow deserved.

Similar feelings resonated with Anitha, a second-generation Sri Lankan-Canadian who also referenced how cultural rhetoric concerning blame deeply affected how she perceived her sexual assault during her undergraduate studies. Like Aisha and Perveen, Anitha, too, found it difficult to discuss her experience as a result of this while perceiving her sexual assault as a consequence of her own actions. While she was at a local nightclub frequented by university students, Anitha met and danced with a male student. Before she knew it, she was sandwiched between the male student and another male, who came up from behind her while she was dancing with his friend. Using the large crowd, loud music, and dim lighting to their advantage, the two men began touching and grabbing Anitha as she was caught between them. Although several years have passed since this incident, having come to terms with the fact that it was not a fault of her own, Anitha explained that at the time, though, she believed that what had happened to her was due to her own actions as she spoke of the “blaming” nature of Sri Lankan culture:

I guess like going out is normal but being in that situation, I think you process it as you putting yourself in that situation. So, there is that logical piece where I recognize that it's not my fault and the response is normal. But there's that emotional piece where I just...again, it comes a lot from the culture because the culture is very blaming, you grow up in that environment where your family doesn't really support you through mistakes and help you learn. It's that they acknowledge that a mistake was made and more condemning, you know, you should've known better.

For Anitha, self-blame was conditioned by the cultural belief that she put herself in a risky situation, having gone to a nightclub, drank, and wore clothes that some would consider as “asking for it”; a social rape myth and misconception that often works to revictimize all women, regardless of racial or ethnic background (see Moor, 2010).²¹ This presumption

²¹ A *Washington Post* report found that 6 out of 10 women on college campuses believed that women who go to parties wearing “provocative” clothing are “asking for trouble” (See Anderson & Clement, 2015).

partly influenced why Anitha refrained from disclosing as she situated her feelings following her experience of sexual violence within a cultural framework.

Chinese and Chinese-Canadians participants in this study expressed similar sentiments as those discussed above, explaining that in the moments after their experience of sexual violence, they internalized a cultural narrative that it was due to their own actions. Research on the experiences of sexual violence against East Asian women in the United States and Canada is limited, partly given that East Asians report the lowest rates of sexual violence in comparison to other racial groups (Bryant-Davis, Chung, & Tillman, 2009; La Flair, Franko, & Herzog, 2008). However, the findings of this study, coupled with reports that have found that East Asians are less likely to disclose sexual violence, speaks to how cultural attributes may discourage women from disclosing. Indeed, some research has found that East Asians often hold negative attitudes toward seeking help from mental health services and fear dishonouring their families by discussing personal problems (Sue, 1994; Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel, & Baig-Amin, 2003). Luo (2000) found that most of the Chinese participants in their study of sexual violence in domestic relationships in China did not disclose their rape to family or friends out of fear of being held responsible or blamed and feared bringing shame and disgrace to their families. Participants in the present study expressed a sense of feeling ashamed for having been subject to sexual violence, describing that this was underlined by cultural feelings towards sexual relationships among unmarried individuals, which would be considered a stain on the family.

Lucy had trouble delineating whether her experience with a member of her resident within the first couple of weeks of her start as an undergraduate student was consensual or not given that she did not say no to her perpetrator's advances. Nonetheless, she explained that the sense of guilt that resonated with her following the experience largely sprung from

cultural norms which emphasized that Chinese women should not have sexual relationships with men outside the confines of marriage, which made it uncomfortable for her to speak of her experiences with the residence managers who expected her to disclose despite her wishes, which I addressed in the previous chapter. Having been raised in China, Chuntao, an international student, provided more insight into Chinese cultural norms with regards to gender relationships and sexual relations, describing how male and female interactions such as touching, kissing, and sex are often stigmatized outside of marriage, which regulated how she conducted herself in romantic relationships. Despite being in a long-term, committed relationship, Chuntao felt that kissing and touching her boyfriend should be limited. Although this cultural proscription shaped why she often rejected her boyfriend's advances to have sex, her boyfriend nonetheless tried to have sex with her, getting as far as attempting to insert his penis into her while she was laying in bed, trying to sleep. Chuntao explained that her boyfriend's attempt to have sex with her was a scary experience, situating her reasons by saying: "I was just scared because I had never had sex with a boy before, because of my traditional roles I'm afraid."

Although self-blame and guilt are common feelings that all women experience in the aftermath of sexual violence and harassment, my findings show that for many racialized women, cultural norms are often adopted as an explanatory framework. As their narratives reveal, gender is constructed through cultural proscriptions which women negotiate as they consider their experiences of self-blame and guilt vis-à-vis their gender, which ultimately had implications for their ability to disclose to either their families, peers, or formal services. As Gill (2004) succinctly demonstrates, there is often a tight rope that racialized women have to walk:

If women speak out against the violence perpetuated against them they are often blamed for its occurrence and forced to carry the burden of shame. If the violence is hidden to avoid dishonouring the family, then again, it is the woman who bears the burden of silence and social isolation. (p. 479)

Given participants internalized cultural norms which emphasized the implications of sexual relations between unmarried men and women, women's experiences of self-blame and guilt further prevented them from disclosing to their parents. In fact, only two participants in this study, Nicole and Chuntao, disclosed to their parents. Nicole, who is Irish-Guyanese-Canadian, did not address the issue of culture when explaining her experience of sexual violence, and did not contextualize disclosure to either her parents or formal services within a cultural context. Although Chuntao did not disclose the specific experience she had with her boyfriend to her father, which I discussed in the previous section, she did tell him about another incident she had encountered with her former male roommate. This roommate would often touch her shoulder and her feet, and tried to kiss her on a number of occasions, repeating what she noted above: that men and women should not physically touch unless they are married. Chuntao told her father about her roommate's inappropriate actions, to which her father responded by suggesting that she must have done something to provoke him.

Growing up, Anitha explained that she had to internalize a sense of silence; silence when it came to any issue that may have been considered stigmatizing or damaging to one's familial honour or reputation. She learned this from a young age, Anitha said, when she experienced sexual harassment in high school and disclosed the event to her parents. Between not being believed and concerned about the potential repercussions of saying that she had been sexually assaulted as a university student, Anitha felt that disclosing the sexual assault she experienced at a club would have been riddled in assumptions of disbelief,

blame, and concern for familial reputation. Speaking to the impact that cultural norms had on shaping her silences, as well as her unwillingness to disclose to her parents or any informal or formal service, Anitha said:

Growing up like if I ever went through stuff that was part of a more stigmatized nature, it was not talked about. Like it was really not talked about. Even in situations where it should've been. Yeah, it wasn't even just a point of immediate family not talking about it or glossing over it, but you have to make sure that it doesn't get outside of the family. So, there's always that general point. There is a lot of lying to hide anything that looks like a blemish from other people...I think a lot of it caused me to be quiet, to start. Growing up in that culture, you kind of have a lot of anxiety instilled into you. Like, you don't make a fuss, you don't draw negative attention, because it can come back and effect how your family is perceived. There's a lot of that. So, I was just quiet a lot, I didn't want to upset my parents or cause some kind of issue. There's also the fact that if you, even if what you're saying is true, if the school hypothetically doesn't believe you and it tarnishes your own reputation through the process, your family will get upset because now, you've effected all of these different domains. So, I think a big part of it was staying quiet.

