The Role of Internalized Biases in Understanding and Detecting Sexual Assault Within African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) Communities

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This research is dedicated to ACB survivors of sexual assault. You matter, you have a voice. May peace and healing find you.

Abstract

Drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) remains prevalent in Canadian post-secondary education despite various efforts to address the issue. Much of the literature has overlooked the Black experience and as a result there is limited understanding of the issue among ACB (African, Caribbean, Black) students. This study used an intersectional theoretical framework to explore ACB students' understanding and ability to detect sexual assault as bystanders. Additionally, the role of internalized biases such as rape myths and gendered-racial stereotypes were explored. Using an interpretive phenomenological qualitative approach, five university students took part in a virtual semi-structured focus group. Through imaginary exposure facilitated by a vignette of an DFSA incident, participants were asked to imagine themselves as bystanders. Theoretical and Thematic analyses were used to identify four themes in the data. 1.) ACB women are dehumanized. 2.) Their dehumanization is internalized. 3.) Dehumanization is facilitated by Gendered racial stereotypes (GRS) and influences bystander behaviour. 4.) University institutions offer limited sexual health and safety resources. All participants identified the situation as potentially dangerous. They expressed concern for the victim and indicated that they would intervene. All participants identified the internalized biases and their effects on their perception. Findings indicate that most of the participants identified with the victim. Opportunities for interventions were identified.

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Introduction

Starting post-secondary education can be an exciting time for many as there is increased opportunities for freedom, social interactions, dating, drugs, alcohol and sex. Adversely, the same opportunities pose as safety risk factors especially for students who are not prepared for this newfound freedom (Gross et al., 2006; Kreb et al., 2011; Mofatteh, 2020). It is possible that the lack of awareness and education on these risk factors by parents and post-secondary institutions could leave students vulnerable to multiple risks such as alcohol poisoning, depression, suicidality, sexual victimization, intimate partner violence, etc. (Gross et al. 2006; Hoxmeier, 2016; Mofatteh, 2020). Specifically, they were found to be prominent correlates to the elevated incidences of sexual assault in college and university settings (Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et al., 2011; McDougall et al., 2019; Mofatteh, 2020)

Sexual assault (SA) can be defined as any unwanted sexual activity devoid of the explicit or implicit consent of the victim (The World Health Organization- WHO, 2013). This includes any form of unwanted penetration (vaginal, anal, oral), unwanted touching, attempted rape and unwanted "other non-contact forms". It is unclear whether "other non-contact forms" by WHO (2013) included stalking, verbal victimization (e.g. catcalls), or visual victimization (e.g. receiving unsolicited explicit images). In Canada, 30 % of women and 8% of men over the age of 15 have reported being sexually assaulted (Cotter & Savage, 2018). It is important to note the difference between the survivor rate and incidence rate. The incidence rate is expected to be higher as there is high chance of revictimization, especially for survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Krebs et al, 2009; Krebs et al, 2011; West, 2006). Additionally, studies find that many women did not define their sexual assault as such (Gross et al., 2006; Fisher et al, 2000). This

suggests that incidences of sexual assault, although silent, are very common occurrences in the lives of women.

As the findings suggest, sexual assault disproportionately affects women. These rates are even higher for women who have multiple intersecting identities. A Canadian study identified some vulnerable populations of women in Canada who experience elevated rates of sexual violence with the aim of detecting opportunities for interventions. These groups include women who are young, francophone, racialized, lesbian & bisexual, newcomers, sex workers and disabled (Benoit et al., 2015). For example, studies found that women who identified as lesbian or bisexual were significantly more likely to experience sexual violence in comparison to heterosexual women (Benoit et al., 2015; Cotter & Savage, 2018; Coulter et al., 2017). These studies lacked some key information regarding transgender women's experience, and it is unclear whether their definition of women included both cisgender and transgender women. However, studies found that gender non-conforming individuals and transgender undergraduate students in Canada and the United States (US) experience significantly higher prevalence of violence including sexual assault in comparison to cisgender people (Cotter & Savage; Coulter et al., 2017 Jaffray, 2020; Hoxmeier, 2016; Stotzer, 2009). Similarly high rates were found for women who are disabled (Cotter & Savage, 2019). Unfortunately, due to the gaps in knowledge, what make these groups especially vulnerable to sexual violence remains largely understudied and therefore not well addressed. The unique experiences created because of their intersecting social identities are even less understood and accounted for. As Benoit et al. (2015) stated, this signals the need for additional research to increase the understanding of their experiences with the aim of informing multilevel policies that are much more effective at preventing the occurrences of sexual assault and at supporting the survivors.

Alcohol/Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA)

Sexual assault is perpetrated using the following common tactics: physically forced assault and drug-facilitated assault (Krebs et al. 2011). Physically forced assault is defined as unwanted sexual activity where the survivor was threatened with physical harm or was physically controlled to comply. DFSA involves the use of alcohol or drugs to incapacitate the person and remove their right to consent. This study will focus on the latter.

It has been over two decades since American and Canadian studies claimed that undergraduate women were at greater risk of sexual victimization compared to women of similar age groups within the general population (Fisher et al., 1987; Fisher 2000; Dekeserdy, 1993 etc.). However, rates of sexual violence in post-secondary institutions remain consistently elevated. This is additionally alarming as Statistics Canada found that women's enrollment into post-secondary education continues to increase even during the pandemic and post-pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2022). Therefore, women are increasingly present within the post-secondary institutions that have been shown to be incapable of protecting them.

Despite various efforts to address the issue, the prevalence of sexual assault in post-secondary settings remains significantly elevated. Between 14% to 19% of women reported experiencing sexual assault since they started college (Krebs et al, 2009; Senn et al, 2014). In fact, women in their first two years were found to be at increased risk of victimization (Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et all, 2009; Lasky et al., 2017; Senn et al; 2014). This is disturbingly referred to as the Red Zone. Moreover, revictimized students made up one third of the sexual assault cases indicating increased vulnerability of sexual assault in post-secondary (Krebs et al, 2009; Krebs et al, 2011). Specifically, it seems that individuals who reported experiencing sexual assault before

college were at increased risk of sexual assault in college (Krebs et al., 2011). This relation was significant even to the type of sexual assault experienced. For instance, students who experienced forced sexual assault were more likely to experience forced sexual assault in college. This is potentially an area for intervention as it suggests that there are key vulnerability factors that could increase the occurrence of post-secondary victimization.