Anitha explained that cultural scripts conditioned her to not reveal personal matters to either her family or university given the risk of effecting and hurting her family while potentially staining her own character. She also refrained from speaking about anything related to sex with her family, both considered to be taboo and stigmatizing. This was a sentiment which was also found in Tambiah's (2004) study which showed that Sri Lankan women often choose to remain silent about experiences associated with sexual behaviour outside of marriage. However, Sangita, who was also Sri Lankan, did not speak of culture when explaining why she did not disclose her experience to her family. Between Anitha's fear of being blamed for her assault, the stigmatizing connotations of being a sexually assaulted woman, her concern for bringing shame to her family, and potentially tarnishing her image as well as her family's, Anitha chose to remain silent. This also factored into why Anitha was unwilling to disclose to formal services or seek the help of peers.

Such cultural proscriptions even extended to influencing how Anitha responded to her perpetrators. Carrying on the discussion that silence is necessary to not draw attention to herself or her family, she explained:

I froze, and I didn't know how to respond to it because it was so ingrained in me to not make a fuss about something. So, it was like those things, almost like they battle in your head for like 5 seconds, you don't know how to respond because there is what you want to do in that moment and what you've been socialized to do, so that was probably the most apparent way that I noticed that conflict...I just froze. I didn't...that was the most I realized that I wanted to do something, like okay, I'll scratch them, or I'll do this, but it was weird. I think this is where the cultural piece comes in. I had a lot of anxiety. As ridiculous as it sounds, anxiety about, you know, will I get in trouble if I hurt them? Like, if I stick my nail in their eye, will I get in trouble? So those two trains of thought operating at the same time just became paralytic.

Anitha's concern for what would happen if she tried to fight her perpetrators off, or at least react to them, and the possible consequences that this might have had for her was underlined by a cultural frame which discouraged her from reacting until a friend intervened, pulling Anitha away from the two men. This is an interesting finding which provides insight into how women respond to perpetrators, which I have found little research on. This also speaks to why an intersectional framework is relevant to further exploring this.

For Monica, expressing emotional concerns and personal problems were also frowned upon in her Chinese-Canadian household. Imagined as signs of weakness, embarrassment, and a stain on family honour, she explained that: "You have to be strong all the time. Ummm that any struggle that you had to go through...like there is a concept of not losing face, it's almost like embarrassing to show weakness." This made it difficult for Monica to open up to her parents, which started from a young age, when she refrained from telling them about the bullying, severe racism, and explicit name calling she experienced from classmates throughout her schooling. Having grown up with the impression that she had to 'save face' and not show weakness, Monica explained that this caused her to refrain

from disclosing her sexual assault to her parents due to cultural views about sexuality and concerns about losing face. She also did not discuss her struggles with mental health, which sprung from a combination of her experiences with racism she experienced in school, cultural expectations of her parents, and sexual violence. Feeling that she was not effectively supported by her parents, disclosing her experience to anyone was difficult for her:

For me that kind of struggle was really intertwined with my struggles with mental health. And that was something that I had a lot [she emphasized ‘a lot’] of trouble with. I dealt with things alone. I started to kind of start opening up, but it was hard to overcome the feeling that I was being burdensome.

Monica was sexually violated by her male classmate during an overnight trip with members of her university program. Given the cultural norm associated with not disclosing personal issues out of fear of not only expressing weakness, but appearing to be a burden, Monica struggled with the idea of seeking help and disclosing from a cultural standpoint, particularly to her parents.

Problematizing the Culturalization of Silence: Implications for Higher Education

In speaking of the issue of violence within racialized immigrant women’s lives, Razack (1994) writes that “in a racist society any discussion of culture and violence in immigrant communities can be interpreted by white society as another sign of backwardness” (p. 896). She goes on to contend elsewhere that the “culturalization of racism, whereby minorities are seen as culturally inferior, makes any foray into cultural difference risky” (Razack, 1998, p. 83). Indeed, situating racialized women’s narratives vis-à-vis the intersections of their gender and ethnicity with culture, and by extension, religion, always risks becoming a discussion rigged with ideas and stereotypes of cultural difference underlined by the

inferiority, regulation, and oppression of women while confirming White superiority. Particularly in liberal democracies such as Canada, which espouses values of gender parity and sensationalized media stories of violence and the subordination of women within non-White communities, constructions of cultural difference—by way of racial differences—have reminded us that part of the problem of speaking of women and culture is that it is almost always imagined through a lens of tradition, backwardness, and inherent repressiveness. Culture is imagined to be the encompassing and sole factor explaining the attributes and behaviours of why men exercise violence towards women, why families regulate their daughters, and why women do not disclose or utilize available services to the same extent as White women in the aftermath of sexual violence (Jiwani, 2005). In this regard, minorities are framed as outside of the bounds of structural circumstances that appear to have no bearing on their lives, communities, and gender dynamics. Concerns for being further subject to racialization and othering by the larger society, which immigrant and second-generation racialized peoples have grown accustomed to, are also not considered in the discussion as to why personal issues are often downplayed and not brought to the attention of the dominant society. As cultural explanations are granted more currency over structural ones in a society where individualism is stressed, and where the illusion of equity and diversity is perpetuated, the structures of racism, sexism, and economic vulnerabilities, including processes of marginalization and exclusion, are easily erased. Indeed, this works in the service of maintaining larger structures of Whiteness and dominance while perpetuating the marginality and perpetual foreignness of racialized peoples.

It is no surprise, then, that racialized women, including scholars and anti-violence activists, have favoured positing structural explanations to account for why women

experience barriers to accessing formal service provisions rather than allocating it to a problem of culture. However, as Razack (2003) reminds us, not speaking of culture in a society that already views racialized women and their families through an Orientalist lens will not make the issue of culturalization and racism towards such women and their communities disappear. I thus have ultimately come to the conclusion that ignoring culture is not fruitful—neither to women who bear the burden of cultural norms which shape gender relations in their communities and makes women vulnerable to various instances of silencing and abuse, nor is it helpful to our efforts to develop more inclusive services and resources for women both within and outside of the university as we attend to social differences. What is needed instead is a consideration, as well as a problematization, of issues of culture, including internal gender dynamics of minority communities, while simultaneously critiquing broader structural factors which do indeed condition women into silence.

Undoubtedly, bringing the findings of this study to the attention of universities, which are predominately White institutions in Canada and structured by institutionalized Whiteness (See Henry & Tator, 2009; James, 2009), has implications that I am aware of and surely concerned about. Indeed, my findings discussed in this chapter perpetuate much of what the dominant society tends to think of women from minority communities, particularly across Muslim, South Asian, and East Asian: that women from these communities internalize the blaming and shaming of their family's cultural values; that women hone the fears of dishonouring their families and tarnishing their image; and that women are often subject to silencing. These, coupled with concerns over stigmatization and exclusion from their families and communities, plays into validating culturalist and racist beliefs of the dominant society, including those of service providers. As Handa (2003)

points out, "...any discussion of gender relations within a non-white context risks the danger of reinforcing stereotypical and fixed notions of culture, where gender oppression is seen as an effect of culture" (p. 20). Thus, bringing any discussion of women's marginalization from within their communities to the attention of White society, including the university, risks compounding the racism and sexism directed towards not only women, but further racializing and marginalizing their communities.

Indeed, this fear of exacerbating racism, discrimination, and marginalization is a real concern. Several participants in this study had direct experiences with racism, discrimination, and marginalization at the intersections of their gender, race, ethnicity, and religion within and beyond the university, including in their experiences with formal campus services. They were well aware of the broader stereotypes and presumptions of their ethnicity, race, religion, and countries of familial origin, and through their narratives, they pointed to how structures of racism, sexism, and racialization have contoured these different social identities which have intersected to shape their subjectivities and experiences. As explained elsewhere, minority communities are cautious of familial and community problems becoming public admissions. This is not always due to cultural concerns, either, but fears over being further racialized, stigmatized, and surveilled by the dominant society. For example, Davis (2000) and Collins (2004) have both explained that a significant reason why sexual violence in Black communities often goes underreported is due to concerns that it will fuel racist ideologies and support racial stereotypes of Black men as innately violent. Indeed, in the effort to hinder further racialization and discriminatory practices, a 'culture of silence' persists among all racialized women. As Hoodfar (2001) has written with regards to Muslim communities in Canada, the continuation of racist and colonialist perceptions has meant that communities have had to

struggle to protect their cultural identities in the face of racist and othering processes. Indeed, “how the dominant society constructs racialized communities has implications for the gendered dynamics within communities” (Jiwani, 2003, p. 15).

Marginalization, discrimination, and racism have caused minorities to often cling more closely to cultural values while transferring cultural norms to their daughters. As Espiritu (2001) found in her research on Filipino parents and their daughters in the United States, efforts to regulate their daughters’ gender identities and sexualities were not only to ensure a continuation of cultural values but to resist what they saw as the ‘moral degeneracy’ of White American women. In this sense, Filipino parents used culture to not only regulate their daughters’ sexualities and gender identities as a form of protection—as a means to assert a sexually moral “public face to the dominant society” (p. 416)—but to also reaffirm their self-worth in the context of racial, class, and gendered subordination experienced from the dominant society. Chou (2012) also found that Asian parents often regulate the gendered behaviours of their children as a way to maintain cultural ties. She writes that while such communities “may be looked upon as archaic and non-western, in some ways this socializing process also functions to resist the colonizer. To maintain these cultural practices is to maintain agency and one’s dignity” (p. 36-7).

Indeed, this does not overlook the fact that communities do regulate their daughters. Women in some minority communities are expected to reproduce and carry on the cultural traditions of their families, which includes conforming to norms of appropriate gender proscriptions, and by extension, sexuality and appropriate forms of femininity (González-López, 2004). As Bacchus (2017) contends, “women’s sexuality has often been a site for contesting and conforming to ethnic boundaries” (p. 776), and women are expected to comply with cultural standards of remaining chaste and moral, which often shape women

and adolescent girls' presumptions that pre-marital sex will tarnish their image, self-worth, and marriage prospects (Kallivayalil, 2004). Repercussions for deviating from cultural norms and gender expectations thus puts pressure on women and girls to conform to familial dictates which often follow threats of violence, arranged marriages, and other social regulations (Ahmed, Reavey, & Majumdar, 2009; Bakhsei & Henderson, 2016; Barker-Ruchti et al., 2013; Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). These are very real and problematic practices that do occur within some minority communities, which reflect the gendered dynamics of the community which are often conditioned by cultural norms. And instead of ignoring them in our efforts to not perpetuate and solidify racial and cultural differences, we have to be able to be critical of such practices within communities while also contextualizing our critiques through a structural analysis.

Understanding women's reasons to not disclose to family or to formal services should also, then, be understood vis-à-vis structural inequities of sexism, racism, classism, immigration, historical trauma, discrimination, and xenophobia. Ignoring how complex and intersecting structural inequalities shape women's lives—including that of their communities—works in the service of eroding women's rights while simultaneously silencing them (Piedalue, 2017). Structural inequities of race, gender, class, and ethnicity do in fact constrain the intersections of identity, including the responses of women and whether they are willing to disclose and utilize available services. Gill (2004) demonstrates the ambivalence and negotiations between the two which racialized women have to balance, writing:

Since Asians tend to be seen as a model minority, free from gender violence, an Asian woman maybe constrained by her family and community from going public for fear of tarnishing the Asian image and inviting racist stereotypes of Asian men, thus alienating herself from the community that supposedly provides protection from a prejudiced society. Due to pressure from inside and outside her community,

she may feel she has to deny the abuse to protect herself from being excluded, to maintain the image of a successful marriage, or to minimise significant risk because of the lack of legal and social support. (p. 477)

While women's responses in this study did reveal that 'culture' functioned as a barrier to disclosure, I posit the notion of the *culturalization of silence* in part to problematize how this may be taken up by the university. Expanding on the work of Razack (1994, 1998, 2003) who has written extensively on the culturalization of violence, namely how culture is often invoked by the dominant White society to explain violence perpetuated against non-White women, the culturalization of silence speaks to the implications of presuming women's obligations to be silent about their abuse as a fundamentally cultural proscription. Indeed, the culturalization of silence can easily excuse the university from taking responsibility for the low number of disclosure rates among racialized women or developing effective services that would cater to the unique needs of racialized students given that they presume women's non-disclosure as a cultural attribute. However, I argue that the implication of this is that it not only contributes to marginalizing and racializing women, but it leaves unchecked the university's own ineffective practices which ultimately perpetuate institutional racism.

In my review of numerous university sexual violence policies in Ontario in the previous chapter, most are written through a Eurocentric lens which posits a universalist understanding of sexual violence and harassment. The one-size-fits all approach to this pressing social and educational problem is demonstrated through the failure of most policies to identify the different ways in which women, based on their disparate social identities, not only experience sexual violence, but barriers to disclosure and utilizing appropriate services. This absence has caused universities to not develop services and resources to cater to racialized women specifically, or hire service providers that are well-

versed in cultural sensitivity training. Indeed, this failure on part of universities is evidence of structural inequities and what Ahmed (2012) refers to as institutionalized Whiteness, which perpetuates policy and practice, and indeed, reproduces cycles of silence among racialized women. Without policy effectively addressing social differences in the context of sexual violence and disclosure, and without appropriate services in place, it is easy to fault 'culture' as the central reason as to why racialized women avoid using campus services and blame non-disclosure as a consequence of the culturalization of silence.

Research on visible minority immigrant women and domestic violence services is useful here. This literature has demonstrated that services often avoid catering specifically to racialized women due to 'cultural' reasons, which include consideration of a community's inclination for privacy while respecting cultural differences; the latter of which often assumes that cultural communities expect to keep personal issues within the family (Burman, Smailes, & Chantler, 2004). There are two pertinent issues here that has implications for universities. Firstly, "respect" for cultural differences leaves unchallenged internal sexist and patriarchal structures within minority communities, and institutions such as the university are excused from having to develop services and resources that would help racialized women. Secondly, such "respect" for cultural differences also contributes to fuelling stereotypes that racialized women are expected to be silent and passive. As Volpp (2003) asserts, "invocations of culture can erase the racism of agencies and entities that fail to provide appropriate services to battered women" (p. 399) while placing the onus of responsibility on women themselves and the pathology of racialized communities. Instead of focusing on how the university's lack of available resources, for example, helps condition racialized women's silences, culture can easily become the sole reason as to why

women do not disclose and choose to remain silent about the violence inflicted against them.