Alcohol or drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) has been found to be the most common form of sexual assault in post-secondary settings (Krebs et al., 2009; Krebs et al., 2011; Senn et al., 2014). The reasons for the elevated rates of sexual assault with the use of drugs and alcohol remain uncertain. It has been found that there are four main risk factors: drinking with the goal of intoxication, being unmarried, sexual victimization before attending post-secondary and living on campus (Fisher et al., 2000). Krebs et al., (2011) similarly found that alcohol use was shown to be significantly associated with sexual victimization in college. However, it is important to note that research shows that simply limiting risk factors (e.g. alcohol consumption) does not eliminate the threat and can at times result in the opposite effect (Armstrong et al., 2006; Gross et al., 2006). Findings such as these demonstrates the pervasiveness of this issue. Moreover, studies have found that most DFSAs are committed by someone the survivor knows such as their partner, friend, or acquaintance (Abbey, 1991; Gross et al., 2006).

Furthermore, researchers found that campus sexual assault is enabled at multiple levels from a personal level and up to an institutional level (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bellis et al., 2022). For instance, there is the expectation to binge drink and to “party”, there is a lack of understanding and education of alcohol and sexual safety and there are institutionalized inequalities that lead to the targeting of certain groups (Armstrong et al., 2006; Kendall, 2021). The researchers found that for many perpetrators, parties provide the perfect opportunity to

predate; with many reporting the belief that certain people are “fair game”. This further suggests that although alcohol is a risk factor to sexual assault it could merely be an effective tool as opposed to the predictor; indicating that the issue is not necessarily alcohol consumption but likely the dehumanization and the quiet acceptance of sexual aggression towards certain groups of people (Bakari, 2019; Benoit et al., 2015; Haslam, 2006).

The shift from partying to sexual assault can be gradual or sudden (Armstrong et al. 2006). Perpetrators often use coercion, manipulation of the environment, alcohol as an inhibitor and force when necessary (Armstrong et al. 2006). DFSA is particularly insidious because it lowers a person’s ability to avoid or resist unwanted sexual activity. As well, it inhibits the person’s right to give consent while distorting the definition of consent; which protects the perpetrator from any accountability (Armstrong et al., 2006; Gross et al., 2006; Kelley, 2023). Moreover, DFSAs often leaves the victim confused about what happened and by extension can invalidate their experience and undermine their capacity to report as well as their credibility. (Armstrong et al. 2006; Abbey, 1991; Gross et al., 2006). These reasons can explain why many survivors do not define the incident as assault (Gross et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2006; Kelley, 2023). Furthermore, a survivor’s disclosure of what occurred to them could lead to victim blaming and social rejection at each of the levels (Armstrong et al., 2006). As shown, there are many obstacles in place to inhibit survivors’ safety and their rights. Additionally, acquaintances are the most common perpetrators of drug-facilitated assaults which can add another layer of complexity when it comes to risk detection for victims and bystanders (Abbey, 1991; Gross et al., 2006).

From a bystander’s or party-goer’s perspective there is pressure to maintain the party environment by drinking more and conforming. Both of which prevent the challenging of the

predatory practices of perpetrators and discourage bystanders from speaking up in defense of potential victims (Armstrong et al., 2006; Bellis et al., 2022; Lasky et a., 2017; Tan, 2011). Expectedly, binge-drinking facilitates the acceptance of DFSA. Alcohol intoxication was found to significantly impede bystanders' capacity to intervene by reducing their ability to detect risk (Ham et al., 2019; Wiersma-Mosley et al., 2020). Moreover, a study by Wiersma-Mosley et al. (2020) found that bystanders' endorsement of alcohol intoxication as a positive and desirable outcome could increase the likelihood of noticing the positive effects of drinking (e.g. enjoyment and socializing); while reducing the likelihood of noticing risky situations (e.g. the threat of sexual assault). As a result, those who value binge-drinking and partying might be less able to detect risk and could subsequently have the tendency to victim-blame to protect the party-culture and by extension the perpetrator (Armstrong et al. 2006; Bellis et al., 2022; Lasky et a., 2017; Tan, 2011;Wiersma-Mosley et al., 2020). This suggests that bystanders' beliefs, even when subconscious, can implicitly influence their ability to detect risks. This also indicates that although simply restricting alcohol might not be effective when it comes to sexual assault prevention; it could be imperative to provide education on alcohol use along with its risks and benefits to mitigate this reported "beer goggles" effect (Armstrong et al., 2005; Gross et al., 2006).

The prevalence of sexual assault is alarming given the profoundly negative and life-long effects that it can have on the survivors such as increased risk of PTSD, depression, self-blame, suicidality, low self-esteem, and substance abuse (Bakari, 2019; Benoit et al., 2015; Neville et al., 2004; Resick, 1993; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2016; Sigurvinsdottir et al., 2020). In fact, survivors of post-secondary sexual assault are two times more likely to report symptoms of depression (McDougall et al., 2019). Additionally, the

experiences of victimization or perceived risk of unsafety can significantly affect women's academic performance in university and inhibit their sense of safety on campus (Jordan et al., 2014). Unfortunately, survivors within African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities experience uniquely negative effects due to the combination of historical, racial and gender discrimination among others (Bakari, 2019; Benoit et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2011; Mekawi et al., 2021; Neville et al., 2004; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2016; West, 2016; Zounlome et al., 2019).

Racial Differences

To date there is a shortage of studies that look at the ACB university students' experience of sexual assault in Canada. As a result, many inferences will be drawn using American studies. There is the awareness that there might be limited generalizability to Canadian campuses but given the many similarities between the societies some key inferences can be made. The literature remains inconsistent in gaging whether there exists significant differences in the prevalence and effects of sexual assault across ethnicities, with some studies stating that there are (Armstrong et al., 2005; Gross et al., 2006; Slatton & Richard, 2020; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015) and other stating that there are not (Neville et al., 2006; West, 2006). These inconsistencies are inopportune but serve as a reminder that what stands as most important is the centering of the voices and experiences of the survivors. This could be done through gaining an in-depth understanding of the effects and the treatment of survivors of diverse identities as they might have distinct needs as demonstrated by Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman (2015).

Studies find that ACB students are at reduced risk of experiencing DFSA in comparison to White students. This is principally thought to be in consequence of reduced alcohol-use within

ACB communities, as result of cultural norms and values. The lower reports could also align with low disclosure patterns within ACB communities; especially when an assault does not meet the conditions of what is culturally conceptualized as “real rape” (Kelley, 2023). The cultural belief of “real rape” disregards DFSA as valid and often requires the use of force. This means that occurrences such as DFSA or acquaintance rape would not be considered or disclosed as sexual assault. In contrast, ACB students reported experiencing more physically or emotionally forced sexual assault in comparison to White students (Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et al., 2011). This further implies that although alcohol is an effective tool for sexual violence, it is not the cause. Therefore, as findings suggest, when alcohol is less effective in certain communities, other tools such as emotional and physical coercion might be more prevalent (Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et al., 2011).