As the findings of this study revealed, some women did locate their reasons to not disclose within a cultural framework. And universities have to seriously consider and effectively weave this into their efforts to develop more inclusive policies and effective services. However, at the same time, universities must consider structural barriers as well. As White society, including post-secondary institutions, take cultural narratives as reasons for why women remain silent, it is easy to make disclosure an issue of culture and cultural differences without acknowledging how larger structural conditions factor into women's decisions in the face of racialization and discrimination. As Jiwani (2003) pointedly asserts:

Factors such as isolation, dependency, marginalization, and stigmatization that are part and parcel of making an individual or group susceptible to violence are occluded, negated, or erased in accounts of violence against specific groups of people. Thus when...a minority whose realities are deeply shaped by structural forces mediated through everyday exclusion, marginalization...the violence of these actions are absented from descriptive accounts, which tend to focus not the cultural peculiarities of these groups, their presumed proclivity to violence, or their "risk" to violence. Such accounts fail to take into consideration factors that put these groups at risk in the first place. (p. 19)

Yet as the findings of this study revealed, participants who did disclose to formal services had varying experiences which confirmed their fears of revictimization, racialization, indifference, and lack of help which were rooted in intersectional, systemic inequities. Thus, if universities hope to develop effective sexual violence policies that are intended to help all students, considerations of both culture and structural barriers need to be seriously considered.

Conclusion

This chapter examined accounts of culture and its role in shaping women's silences—namely that of South Asian and East Asian participants—regarding disclosure to family and formal services. Furthermore, this chapter examined how the internalization of self-blame, shame, and guilt following participants' experiences of sexual violence and harassment were rooted in cultural narratives of appropriate gender norms, which for some stood as a critical barrier to disclosing and seeking support. Some participants feared that disclosing would put their religious convictions into question while being blamed for their assault, while cultural beliefs around male-female interactions, sexual relations, and gender norms regarding unmarried women caused women to evaluate their actions while perpetuating feelings of self-blame. For others, familial cultural norms convinced them that speaking of personal issues was embarrassing and a sign of weakness, which prevented them from utilizing familial support or seeking the help of service provisions. Indeed, the findings of this chapter reveal that the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and culture do create barriers for women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment and the extent to which they can disclose and utilize informal and formal services. However, bringing the subject of culture to the attention of the university, including White society, is risky.

As culture is often associated with something that non-White peoples possess, and something that stands apart from any influence of historical processes and structures of racism, sexism, xenophobia, and racialization, any discussion of culture, particularly in relation to women and violence, risks exasperating racism, sexism, and marginalization towards women and racialized communities. Indeed, racialized scholars have opted to not speak of culture because of this, choosing to critique structural circumstances instead.

However, as I argue in this chapter, it is not fruitful to avoid speaking of culture. An avoidance of speaking of culture leaves unchecked internal gender dynamics and cultural practices which do condition women into silence while deterring women from utilizing informal and formal supports. Moreover, it fails to hold universities accountable to developing more culturally appropriate services for racialized women. Not speaking of culture also contributes to reproducing one-size-fits-all approaches to sexual violence and harassment often perpetuated in policy and practice, which is harmful to racialized women who experiences sexual violence and harassment at the intersections of their social identities.

In this chapter, I also posit the notion of the culturalization of silence. In speaking of racialized women, culture, and violence, women's obligations to remain silent is often interpreted as an innate cultural attribute absent from any association with structural circumstances. By critiquing the limitations of the culturalization of silence, I argue that perpetuating cultural explanations as the encompassing reason for why minority women remain silent about their abuse only marginalizes and further racializes women while failing to account for how structural inequities of sexism, racism, classism, and xenophobia play a significant role in shaping their barriers to disclosure. Instead of ignoring culture as a pervasive element in the narratives of some women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment, it is important to acknowledge culture while simultaneously critiquing structural inequities which help contribute to silencing women.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

This study involved undertaking a qualitative case study of 15 racialized women who experienced sexual violence and harassment while attending post-secondary in Ontario. Driven by a concern for the persistence of social inequities which shape the lived experiences of racialized women, and an eagerness to help contribute to bettering institutions of higher education and society at large, examining the alarming reality of sexual violence and harassment has helped illuminate the existence of myriad inequities which shape this pressing social and educational issue—structures of oppression that have often been neglected in the study and understanding of violence against women in Canadian higher education. Indeed, universalist narratives that have postulated single-axis thinking about women have long dominated our understandings of sexual violence and harassment as one which is solely about gender inequality; rooting the issue as one in which men assert their power and dominance over women. Initiatives to address sexual violence and harassment, and efforts to help women who have been subject to violence and harassment, have also perpetuated one-size-fits-all approaches that have done little to help those who occupy social locations beyond the White, middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual norm.

However, applying an intersectional framework to our understandings of violence against women, while expanding our studies to include the voices of racialized women, as this study has, reveals the limitations of this argument and the dangers of uniform approaches. As a conceptual framework, intersectionality systemically illuminates the multiple and intersecting structures of dominance and power women experience in the context of sexual violence and harassment as gendered, raced, sexual, and classed bodies

(Mirza, 2014). When used alongside a qualitative case study method, studies which utilize intersectionality as a conceptual framework reveal the reality that violence against women is not merely about gender inequality alone. As I was driven by the work of racialized scholars and anti-violence practitioners to hear from the voices of racialized women, what my research has revealed is that racialized women “possess credible, unique perspectives” (Hippinsteel, 1997, p. 197) that need to be heard and seriously considered as we move towards developing more effective sexual violence policies and services that cater to an increasingly diverse student population on campus rather than continuing to overlook their experiences in favour of universal approaches. As Skegg’s (1997) eloquently asserts, “[l]istening and hearing others is important for the production of accountable and responsible knowledge” (p. 167). Indeed, universities continuing along a path of negating the intersections of social identities on women’s lived experiences of sexual violence and harassment—from why they are targeted, to their feelings self-blame, shame, and guilt, to the barriers they face in the context of disclosure—will only contribute to perpetuating partial knowledges, inequitable services and practices, and structures of oppression which has implications for social and educational equity.

The voices of participants in this study shows just how problematic it is to overlook racialized women’s experiences. The reasons why women were targets of sexual violence and harassment had as much to do with their gender as it did with their race, ethnicity, as well as religion. These identities did not operate as separate oppressions, but as interlocking; together informing the ways in which participants not only experienced their gender, but also how, vis-à-vis the identities of their perpetrators in inter-racial and inter-racial contexts, women made sense of their experiences of violence and interpreted the actions of perpetrators. A significant number of participants in this study described sexually

violent and harassing behaviours, comments, and actions from men who were racially different than themselves. In a number of these cases, sexualized and racial stereotypes of Black women as hyper-sexual, East Asian women as submissive and servile, and Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian women as mysterious, exotic, and oppressed made women vulnerable to a form of sexual violence and harassment that goes beyond purely being a problem of gender and sexism. With roots in a legacy of European colonial expansion, imperialism, Whiteness, and nation-building, reproduced through popular culture and media channels, these controlling images have helped construct non-White women in racialized as well as sexual frames which men in cross-racial contexts, in their sexually violent and harassing behaviours towards women, drew on. Privileged by their gender as well as their race, systems of power which conditioned gendered, sexual, and racial relations between men and women helped men enact violence against women. This illuminates the simultaneous existence of sexism and racism to which women are subjected to with respect to foregrounding cross-racial experiences of sexual violence and harassment, which the findings of this study contribute to with regards to the field of sexual violence and harassment research.

Moreover, this study not only contributes to extending the notion of “controlling images” to Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian women, but it also contributes to bringing this understudied population of women to the center of sexual violence research in higher education. Indeed, their inclusion in this study is among the first studies to do so, and contributes to understanding their experiences outside of the context of intimate partner violence and domestic violence within their ethnic and religious communities. Moreover, this study provides insight into the intersections of racialization, gendered Islamophobia, and fetishization within their experiences of sexual violence in cross-racial contexts. In this

respect, this study contributes to understanding the racialized dimensions of sexual violence and harassment with regards to second-generation Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian-Canadian women in higher education.

This present study is telling of not only how racialized women's bodies are framed through the intersecting lens of race, gender, sexuality, as well as religion, but how such constructions make women vulnerable to sexual violence. Illuminating how women experience violence and harassment underlined by racialized connotations reveals the intimate and interlocking nature of race and gender. Indeed, understanding sexual violence and harassment in cross-racial contexts requires contextualizing the issue through an intersectional framework which takes into account historical, political, and social contexts in order to situate sexual violence within relations of power and oppression. It is here that we can understand how structural conditions shape social identities and make women vulnerable to violence, and for racialized women, a form of violence which goes beyond gender as a statistic identity unaffected by other social categories. A structural analysis thus needs to be addressed in any examination and discussion of sexual violence and harassment in higher education.

Although less participants who experienced sexual violence in intra-racial contexts interpreted their experiences by drawing on their race, ethnicity, and gender—which was very different than the way most experienced and interpreted sexual violence and harassment in inter-racial contexts—the few who did demonstrates the need for applying an intersectional framework to the study of sexual violence and harassment. Their experiences point to not only the significance of social identity, but the qualitatively different ways in which social identities are experienced in the context of sexual violence and harassment. This study thus provides important insight into sociocultural variations in

terms of the intersections of social identity, and how identity shapes how women interpret their experiences vis-à-vis the racial and gendered identities of their perpetrators. Indeed, this requires future studies to examine the issue of racialized sexual violence in both intra-racial and inter-racial contexts in order to understand the qualitatively different ways in which women experience and interpret sexual violence by drawing on social identities, which has not been the subject of much scholarly sexual violence research with regards to Middle Eastern, South Asian, and East Asian women.

Disclosure was also subject of much discussion throughout this dissertation. Addressing disclosure solely through an educational lens reveals that some women in this study chose not to disclose due to concerns for disrupting their education, damaging relationships with their professors, colleagues, and classmates in their departments and academic networks, and consequently, ruining their future career prospects which alone should concern the university as to the implications of sexual violence and harassment on campus. Other participants, though, found that disclosing to a trusted female professor was beneficial in situations where participants were concerned about growing disengaged from their courses and missing classes following their experiences, which speaks to the need for universities to provide resources and workshops for academic staff in order to appropriately help students who disclose to them. Yet, as this study revealed, women's decisions to disclose, to whom, and their decisions to remain silent largely ruminated the different dimensions of their social identities as racial, ethnic, gendered, religious, as well as classed bodies, which they negotiated vis-à-vis larger structural inequities of sexism, racism, xenophobia, and socioeconomic inequities to varying degrees—within and beyond the university context.

Disclosing to formal services required participants to reflect on their identities to

decide whether they would be effectively helped if they were to disclose. Indeed, individuals who occupy marginalized identities are more likely to question whether they would be helped if they turned to formal institutions (McGuffey, 2013). As women, their exposure to story-after-story of women within and outside of higher education being sexually victimized, often without any consequences for perpetrators, coupled with their internalization of social perceptions regarding assaulted women, deterred some from disclosing. Because they were drinking, partying, and alone in a bedroom with their perpetrator, the fear of disclosing to formal campus authorities or the police was discussed as not only irrelevant, but revictimizing as they would be blamed for their assault, which weighed heavily on a participant's decision to not disclose to the university. Coupled with the belief in other damaging social perceptions which prevent women from disclosing, such as rape mythologies which imagine "real victims" as women who have been violently assaulted with physical bruises to show for, findings reveal the workings of the systemic nature of oppression as women actively internalize narratives that silence them and force them into downplaying the seriousness of the abuse they are subject to. Policy makers and post-secondary institutions must be cognizant of the damaging impact these internalized perceptions have on women's abilities to disclose and seek help and need to address the ways they intend on mitigating this as a barrier to disclosure.

As racialized women, though, their decisions to not disclose went beyond gender alone to account for how the intersections of sexism interlocked with racism, as well as economic vulnerabilities, in shaping their decisions to disclose to formal campus services or remain silent. Frequent and common instances of racialized sexual violence and harassment from men convinced some women that disclosing would be useless. Others, too, subject to various episodes of racism and Islamophobia in the context of the university,

questioned whether they would be effectively helped if they were to disclose given their marginal social positioning in the context of the university and the larger society. This, coupled with financial constraints and concerns about losing an on-campus job, factored into participants' reasons to not disclose to formal services. The social privileges granted to men vis-à-vis the marginalized social identities of the women themselves, also convinced women that any charge against them would be useless. For others, cultural background shaped how women responded to sexual violence and harassment, how they internalized feelings of self-blame, shame, and guilt, and the likelihood that they would disclose.

Participants referenced how cultural norms functioned as barriers to disclosing to their families, peers, and formal services, and situated their feelings of self-blame and guilt through a cultural framework; their comments revealing insight into the barriers that second generation East Asian and South Asian-Canadian women face, who are a significant portion of the student body in Canada that have been largely absented from studies regarding sexual violence in post-secondary institutions. Only a minority of women in this study addressed the issue of culture and the significance it had on how they felt in the aftermath of their experiences as well on their decisions to disclose. Although their comments were significant, the low number of women who addressed the issue of culture also points to the implications of clumping the myriad cultural, geographical, religious, economic, and ethnic differences within and between South Asian and East Asian women into one, which most studies that have examined issues of violence among South and East Asian women have often tended to do.

However, the low number of participants from each subgroup in this study, including time constraints and the limitations of a dissertation, has put limits on my ability to fully understand the disparities within and between each subgroup and why some women

discussed culture and others did not. Indeed, while intersectionality is a useful and illuminating theoretical and analytical framework and tool to understand the issue of sexual violence and harassment, and one which I have found has helped reveal critical insights into racialized women's experiences, I have also found that the use of an intersectional framework, in some cases, requires a more in-depth study which includes more participants in order to understand and recognize the intersections of social identity on experiences more closely. Nonetheless, those who spoke of the issue of culture revealed similar reasons regarding the influence of cultural values and norms emphasized by their families, which shaped not only their feelings regarding self-blame, shame, and guilt following their experiences of sexual violence, but how an emphasis on appropriate gender norms, family honour and reputation, and collectivism shaped women's options and barriers to disclosure.