Furthermore, studies suggest that ACB women tend to blame themselves for their rape by understanding their assault through cultural attributions (Neville et al., 2004). Research also shows that they are more likely to be blamed by others (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Slatton & Richard, 2020) It was also found that ACB women tend to report high level of loyalty to their community and as a result may avoid “betraying” the ACB men that harm them. As a result, they might be less likely to resist during the attack, to disclose to loved ones, and to report the incident to the authorities (Bakari, 2019; Kelley, 2023; Slatton & Richard, 2020; West, 2006). Consequently, disclosure rate remains relatively low in ACB communities and leads to the effects of sexual assault being dismissed (Bakari, 2019; Kelley, 2023 West, 2006).

Racial, Sexual Orientation and Gender-identity Differences

As intersectionality posits, the compounding effects of multiple marginalized identities can be seen in the experiences of queer women and gender-nonconforming individuals of ACB communities. A study by Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman (2015) examined the impact of sexual assault on individuals with intersecting identities. They found that ACB women who identified as heterosexual reported encountering higher recovery difficulties in comparison to White women who identified as heterosexual. This suggests that racialized individuals might experience sexual assault differently or encounter distinct obstacles when recovering. The researchers detected a similar pattern for ACB women who identified as lesbian or bisexual in comparison to White women who identified as lesbian and bisexual. For example, the queer ACB women reported elevated PTDS symptoms and drinking problems. This suggest that the racial differences remain as well among the lesbian and bisexual community. Additionally, more recovery difficulties were detected for ACB women who identified as lesbian and bisexual in comparison to ACB women who identified as heterosexual. This further illustrates the distinct experiences conceived by intersecting identities even for individuals within the same ACB communities. These experiences could also suggest a difference in needs and signal the demand for different approaches to better support these individual (Crenshaw, 1989). Other studies found that transgender people and students of colour reported higher severity of sexual assault in comparison to White transgender people (Coulter et al., 2017; Staples & Fuller, 2020). This indicates that being racialized and transgender or identified as a transgender person can significantly and negatively influence the level of harm experienced.

As demonstrated, an intersectional lens can bring to light the various vulnerable populations who despite their evident existence are often overlooked (Crenshaw, 1989). This

provides researchers with the rich opportunity to investigate and understand the issue more profoundly than before. Moreover, this approach provides researchers within the field with the ability to create effective prevention programs and support services (Crenshaw, 1989; Daly, 2020). As these findings demonstrate, ACB individuals of the LGBTQIA2+ communities might face uniquely distinct experiences, obstacles, and discriminations and as a result might have different needs (Coulter et al., 2017; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015; Staples & Fuller, 2021)

These findings signal that although West (2006) found that rates, severity, and health effects of sexual assaults between ACB students and White students appear similar, there are some notable differences observed in the student population as well as the general population that could only be understood through further research (Coulter et al,. 2017; Kelley, 2023; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2016; Slatton & Richard, 2019). Moreover, additional Canadian research is essential, especially following the findings by Statistics Canada (2020) that showed a rise in the population of Black women with post-secondary education from 2001-2016.

Gendered Racial Stereotypes (GRS)

Many studies make evident the extensive effects of sexual assault and the obstacles faced by people of colour and ACB individuals (Benoit et al., 2015; Kelley, 2023; Neville et al., 2004; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2016; Slatton & Richard, 2019; West, 2006). Firstly, the devaluation and dehumanization of racialized women through sexual exploitation is a significant part of North American history and therefore embedded into society's consciousness (Haslam, 2006; hooks, 1981; Noble, 2013; Kendall, 2021; Pietsch, 2010). A study by Noble (2013) found that these myths are perpetuated at multiple levels. This phenomenon can even be observed in

popular search engines such as Google. This is significant because Google reflects prominent narratives in our society. It is popular and serves as a neutral, trusted information source for most and for that reason can reinforce negative biases. This history of devaluation must be understood and considered when discussing and studying sexual assault within ACB communities. Unfortunately, that is seldom the case. Instead, harmful, and unfounded racial and gendered myths are unconsciously adopted into our society as stereotypes that are treated as facts (Devine, 1989; Benoit et al., 2015). Devine (1989) found this to be true even in people who consciously try to suppress it. As a result, individuals remain susceptible to the internalization of these myths; which are shown to be detrimental to racialized women and racialized survivors of sexual assault (Benoit et al., 2015; Dupuis & Clay, 2013; Donovan & Williams, 2002; George & Martinez, 2003; hooks, 1981; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Pietsch, 2010).

It is believed that these myths could also serve as obstacles in ACB bystanders' detection and conceptualization of sexual assault (Donovan & Williams, 2002). According to hooks, (1981) and Collins (2002) there are three gendered racial stereotypes (GRS) that are investigated in this context of sexual assault (Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981). The mammy stereotype was not included in this study because the literature did not indicate a link between it and sexual violence (Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981). The likely explanation for this could be that the mammy depicts ACB women as sexless, unattractive, self-sacrificing, and nurturing, and as a result is often studied in connection to ACB motherhood (Collins, 2002; Thomas et al., 2004). The Jezebel stereotype refers to sexual objectification and is used to sexually objectify ACB women. The superwoman is more commonly known as the strong Black woman (SBW) stereotype. Lastly, the sapphire stereotype is seen as harsh and angry and is most known as the angry black woman (ABW). Studies have suggested that these

myths have been linked to bystanders' and ACB communities' treatment and attitudes towards survivors (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Donovan, 2007; Zounlome et al., 2019).

Gendered Racial Stereotype: The Jezebel

The devaluation of Black women through enslavement, institutionalized rape, and sexual exploitation was a customary practice approximately six generations ago (hooks, 1981; Donovan & Williams, 2002; West, 2006). During that time, it was widely believed that a Black woman could not be raped because she was deemed to be inherently promiscuous and sexually liberated. As a result, victims were judged to have wanted the assault and all abuse of Black slaves were viewed as acceptable. Expectedly, this blatant justification led to the normalization and the intensification of sexual violence against these women (Carraway, 1999; Cheeseborough et al., 2020; Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981; West, 2006). From that myth originated the stereotype of the Jezebel which defines Black women as hypersexual, promiscuous, and seductive (Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002); hooks, 1981; West 2006). The stereotype was used to remove White rapists as well as Black rapists of their culpability by redirecting the blame onto the perceived sexual invitation and body of the victims (Collins, 2002; hooks, 1981; West, 2006). Presently, the damaging effects of the stereotype remain (Nobel, 2013; Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016). To date, ACB women are more likely to be seen as sexual objects and as more sexually liberated despite the lack of evidence to support the claims (Bakari, 2019; Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; George & Martinez, 2003; hooks, 1981; Nobel, 2013). In comparison to White women, they are also believed to have had more sexual partners in the past month and to not have used any physical contraception during sex (Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016). Given the extensive and long-lasting effects of this history, it is unfortunate that it is seldom considered in research centered on sexual assault and especially that

of ACB individuals. It is also strange that it is often not accounted for during the development of sexual assault preventions and interventions.