However, an overemphasis on culture alone as a barrier to disclosure is insufficient as it negates the implications of broader systemic factors and structural inequities, such as racism and sexism, in limiting women's options to disclose. As Razack (1998, 2003) has reminded us, speaking of culture is risky, and bringing a discussion of culture as a barrier to disclosure to the attention of White society, including the university, risks exacerbating racialized and sexist narratives of non-White women and minority communities. Aware of the possibility of reproducing stereotypes against racialized women, I have admittedly struggled with how I was going to frame women's narratives of culture in this study. Although participants drew on culture to describe their feelings of self-blame, guilt, and shame in the aftermath of sexual violence, including their concerns for tarnishing their own reputation, including their family's—both of which converged together to shape whether women felt that they could disclose or not to either formal or informal support networks—

I wondered how I could discuss this without giving further justification and power to Orientalist presuppositions which tend to fuel the racism and sexism of the larger society, and further marginalize and racialize non-White communities. However, I have come to the conclusion that not speaking of culture is ineffective. I agree with Razack (2003) that avoiding a discussion of culture “where we are to fully stay away from cultural details, is not only less convincing but more importantly, such a portrait relies on the liberal feminist concept of a woman who is defined solely by her gender” (p. 81).

Indeed, speaking of culture and not speaking of it has a multitude of implications in a society which often perceives non-White women from certain communities to be regulated by the oppressive norms of their cultures. In such a context like Canada, not speaking of culture risks, at best, perpetuating one-size-fits-all narratives and approaches to sexual violence, and at worst, helping racist narratives of women and their communities go unchallenged while reproducing perceptions of women as subject to the control and silencing of their families. Speaking of culture, then, not only challenges our uniform understandings of sexual violence and harassment, but also the forms of barriers and obstacles women face in the context of disclosure. By speaking of culture, women have the chance to shape narratives which have long marginalized racialized women in Canadian society while contesting the tendency of the dominant society to pathologize them as women who fear their communities and are expected to remain silent about any form of abuse.

However, an overemphasis on culture is also problematic as it ignores how larger structural conditions and systems of power and privilege shape women’s obstacles to disclosure. It is here that I posit the notion of the *culturalization of silence*, which speaks to culturalist narratives of the dominant society which presumes that racialized women’s

obligations to remain silent and not disclose their experiences of abuse are fundamental attributes of a community's cultural norms. While I argued in this dissertation that it is indeed necessary to acknowledge women's narratives of culture as reasons for why they are often unable to disclose their experiences of sexual violence and harassment, I problematize the culturalization of silence given that the dominant society often does not extend the barriers to disclosure to a matter of structural inequities.

Indeed, internal gender dynamics and problematic practices within some ethnic communities need to be challenged given that not speaking of this leaves unchecked unjust cultural practices that do harm women and encourage their silence. But we also have to consider why racialized women may choose not to disclose as a structural issue. Indeed, racialized communities often fear having personal issues becoming public revelations out of fear of being subject to further stereotyping and marginalization by the dominant society (Jiwani, 2006; Davis, 2000). Therefore, we need to consider how women's fears about disclosing, and bringing attention to the repercussions they may face from their families for doing so, has much to do with processes of racialization, othering, and marginalization that non-White communities often endure by the dominant society. These structures of racism and sexism are powerful forces which often shape why minorities do not want to disclose experiences of sexual violence and other personal problems, especially to White society, which ultimately encourages their silence.

Moreover, universities failing to identify the myriad obstacles women face when considering disclosure, and failing to have trained service providers, including appropriate resources and practices in place to attend to the needs of a diverse range of women, emerges as a critical barrier to racialized women and their options to disclose. Indeed, this reveals the institutionalized and structural forms of racism and institutionalized Whiteness that

post-secondary universities perpetuate. In this context, then, universities, for example, can blame “culture” as the reason why women do not disclose and utilize campus services while failing to implicate themselves in why women opt not to disclose to the university.

Only a handful of women who participated in this study disclosed to a formal campus service, which included professors, residence managers, sexual violence services, and the police, most feeling that they have been revictimized following their disclosure to most of these services with the exception of teachers. Women’s experiences showed that service providers appeared to be unconcerned with the difficulties some faced for speaking about their experiences despite the cultural implications for doing so. Others addressed how the racial aspect of their experience was ignored, while racist and sexist perceptions shaped how they were treated. As the results of this study found, racialized women who turn to these services, either willingly or unwillingly, are met with inadequate support which they attributed to perceptions of racism and sexism, as well as a lack of understanding of the racial and cultural dimensions and implications of sexual violence for racialized women.

Although a majority of participants in this study chose to disclose to peers as opposed to parents or formal services, the intersections of race and gender played a critical factor in shaping which of their peers most participants were willing to confide in. Several women noted that disclosing to racialized women was easier for them given that their female racialized peers could relate more and empathize their sexual and racial experiences, and thus, be more effective support systems. However, as Aisha’s experience showed, disclosing to a White peer was easier for her rather than disclosing to her racialized peers who occupied a similar ethnic and religious background as her given that her White friend would not question her religious convictions following her experience of sexual violence. Nonetheless, their experiences with disclosing to peers reveals the significance of the

intersections of identity in shaping who women are willing to disclose to, which studies on peer support and disclosure of sexual violence in higher education have not addressed. Future studies thus must examine more closely the significance of social identity with regards to disclosing to peers, which also has implications for bystander intervention programs increasingly used by universities.

Given the findings of this study, the implications of Bill 132, along with a number of subsequent university sexual violence policies implemented in its wake, are manifold. Failing to contextualize sexual violence and harassment as a systemic rather than individual problem which overwhelmingly affects women risks overlooking and challenging structures which allow for sexual violence to continue in higher education. Likewise, ignoring social differences such as race and ethnicity does little to help racialized women as one-size-fits-all approaches overlooks how racialized women are vulnerable to sexual violence beyond their gender, and how racist and sexist preconceptions, fears of being revictimized, and lack of understanding on part of individuals who occupy privileged racial positions fail to acknowledge. This leads to overlooking how race, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, religion, and ethnicity, among other social identities, shape women's experiences of sexual violence, as well as their opportunities to access support services and to be sufficiently supported. Indeed, when policy makers and universities ignore the significance of social differences, including the historical and contemporary relations of power which condition structures of oppression, we cannot expect that racialized women will access campus support services nor feel self-assured that they will be effectively helped. Indeed, the absence of a recognition of social differences in sexual violence policies has resulted in the failure of post-secondary institutions to develop effective services and resources for racialized women while contributing to their silences. This does a disservice

to racialized and minority students whose identities and lived experiences are ignored and devalued as they are absent from policies. Moreover, if policies fail to address how students' social identities shape their experiences of sexual violence, as well as their help-seeking and disclosure processes, universities can risk giving power to pathologizing narratives that assume that it is the fault of women and their 'cultures' that they do not utilize services rather than it being a result of ineffective policies.