The damaging effects of the Jezebel stereotype can be observed in the way that ACB sexual assault survivors are presently perceived and treated (Bakari, 2019; Donovan & Williams 2002). A study found that the internalization of the Jezebel stereotype resulted in increased self-blame and low self-esteem in ACB sexual assault survivors. This was because the survivors were more likely to attribute their rape to the Jezebel stereotype (Neville et al., 2004). In fact, recent studies have found that sexual objectification of ACB women has been linked to the justification of gender-based violence and an increased risk of victimization (Awasthi, 2017; Cheeseborough et al., 2020; Gervais & Eagan, 2017; Gillum, 2002; Zounlome et al., 2019). Furthermore, studies in Canada and the (US) showed that racialized women were more likely to be seen as promiscuous in comparison to White women. As a result, they were more likely to be blamed for their assault just as they were in the past (Donovan & Williams, 2022; Donavan, 2007; Pietsch, 2010). However, an interesting interaction was discovered among Donovan's (2007) primarily White sample. There was no found difference in blame attribution and in perceptions of promiscuity if the perpetrator was Black (Donovan, 2007). Therefore, it appears that Black victims were not more judged than White victims if the perpetrator was depicted as Black. These findings suggests that the perpetrator's race could also influence how a survivor is perceived and treated. This brings to light the unique effects of intersectionality and further emphasizes the need for research that investigate ACB participants' experiences.

Gendered Racial Stereotypes: Strong Black Woman (SBW)

The Strong Black woman stereotype (SBW), which is known as the Matriarch or Superwoman is one that can also be understood through the history of slavery (Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981; Thomas et al., 2004). Black female slaves were forced to work in the fields alongside the men to survive. Witnessing the capacity for harsh labour in women stood in stark contrast to the White women who were regarded as the typical woman. These women were seen as delicately feminine and primarily held housemaker roles. (hooks, 1981). As a result, the female slaves' contrasting abilities were explained as an exceptional quality of being a Black female slave, which was deemed as inherently different from being "woman". Essentially, Black female slaves were regarded as more closely related to Amazons or beasts as opposed to another expression of womanhood. Consequently, this dehumanization gave rise to the common and modern depiction of ACB women as inherently strong, unfeminine, assertive, and unemotional (Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Gillum, 2002; hooks, 1981).

Within ACB communities, the SBW stereotype is widely accepted and looked upon favorably (Donovan, 2011; Donovan & Williams, 2002). For this reason, its internalization has been shown to have some buffering effects when it comes to experiencing oppression (Donovan, 2011). However, it appears that the negative consequences far outweigh its protective ones. Many studies indicated that the SBW stereotype is found to be linked to depression, social stress, low self-esteem, and reduced help-seeking behaviours (Donovan & William, 2002; Thomas et al., 2004; Woods-Giscombe et al., 2019).

The SBW stereotype also serves as an obstacle to seeing ACB victims as such and can even increase the likelihood of victim blaming (Donovan & Williams, 2002; West, 2006). This

stereotype could be linked to the expectation of non-disclosure of sexual assault in favour of protecting ACB men (Bakari, 2019; West, 2006). In fact, Zounlome (2019) found that ACB women are often expected to be strong enough to defend themselves during incidents and as result are less believed to be victims. This could mean that the stereotype could decrease bystanders' pro-social behaviour through reduced risk detection. It is also possible that bystanders might expect the victims to be able to defend themself. It could also lead to the expectation that the survivor and bystander protect the perpetrator (Bakari, 2019; Slatton & Richard, 2020).

Gendered Racial Stereotypes: Angry Black Woman (ABW)

SBW and Sapphire/ABW stereotypes are closely linked with overlapping traits such as assertiveness and toughness (Donovan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2004). Although few studies find it beneficial to separate the two stereotypes; it is important to note that the SBW is characterized primarily by strength, whereas the angry black woman (ABW) is primarily characterized by anger. As a result, the current study will separate the two. The ABW stereotype is also known as the ABW, and it maintains that ACB women mostly express themselves with hostility, loudness, harshness, and aggression (Donovan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2004). This stereotype can be damaging to ACB survivors in many ways. Studies show that being perceived as less warm and less innocent can reduce the likelihood of being offered support and may even increase the likelihood of violence or assault (Cuddy et al., 2007). Moreover, the same study found that those who were perceived to be highly competent much like SBW and ABW stereotypes were more likely to be neglected and less likely to be offered help. This could explain why ACB survivors' experiences are likely to be minimized as they are expected to be less traumatized than the average person (Donovan & Williams, 2002). Additionally, the internalization of the ABW or

the SBW stereotype has been linked to less help-seeking behaviours, low self-esteem, and maladaptive repression of anger (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2015).

Evidently, the Jezebel, SBW and ABW stereotypes can significantly impact ACB individuals' likelihood of being victimized, being protected, their recovery, their access to support, as well as the quality of that support. Furthermore, these stereotypes are internalized and reinforced intergenerationally, which explains their prevalence hundreds of years later (West, 2006). The impact of these three stereotypes can be investigated in connection with femininity as they stand in stark contrast. Hegemonic femininity can be described as an exclusive ideal of feminine norms. These ideals have been found to contribute to the oppression and devaluation of women who reject or are unable to meet its standards due to race, class, sexuality, and ability (Cole & Zucker, 2007; Davis et al., 2018; Pietsch, 2010). Hegemonic femininity by design was never attainable to ACB women (Collins, 2002; Haaken, 2017; hooks, 1981; Pietsch, 2010). It can be argued that the stereotypes were created to perpetuate the exclusion of ACB women from femininity or the typical description of 'woman' (Collins, 2002; hooks, 1981; Noble, 2013). The authors also indicated that historically and presently, femininity has been characterized by fragility, sexual purity, passivity, domesticity, and emotionality. However, due to sexual exploitation, enslaved women were robbed of the privilege of remaining pure. Moreover, for their survival they were forced to do manual labour and at times given more work than male slaves as a form of punishment. Additionally, they engaged in behaviour that were largely considered to be masculine such as being assertive or working outside of the home (Cole & Zucker, 2007; Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981). In other words, ACB women in North America were repeatedly stripped of their femininity and subsequently stereotyped for it. This

exclusion cycle is presently maintained through the myth that racialized women are inherently and culturally different and inferior to White femininity which could be defined as a kind of dehumanization (Cole & Zucker, 2007; hook, 1981; Moradi, 2013; Pietsch, 2010). An example of this practice was observed following the emancipation of slaves. Former female slaves who strived to participate in femininity and to act 'lady-like' were often harassed and assaulted for their attempt (hooks, 1981). This illustrates the measures in place to consistently exclude ACB women from hegemonic feminine norms.