I do not suggest that women who are subject to sexual violence and harassment in higher education should and must disclose to formal campus authorities. However, (i) identifying the obstacles and barriers women face to disclosing can help universities understand the multitude of barriers racialized women experience and, (ii) this can help universities develop campus services and resources that would encourage racialized students to feel more inclined to disclose and seek support for emotional and mental health problems which often emerge from such experiences while accommodating them with their studies. Indeed, one-size-fits-all approaches to sexual violence and harassment, which are perpetuated through sexual violence policies and campus services, are unhelpful to racialized women who experience sexual violence and harassment beyond gender alone.

As Henry and Tator (2009) write, the university is a White, Eurocentric institution, where both subtle and overt forms of racism permeates, and where other forms of oppression are practiced:

However, as the needs, values, and practices of Canadian society have become more diverse and pluralistic, these anachronistic and monocultural ideological assumptions, policies, and practices, which emphasize Eurocentric domination and learning, are increasingly being challenged by new voices and different perspectives on knowledge and education. The mission of the university, therefore, needs to adjust to these new challenges. (p. 5)

Indeed, as the study body of Canadian universities becomes increasingly more diverse, institutions of higher education need to implement more comprehensive policies while developing more effective services and resources which account for such differences.

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**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study on **racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education** who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a racialized woman (this refers to women who do not self-identify as white)
- Are university students at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
- Experienced sexual violence and/or harassment while attending university at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
- Experienced sexual violence and/or harassment on campus or during an off-campus event affiliated or not affiliated with the university you attend (i.e. bar, party, private residence)
- Are 18 years old or older

If you are interested and agree to participate you would be asked to:

- Partake in a one-on-one, confidential interview with the researcher
- Be audio-recorded during the interview (audio-recording will not be shared with anyone other than the researchers)
- Answer questions which focus on the intersections of your social identity (race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class, sexuality) in relation to your experience of sexual violence and/or harassment

Your participation would involve an approximately one-hour interview

You will receive a \$25 VISA gift card as an appreciation for your participation in the study following the interview

IMPORTANT: If you are interested in learning more about this study and/or are interested in participating, please refrain from commenting on the comment section of this post in order to protect your privacy. If you do comment, the researchers will not communicate with you through publicly viewable channels. Please contact the researchers by email or telephone to ensure your privacy.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:

Shirin Abdmolaei
Faculty of Education, Western University
Email: [REDACTED] Telephone: [REDACTED]

Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Principle Investigator

Faculty of Education, Western University

Email: [REDACTED] Telephone: [REDACTED]

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Shirin Abdmolaei
Faculty of Education, Western University
Email: [REDACTED] / Telephone: [REDACTED]

Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University
Email: [REDACTED] / Telephone: [REDACTED]

In-person recruitment verbal script

Hello, my name is Shirin Abdmolaei and I am a third year Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Education. My research focuses on racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment in higher education. Given the alarming rate to which sexual violence and harassment exists in higher education in Canada, and the lack of studies which focus on the experiences of racialized women, this study will examine how the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality shapes the experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment for racialized women.

I am recruiting participants who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a racialized woman (this refers to women who do not self-identify as white)
- Are university students at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
- Experienced sexual violence and/or harassment while attending university at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]
- Experienced sexual violence and/or harassment on campus and/or during an off-campus event affiliated or not affiliated with the university you attend (i.e. bar, party, private residence)
- Are 18 years old or older

If you are interested and agree to participate, you would be asked to:

- partake in a one-one-one, confidential interview with the researchers
- Be audio-recorded during the interview (audio-recording will not be shared with anyone other than the researchers)
- Answer questions which focus on the intersections of your social identity (race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic class, sexuality) in relation to your experience of sexual violence and/or harassment).

The interview will be approximately one hour, and will be conducted in private but public location where the participant feels comfortable. This can be in a private room at a local library or in a private room on campus.

You will be given a \$25 VISA gift card for your participation in the study following the interview.

Your participation is voluntary, has no connection with your education, and will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, you do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

If you know of any students at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] who may be interested in participating in this study, please share the flyer with them.

This research will hopefully lead to further understanding about the experiences racialized women have with sexual violence and harassment in higher education, and can potentially contribute to creating more inclusive and safe environments on post-secondary campus'. Moreover, the findings of this research can help contribute to understanding sexual violence and harassment against women better, and create more resources to benefit racialized women who experience sexual violence and harassment.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at the emails or telephone numbers provided on the bottom of the flyer instead of asking me questions about the study now. This is to ensure student privacy.



Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Hello,

You are being invited to participate in a study that Shirin Abdmolaei and Professor Goli Reza-Rashti are conducting. Briefly, the study involves a one-one, confidential interview with the researcher, Shirin Abdmolaei, regarding **racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment in higher education.**

You are being invited to participate if you:

- identify as a racialized woman (a woman who does not self-identify as white)
- are a university student at [REDACTED]
- have experienced sexual violence and/or harassment on campus and/or during an off-campus event affiliated or not affiliated with [REDACTED] (i.e. bar, party, private residence)
- are 18 years old or older

If you are interested and agree to participate, you will be asked to discuss your experience of sexual violence and/or harassment in relation to the intersections of your social identity (race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality). Interviews will be conducted in private spaces in a public location where you feel safe and comfortable. Appropriate locations will be discussed once you agree to participate in this study. Interviews will be approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded. Audio-recordings will not be shared with anyone other than the researchers, and your name will be not be used in the study to protect your privacy. **You will receive a \$25 VISA gift card as an appreciation for your participation in the study following the interview.**

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of information about this study please contact the researchers at the contact information given below.

Thank you,

Shirin Abdmolaei
Faculty of Education, Western University



Goli Rezai-Rashti
Faculty of Education, Western University



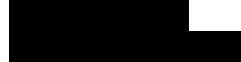


Letter of Information

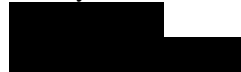
Project Title: Racialized Women's Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University



Additional Research Staff: Shirin Abdmolaei, Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education, Western University



You are being invited to participate in this research study about racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education. If you self-identify as a racialized woman (a woman who does not self-identify as white), are currently a student at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], and have experienced sexual violence and/or harassment while attending university as a student, on or off-campus, and are 18 years old or older, you are invited to participate.

This study is being conducted given the alarming rate to which sexual violence and harassment exists in higher education in Canada, and the lack of studies which specifically focus on the experiences of racialized women. This study examines the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality on women's experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment.

The interview will take approximately one hour.

If you agree to participate you will be asked a number of questions during a one-on-one interview with the researcher. You will be asked about your experience with sexual violence and/or harassment, and the intersections of your race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality in the context of the experience. You are free to not answer any questions you do not want to answer or feel uncomfortable answering. The interview will be completely confidential and you will be assigned a pseudonym (fake name) to protect your confidentiality, and your data will be labelled by this pseudonym. You will choose an appropriate and convenient place to meet for the interview where you feel most comfortable.

Audio-recording of interview is mandatory. The interview will be audio-recorded with an audio-recorder. Audio-recording is being used solely for research purposes. The researcher will audio-record the interview to retain the full interview, to make transcribing and data analyzing easier, and to have a constructive interaction and positive rapport with you during the interview. The researchers will be transcribing the interviews. Direct quotes from the interview may be used in the study with your consent.

The researchers will take all measures to protect your privacy, identity, and confidentiality. The identifiable information that will be collected from you are your name and either your email address or telephone number, depending on which form of communication you used to contact the researcher. If you are reading this, it is because you contacted the researchers via email or telephone to express your voluntary participation in this study. Your contact information will only be used for communication about the study, and will not be retained by the researchers. Your name will only be written on the consent form, which will be stored in a secure, private place separate from your study file. A list linking your pseudonym with your name will be kept by

the researchers in a secure place, separate from your study file. The audio-recording will be labeled with your pseudonym and kept in a safe and secure place by the researchers. Only your pseudonym will be used to label and identify you on notes, audio-recording, the interview transcript, and in the research dissemination. The researcher will keep any information collected about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 7 years. No one will have access to your information and interview other than the researchers. However, representatives of the University of Western Ontario's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of this research.

While we will do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project which may be required to report by law we have a duty to report.

The researchers realize the sensitive nature of this study, and the fact that you have to reflect on your personal experience with sexual violence and/or harassment, including possibly racism, sexism, classism and homophobia. There is no predictable way of knowing how you may react during this study. Given this, the researcher will provide you with a list of resources and contact information of on and off-campus services available during the interview in case you need further assistance.

Given the lack of research regarding experiences racialized women have with sexual violence and harassment in Canada, especially in higher education, your participation in this study will be vital to helping contribute to research and effective strategies to help combat sexual violence and harassment against women. Your participation can also contribute to shaping services and resources to support racialized women who have experienced sexual violence and harassment. Moreover, your participation in the study can help to create more inclusive post-secondary institutions.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know. All of your data will be destroyed if you wish to withdraw from the study.

You will be compensated for your participation in this research. You will receive a \$25 VISA gift card as an appreciation for your participation in the study following the interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your academic standing.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Shirin Abdmolaei at [REDACTED] or Goli Rezai-Rashti at [REDACTED]

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference

Consent Form

Project Title: Racialized Women's Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University



Additional Research Staff: Shirin Abdmolaei, Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education, Western University



I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES NO

Print Name of Participant

Signature

Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Print Name of Person
Obtaining Consent

Signature

Date (DD-MM-YYYY)



DEBRIEFING FORM

Project Title: Racialized Women’s Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti,
Faculty of Education, Western University



Additional Research Staff: Shirin Abdmolaei, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education, Western University



Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences racialized women have with sexual violence and/or harassment in higher education. This study was additionally meant to examine how the intersections of your social identity, such as your race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality, affected your experience. Given that existing scholarly research has examined how issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality are present in racialized women’s experiences of sexual violence and/or harassment, this study was necessary to conduct in order to understand how this unfolds in higher education and within the Canadian context. This study was carried out by putting out a call for volunteers to participate, where you met with the researcher for a confidential, one-on-one interview. You were compensated with a \$25 VISA gift card following the interview.

It is our hope that your participation in this study was helpful to you. We know it took much courage and strength to reach out and willingly participate in a study about your experience with sexual violence and/or harassment. In the event that you feel emotionally or psychologically distressed by your experience, or feel that you need additional services and resources, we encourage you to contact available services:



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The researchers believe that your participation in the study will be valuable to understanding racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment both within and beyond the context of higher education. The results of this study has the potential contribute to further dialogue, services and resources to effectively help racialized women who have experienced sexual violence and/or harassment at the intersections of their social identities, and to help combat sexual violence and harassment on a wider scale. Moreover, this study aims to create more inclusive post-secondary institutions, as well as to contribute to dismantling oppressive societal structures.

The audio-recording of the interview will be kept confidential. You have been given a pseudonym and your identity will be kept secure.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Shirin Abdmolaei or Goli Rezai Rashti.

Thank you,

Shirin Abdmolaei
Faculty of Education, Western University

[REDACTED]

Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti
Faculty of Education, Western University

[REDACTED]

Interview Topics

Introduction and informed consent

- Introduce myself
- Introduce project and explain significance of this project/why I am conducting this study
- Ask participant if they have any questions about the study/research process/interview
- Have participant read over consent form, ask questions, and ensure that it has been signed

Personal information – Getting to know participants

- Where did you grow up?
- What are you majoring in? What year of study are you in?
- How do you identify yourself in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and social class?

Experience of sexual violence and/or harassment

- How did you know the perpetrator?
- Would you mind telling me about your experience?
- How do you think your social identities influenced why you were the target of sexual violence and/or harassment?

Disclosing

- How did the perpetrators social identities influence whether or not you reported your experience?
- How did your social identities influence your decision to remain silent or to disclose?
- Did you tell any professors, on-campus services or administrators about your experience?
- Did anyone from the criminal justice system become involved?

Ending the Interview

- How are you feeling?
- Is there anything else you would like to add or talk to me about?
- How do you feel about having talked with me about your experience?
- How do you think the interview went?
- Has this experience impacted or helped you?
- What do you hope will come of recounting your experience of sexual violence and/or harassment with me?
- What do you think is important for people to know about your experience?



Western Research

Date: 26 March 2018

To: Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

Project ID: 110735

Study Title: Racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in higher education

Application Type: NMREB Amendment Form

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 06/Apr/2018

Date Approval Issued: 26/Mar/2018 09:46

REB Approval Expiry Date: 22/Feb/2019

Dear Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the amendment, as of the date noted above.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Consent form	Written Consent/Assent	05/Mar/2018	1
Debriefing form - [REDACTED]	Other Materials	05/Mar/2018	1
Debriefing form - [REDACTED]	Other Materials	05/Mar/2018	1
Email Script	Recruitment Materials	05/Mar/2018	1
In-person recruitment verbal script	Recruitment Materials	05/Mar/2018	1
Poster	Recruitment Materials	05/Mar/2018	1
Social Media Recruitment	Recruitment Materials	05/Mar/2018	1

Please note that Western's REB approval does not permit you to recruit at these universities without first contacting their REBs. Their REBs may require submission to their institutions prior to recruiting their students. Please ensure that you contact them before implementing these revised recruitment strategies.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Critical Policy, Equity, and Leadership Studies <i>Western University</i> , London, Ontario, Canada	2015-2020
M.A., Social and Cultural Anthropology <i>Concordia University</i> , Montréal, Québec, Canada	2012-2013
B.A. (Honours), Anthropology <i>York University</i> , Toronto, Ontario, Canada	2007-2011

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant <i>Western University</i>	2020
Graduate Student Teaching Assistant, Faculty of Education <i>Western University</i>	2017-2019
Graduate Research Assistant, Faculty of Education <i>Western University</i>	2015-2019

HONORS AND AWARDS

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship	2019
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) (Declined)	2018
Emerging Scholar Award	2018
University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education Conference Travel Grant	2018
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)	2017

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Racialized women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Canadian higher education. *European Conference on Gender Equality in Higher Education*. Trinity College Dublin. Dublin, Ireland. August 2018.
- Sexual violence in Canadian universities. *Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations*. The University of Texas at Austin. Austin, Texas, U.S.A. June 2018.