The lack of adherence to the established feminine norms is central as it prohibits ACB women from femininity's conditional benefits and protection (Collins, 2002; Haaken, 2017; hooks, 1981). However, this marginalization is the intrinsic function of hegemonic femininity. For example, Pietsch (2010) found that victims that closely adhered to the standards of hegemonic/White femininity were better treated and better protected. Therefore, Carraway (1999) and Pietsch (2010) imply that there is a standard for victims, or an 'ideal victim' and that standard is hegemonic femininity. Similarly, Bakari (2019) argued that social, and legal practices perceive ACB women as the opposite of the 'ideal victim' because they are deeply rooted in racism and sexism. In fact, historically the criminal charge of rape referred exclusively to the assault of a White woman, as any assault of a Black woman was not considered to be unlawful (Collins, 1999; Donovan & Williams, 2002; hooks, 1981). Presently, this legacy is evident in the consistent pattern of the mistreatment of racialized survivors in comparison to White survivors (Carraway, 1999; Pietsch,2010). Ultimately, it can be argued that in North American society, a White woman being assaulted is perceived as more important than thousands of ACB women assaulted (Carraway, 1999; hooks, 1981; George & Martinez, 2002). This argument was partially supported by the findings of Donovan (2007) that found that despite ACB women being the most

likely victims of Black male perpetrators; participants were significantly more likely to choose White women as potential victims. In other words, because White women are perceived as more innocent as per feminine standards, they are seen as the likely victims. Inversely, ACB survivors tend to not be believed as victims and are subject to mistreatment and lack of support (George & Martinez, 2002).

As discussed, findings suggest that GRS influence the way ACB survivors and women are perceived today (Katz, Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2007; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2007 Donovan, 2011; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Dupuis & Clay, 2013; George & Martinez, 2002; Pietsch, 2010; Zounlome et al., 2019). These stereotypes are especially ubiquitous due to their historical roots (Rosenthal & Lobel, 2016). However, most of these studies included primarily White samples. To date there lacks studies that investigate the ACB experience and conceptualization of these important topics. This is disappointing given that most sexual assaults tend to be intraracial- meaning that the offender, victim, and witness(es) tend to be of the same race (Bakari, 2019; Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019; West, 2006). In other words, ACB individuals are more likely to be assaulted by an ACB person and if there are bystanders those bystanders are more likely to be of the same communities. However, it can be argued that the lack of literature centered on the population of interest is a result of the biases that this study is aiming to bring to light (Noble, 2013). Therefore, to better understand and even prevent sexual assault within the ACB communities, research on the communities' experience must be prioritized.

Rape Myths

The research suggests that rape myths and GRS could be closely related; especially since both have cultural and sexist roots (hooks, 1981; Vandiver & Dunlap, 2012. It can be argued that they serve similar functions in the way that they oppress and devalue women survivors (hooks, 1981; Gillum, 2002; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012). Rape myths and GRS were found to affect individuals' perception, and behaviour significantly and negatively (George & Martinez, 2002; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Pugh et al., 2016; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021). Rape myths can be defined as internalized false beliefs or stereotypes that are used to justify aggression and sexual violence towards women (Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Additionally, McMahon (2010) found that the internalization of rape myths was significantly related to the reduced intent to help by bystanders.

Rape myths are often used to measure victims lack of worthiness and respectability to ultimately victim blame in a similar way that the Jezebel, and ABW stereotypes are used (Dupuis & Clay, 2013; George & Martinez, 2002; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021; hooks, 1981; Pugh et al., 2016). Studies found that bystanders reported higher empathy or greater intent to help when victims were evaluated as worthy or respectable (Burn, 2008; Pugh et al., 2016; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017). It is important to note that many studies have shown that worthiness and respectability are often antonyms of female promiscuity and heavy drinking (Dupuis & Clay, 2013; Gillum, 2002; Pugh et al., 2016). Therefore, they found that women who are seen drinking and partying or who are perceived as flirty or sexually assertive are at greater risk of victimization due to reduced pro-social bystander behaviour.

Similarly, the studies found that victim blaming is linked to reduced protection. Additionally, findings show that women who bystanders determine deserve less respect tend to be seen as deserving sexual violence (Armstrong et al. 2006; Kendall, 2021). Perceived respectability and victim blaming have also been found to be related to the status, race, or gender of the individual (Armstrong et al. 2006; Dupuis & Clay, 2013; George & martinez, 2002; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017). Armstrong et al., (2006) found that these beliefs can be subconscious as some participants appear to adhere to the belief that people are inherently worthy of respect (e.g. you don't deserve to be mistreated) while also having some victim blaming tendencies (e.g. but what do you expect dressing like that). This suggests that there exists a conflict even within those who reject the myths. Furthermore, victim blaming is linked to reduced protection through bystanders' reduced intent to help (Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Pugh et al., 2016; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021).

In addition to meeting respectability and worthiness standards, survivors are often unrealistically expected to protect and defend themselves during the assault (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). This rape myth aligns with the beliefs from SBW and ABW stereotypes (Zounlome, 2019). An important difference between the two is that rape myths are limited to gender-based violence while the stereotypes can affect all areas of life. However, it is possible that rape myths and GRS would have compounded negative effects on ACB sexual assault survivors. This likely co-existence will be investigated in the present study.

Bystanders

Bystanders are especially important in sexual assaults situations and attempts. Studies have found that they are present in a third of incidents. This signals the potential that through the

proper education, bystanders could be mobilized to reduce the occurrence of sexual violence (Bridges et al., 2021). A necessary first step to bystander pro-social behaviours is the detection of risk (Bennett et al., 2014; Gidycz et al., 2006; Kania & Cale, 2021). Specifically, they found that failure to recognize the risk of sexual assault when witnessed has been found to be one of the biggest barriers to victim safety, and bystander pro-social behaviours**.** Studies have suggested that other possible barriers to risk detection could be environmental such as the presence of alcohol and the ambiguity of sexual cues etc. (Bridges et al., 2021; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021). Some have also found that there are significant links between the endorsement of certain beliefs such as rape myths and the ability to detect risk (Brown et al., 2014; Burn, 2008; Donovan, 2007; Hetzel-Riggin et al. 2021; Loiselle & Fuqua, 2007). Precisely, a study by Pugh et al., (2016) found that risk detection mostly depended on bystanders' evaluation of the woman as a worthy in comparison to situational factors such as alcohol consumption. This further emphasizes the importance of how the victim is perceived when it comes to bystander and perpetrator behaviour (Armstrong et al., 2006; Cuddy et al., 2007; Kendall, 2021; Pugh et al., 2006; Zounlome, 2019)

The literature suggests that the victim being racialized might be related to reduced risk detection and negative bystander behaviour (Donovan, 2007; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017; Wooten, 2017). A study by Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., (2017) compared the detection rate and the intent for pro-social bystander behaviour when the victim was an ACB woman compared to when the victim was a White woman. However, they found that there was no difference in the rate of detection between ACB and White victims. Yet, participants in the ACB victim group had less intention of helping and felt less responsible to intervene. Another study by Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017 found that reduced intent to help was related to internalized racist and sexist attitudes. This current

research aims to expand on the findings of both studies using an ACB sample to understand the effects of internalized biases.

Previous studies suggest that rape myths and GRS could interfere with ACB participants' ability to perceive risk (Burns et al., 2019; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012). The studies by Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., (2017) and Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., (2017) are among the few so far that have examined bystander behaviour in relation to ACB women victims. It is important to note, however, that they used a mixed sample of primarily White participants. Given that most violent crimes are intraracial it is imperative that future studies consist of primarily ACB individuals when studying ACB victims and survivors (Bakari, 2019; Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019). Thus far, the literature review reveals no similar study done in ACB communities.

As illustrated, most of the studies that have looked at bystander behaviour or sexual assault detection focused primarily on White samples. As a result, the researchers' ability to generalize findings to different populations is limited. This gap in the literature is observed in the reduced effectiveness of educational interventions in ACB communities (Burns et al., 2019; Woten, 2017). This suggests that the ethnicity-neutral approaches to preventions and interventions may be lacking when it comes to addressing other cultural populations. It also calls for conscious exploration in bystander detection centering on ACB participants as no known studies have been conducted. Additionally, even fewer studies have investigated the relationship between internalized biases and sexual assault, especially from the viewpoint of racialized bystanders (Mekawi et al., 2021; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2016). Furthermore, there are various bystander interventions and prevention measures available throughout Canadian universities, but most do not consider the significant impact of the students' culture, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality when it comes to sexual violence. As a result, many of those interventions

have limited effectiveness in ACB communities (Burns et al., 2019). This signals the need to incorporate intersectionality in future studies to better understand and protect those in marginalized populations.

Present Study

The persistent and intricate nature of post-secondary sexual assault signals that there might be a lack of understanding in its complex nature or that findings are not effectively applied to result in positive change. This study argues that it is both, it is possible that the literature and responses were primarily occupied with managing the risk factors (e.g., alcohol, victim characteristics etc.) with limited attention to the community etiology of the problem (e.g. rape myths, inequality etc.). For example, Armstrong et al. (2006) and Gross et al., (2006) found that limiting alcohol use does not reduce incidences of sexual assault and might in fact result in the opposite. Additionally, researchers have investigated the psychological determinants of perpetrators and victims while others have looked at the social /contextual determinants (Armstrong et al. 2006; Casey & Linhorst, 2009; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021; Kania & Cale, 2021). Many have found significant antecedents and correlators of sexual assault; however, from the persistence of the issue it can be assumed that the found correlates might not be sufficient reasons. These findings are important to the literature and to the understanding of sexual assault and have been found to reduce rape endorsement beliefs and raise awareness on risk factors. However, they approach the issue from an individualistic lens as opposed to a systemic or community-based approach (Armstrong et al., 2006; Casey & Linhorst, 2009). This could limit the efficacy and the long-term effectiveness of interventions leading to invariable rates of incidents (Banyard et al., 2004; Casey & Lindhorst, 2009).

Moreover, the individualistic lens reinforces the myth that sexual assault is a personal issue between the perpetrator and victim when it is in fact a systemic issue with multi-level effects (Armstrong et al., 2006; Banyard et al., 2004; DeGue et al., 2012; Wooten, 2016). Sexual assault appears to be a manifestation of the existing inequalities within our systems and at its core is a specific pattern of violence perpetuated against women due to perceived inferiority (Armstrong et al., 2006; Benoit et al., 2015; Bridges et al., 2021). Given that sexual assault is a multi-faceted, multi-level issue, it is imperative to attend to its many levels with a focus on understanding its roots in various communities, especially those most vulnerable (Armstrong et al., 2006; Banyard et al., 2004; Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; Wooten, 2016).

It is difficult to understand the full scope of an issue in a world where marginalized groups are excluded or underrepresented from the literature (Bakari, 2019). It can be argued that all communities are interconnected, even to those who are marginalized. This means that although marginalization disproportionately harms the targeted groups, its effects are widespread. No group, even those with privilege are left unscathed. Consequently, the lack of understanding of certain communities serves as an obstacle to the comprehensive understanding of the etiology and contributing factors of sexual assault in those communities as well as in society.

Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality was developed by Feminist and Critical Race Theory as they found that belonging to multiple marginalized social categories can substantially and negatively impact the experiences of individuals within those categories (Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2004; Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989). The authors found that

the interaction of these social identities created distinct and unique experiences that are not fully understood when studied discretely. For instance, ACB individuals and especially women have reported high rates of depression, anxiety, trauma exposure and PTSD symptoms in comparison to the general population (Alim, Charney et al., 2006; Alim, Graves et al., 2006; Carraway, 1999; Cénat et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2022; Mekawi et al., 2021). Furthermore, Haaken (2017), Bakari (2019), Donovan and Williams (2002) found that race, class, and gender have significant impact on individuals' likelihood of being victimized. They can also exacerbate the effects of the assault on survivors and impact the social responses and support provided during and following the incident. In fact, studies found that ACB women were more likely to be blamed for their victimization in comparison to other women (Donovan & Williams, 2002; Dupuis & Clay, 2013). As a result, bystanders were less likely to intervene and less likely to report the intent to intervene (George & Martinez, 2002; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017). Researchers attributed those bystander behaviours to the internalization of biases (Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Dupuis & Clay, 2013; George & Martinez, 2002).

These findings illustrate the interconnectedness of race and gender and argue that they cannot be separated when investigating the sexual assault of ACB women (Crenshaw,1989; Donovan & Williams, 2002). They signal the need for research much like this current study that investigates sexual assault and bystander response, through the lens of intersectionality. Thus far, very few research on sexual assault have looked through the lens of intersectionality. As a result, survivors and especially ACB survivors are less understood and supported (Cole, 2009; Wooten, 2017; Donovan & Williams, 2002). Furthermore, it is important to note that although past studies' contributions remain significant, they consisted of primarily White samples. This means that the incorporation of ACB perspectives have been severely limited but remain necessary for

the advancement of the literature as a whole. The current study aims to join other studies such as that of Wooten (2017), Bakari (2019) and Keley (2023) . in serving as a preliminary step towards a more in-depth conceptualization of the issues. However, more research will be needed to better understand the intersection of language, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability etc. as this study was limited in its ability to do so.

Women in general have been found to be one of the fastest growing enrollment groups in post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2022). Additionally, the 2016 census revealed that there has been an increase in the proportion of ACB women, both immigrant and Canadian born, with a post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2020). Studies found that ACB students might already be vulnerable in post-secondary settings due to microaggressions and institutional discrimination (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Karkouti, 2016) and that women remain vulnerable due to high incidences of sexual assault (Benoit et al., 2015). This suggests that post-secondary settings might be significantly unsafe for ACB women despite the growth in their representation on campuses. Furthermore, Statistics Canada (2019) found that the Black population has doubled in size in the past 20 years. This growth is projected to continue. As Canada's population diversifies, and ACB women's post-secondary enrollment increases it is imperative that research and institutions alike develop tools and resources to protect and support women of colour as well as survivors of colour.

Research Questions

The purpose of the present study was to examine the ways that internalized biases such as rape myths and GRS relate to ACB bystanders' detection, understanding and conceptualization of the DFSA of ACB women. Studies indicate that it is possible that the internalized biases play

an important role on how participants relate to incidents and perceive survivors (George & Martinez, 2002; Donovan, 2007; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017; Pugh et al., 2016). The following questions were explored: To what extent are GRS internalized by ACB individuals? How do participants identify DFSA and what is their conceptualization of it? How does the internalization of GRS and rape myths affect participants' ability to detect DFSA and their understanding of it? How does GRS affect participants' perception of the victim?

Methods

The study was among the first to investigate the role that internalized biases play on the detection of sexual assault and bystander perception in an ACB context. An interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used for this study as it allowed for a deep exploration of participants' subjective rationale, experiences, and potential internalized biases (Lester, 1999; Smith and Osborn, 2008). This approach was also chosen due to the presence of understudied contextual factors of the phenomenology of sexual assault such as historical, race, gender, culture, gender-identity, sexual orientation etc. The research was interested in exploring each participant's perception, worldview, and experiences free of hypotheses. Specifically, an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm (i.e., social constructivist orientation) was adopted as it considers both the individual and social contexts that influence participants' subjective interpretation of the world. Additionally, my own pre-theoretical and theoretical orientations was important in this process according to the value-laden view (van der Walt, 2020). The value-laden view maintains that the researcher is an integral part of the research and views their interpretation of data and constructed theory as "manifested in facts" (van der Walt, 2020). At the same time the researcher remained cognizant of potential unintended impacts of their involvement through consistent self-reflection (van der walt, 2020).

Intersectionality is the theoretical framework of this study. The interpretivist-constructivist method compliments the intersectional lens and allows for the compounded effects of gender and race to be studied. The two are primarily concerned with nominalism, which values the authenticity of the experiences of identities and maintains that there is not one proven fact. Likewise, intersectionality considers the unique experiences of each participant and examines how their interacting social identities might affect their bystander behaviour, their rationale, motivations, and internalization of the investigated biases. The intersectional lens will also be used to better understand the victim's experience. The theory asserts that many social identities, such as gender and race, are irretrievably intertwined and for that reason should be studied holistically (Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2004; Cole, 2009; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Zounlome et al., 2019). At each stage of the research process the researcher aimed to remain cognizant of the following three questions as per Cole (2009): who is included in this social category? What role does inequality play? What are the similarities across the categories? With these questions in mind the study remained intentional of the social and historical context of sexual assault and the role of bystanders. Additionally, this lens is a powerful tool in the study of marginalized populations who are often underrepresented in the literature (Cole, 2009; Zounlome et al., 2019).

Positionality Statement

The constructivism-interpretivism and IPA emphasizes the role of the researcher's voice as the analyzer and interpreter. As Holmes (2020) states, the researcher is regarded as part of the social world that they are studying, and that world is constructed by many predetermined factors. Therefore, the researcher's worldview, gender, race, education, experiences etc. are relevant as they influence the way that the data is approached, received, and interpreted. For these reasons, it

is important to note that I am an ACB, heterosexual, lower-middle class, cisgender woman in my late 20s. I have lived in Canada for much of my life but was born in Haiti. Although, I am Canadian, I identify most with my Afro-Caribbean culture and with being an immigrant. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and I am currently completing my Masters in Psychotherapy, Counselling and Spirituality. I have certain privileges and resources that allowed me to obtain my education and conduct my research. However, I have faced many forms of oppressions both systemic and micro due to my identity to various marginalized communities. My background and experiences have shaped my values and beliefs greatly. I consider myself to be progressive and more spiritual than religious. I value safety, equity, equality, and social justice for all, but especially for marginalized communities. I have a special interest in supporting populations such as women, BIPOC, LGBTQIA2+, newcomers and refugees, and individuals with disabilities.

My interest in this topic began when I noticed the high prevalence of GRS and their impact on myself and my communities. Additionally, during my undergraduate degree, the existence of sexual assault became increasingly looming with each painful story entrusted to me. It became clear that there lacked an understanding of sexual assault and sexual safety within campus, which left young adults such as myself and my loved ones vulnerable. Consequently, I set out to understand more.

The perceived similarities between the me and many of the participants facilitated my ability to interpret their perspectives as representatively as possible. I identify as an insider and believe that the noticeable similarities could have mitigated the power imbalance that tends to exist between researcher and participants. This could have facilitated a safe space for participants to share. The reflective process of positionality was important. It made it possible to withhold

assumptions about participant's perspectives and worldview. It also facilitated the correction of misconceptions as they inevitably occurred.

The constructivist paradigm was chosen instead of the post-positivism, transformative or pragmatic because it reflected my worldview. This decision was aided by the writings of prominent scholars such as Creswell (2014), Holmes (2020) and Walt (2020). This approach matches my assumptions that individuals' experiences and perspective are subjective and shaped by historical, social, and political contexts in which they live. Therefore, its philosophical underpinnings were shared by the present study, which argued that the intersection of participants' identities would result in distinct experiences and perspectives that matter and should be explored.

Alternatively, post-positivism's concerns center on proving or refuting theories through empirical testing (Creswell, 2014; Walt, 2020). It maintains that there is a universal truth that can be detected when meticulously isolated and studied. This approach is common in sexual assault literature, but it did not feel appropriate for this study because of my skepticism of the assumption of a predetermined truth and the research's interest in gathering a subjective understanding of marginalized participants' beliefs and experiences.

The transformative approach could have been well-suited for this research as it is especially created to uplift the voices of oppressed individuals and understand experiences while questioning the idea of default categories (Creswell, 2014). However, the primary aim is to effect political systemic change, which is not the primary purpose of the present study. Oftentimes in this approach, there is an action agenda with targeted issues and concrete steps for reform. The present study did highlight the potential needs of ACB communities, and future directions,

however, most of the effort was directed at interpreting participants' experiences and positioning them within established and emerging theories. The present study aims to prompt further research, but no action agenda is proposed. Additionally, transformative approach's collaborative creation of meaning between researcher and participants was limited. I collaboratively interpreted with participants during the focus group, but they were not included in the coding and writing portion.

Lastly, the pragmatic approach was not suitable for this research as it inquires into applications and processes (Creswell, 2014). Notably, this approach would be fitting for the testing of intersectional DFSA prevention programs.

Upon the decision to proceed with the social constructivist paradigm, the phenomenological qualitative research was determined to be the most suitable (Creswell, 2014). The present study was interested in deeply understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of particular participants regarding the issue of DFSA and as imagined bystanders. The narrative approach would not be suitable as it centers on the chronological retelling of a person's life, their experiences and their philosophy but does not inquire into specific issue or circumstances. It was also established that the research topic would be approached using IPA instead of grounded theory for many reasons (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2014). Firstly, although this research is among the first of its kind, the aim was not to derive a theory or hypothesis. The main goal was to understand the phenomenon of DFSA and GRS and participants' constructed meaning. This was especially important given the underrepresentation of the population of interest. Secondly, the aim was to detect and explore the suspected existence of internalized biases such as GRS and their potential relation to bystander behaviour, with hopes of prompting further research that could test these suspected relations. Thirdly, the sampling

method did not meet the requirements of grounded theory. The sample was small and there were no iterative coding practices. Lastly, the time constraint and limited resources was not compatible with what is needed for grounded theory. However, this study could serve as a good foundation for future grounded theory research.

Data was collected in two focus groups to facilitate the discussion of a difficult topic while naturally replicating the social interactions and feedback that bystanders might experience in real life situations (Kitzinger, 1995). The group interviews were semi-structured and conducted in an informal and open-ended style. Additional relevant questions were asked for clarification.

Participants

This study defined post-secondary institutions or colleges as Canadian universities. Three Ottawa universities were used for recruitment: University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University and Carleton University. Students attending either of those institutions who were actively enrolled in a 4-year undergraduate program, or a graduate program were included. International students were also included but none participated in the study.

The sample consisted of participants who identified as being part of ACB communities. The term ACB is used in this study instead of the term Black to refer to Canadian residents who identified as being part of any of the African Caribbean and Black communities, as per the language guidelines set out by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2022). This term is used to represent the diversity of ACB communities more accurately by mindfully including the intersecting nationalities and identities. ACB communities are comprised of individuals who have distinct diasporic and settler history, along with diverse languages, faiths, and cultures.

These individuals also have varying social classes, levels of education, ethnicities etc. This includes people who have been in Canada for generations like the Nova Scotians as well as those who are recent arrivals such as newcomers (Etowa et al., 2022; West, 2006). This term includes various ethnicities and cultures who were previously excluded such as Afro-latinx, Indo-Caribbeans and Afroasiatic. Concurrent with the usage of the term ACB the term "communities" instead of community is used to represent the diversity more accurately. Most participants (N= 3) selected African as their ethnicity, indicating that they were born in an African country or primarily identify with their African culture. The rest (N=2) selected Black, indicating that they are part of the African Diaspora but were born in Canada or primarily identify with Canadian culture.

The gender, woman, was not clearly defined in the study. The researcher encouraged participants to define it as they saw fit and made sure to use inclusive language. However, because of this open stance, it is unclear whether the participants' perceptions were of exclusively cisgender women or of all women such as cisgender and transgender. All genders were invited in this study. Most participants identified as women (N = 4) and one participant identified as nonbinary. No men participated in this study.

Participants were recruited via word-of-mouth snowball sampling, connections with student services, social media, recruitment emails, and posters around the three university campuses (see Appendix B and C) . Participants were advised that the focus groups might involve some discussion about non-consensual experiences. Two individuals decided to not proceed due to the potential triggers. One individual was excluded because they fell outside of the age group and another as a result of not being part of the ACB communities.

The sample consisted of five undergraduate students from Saint Paul University, University of Ottawa, and Carleton University between the ages of 20-26 years old. The age group of 17-26 was chosen to reflect the average age range of post-secondary students in Canada by Statistics Canada (2019). Most students (N= 4) reported being in their third or fourth year of undergraduate, while one reported being in their first or second year of undergraduate. The minority of participants identified as heterosexual (N= 1), with most identifying as queer (N=4). They indicated being pansexual, bisexual, or questioning. The most cited religion was Christianity. Participants also selected agnosticism/atheism, Islam, and spirituality. Four participants completed the study, one left before the vignette discussion. The findings consisted of two focus groups, one consisted of 3 participants and the second consisted of two.

In totality, the focus groups consisted of Bianca, Carla, Danni, Gina, and Sama. Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality. Participants were asked to use codenames during the focus group. Then the names were changed to new names before data analysis. One participant, Danni left before the end of the study. They left before the discussion of the vignette. The participant sent me a private chat indicating that they had to leave. All participants were asked to imagine themselves as bystanders during the presentation of the vignette.

Measures

Demographics, consent, and confidentiality agreement were collected a few days before the focus group. A semi-structured interview was used to gather participants' perceptions of ACB women and internalization of biases such as rape myths and GRS. Focus groups and semi-structured interview style was chosen to facilitate rapport and allow for flexibility as needed (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Participants' overall perception of ACB women were explored using semi-structured interview questions. It included general questions such as "what are your thoughts on Black women's sexuality?" and "what are your thoughts and views on Black women?".

The Stereotypic Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS) by Thomas et al. (2004) was used to formulate some of the interview questions (see Appendix L). It explored participants' internalization of three common stereotypes of ACB women: Jezebel, Superwoman/Strong Black Woman (SBW) and ABW. The aim was to explore the ways that GRS can interact with the detection and the understanding of sexual assault of ACB women victims. Moreover, participants' perceptions of the victim in relations to the stereotypes was explored.

One participant, Danni left their focus group early. It was believed that this was due to time constraints as the focus group was running 40 minutes behind. Danni was not asked to explain their reason for leaving as it is within their right as a participant to leave the study at any point. They left before the presentation of the vignette. This resulted in that focus group turning into an individual interview, because only one participant, Carla remained. Carla indicated that she was comfortable with proceeding as an interview.

The four participants, Bianca, Carla, Gina and Sama, were asked to imagine themselves as the bystander in the written vignette based on Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al. (2017) (See Appendix I). Vignettes are useful when studying situations such as these because the topic might be difficult or triggering to participants. The depersonalization can provide participants some distance from the disturbing content and facilitate sharing (Barter & Renold, 1999; Sampson & Johannesen, 2020). The vignette was set in a university party where alcohol was being

consumed, resulting in a heavily intoxicated victim. The vignette was read, and the description was displayed on a shared screen. The incident was referred to as sexual experience as opposed to sexual assault as to not influence participants' responses. Participants were asked to imagine that they were witnessing the events as bystanders. Their impressions of the situation in relation to the pre-discussed internalized biases such as rape myth and GRS were explored.

Questions also explored participants' understanding and real-life experiences regarding DFSA in general. The last set of interview questions was used to determine participants' real-life witnessing and experiencing similar experiences; as well as the information received from their universities about safe sex and DFSA .

Procedures

Incomplete disclosure was used in the study. Some information was withheld as to not influence participant's responses. During recruitment students were told that the study investigated the sexual experiences of ACB individuals instead of sexual assault. However, participants were advised during the screening call that the focus groups might include some discussions about non-consensual experiences. They were then asked to determine whether they might find it to be potentially triggering before proceeding with the study. Incomplete disclosure was used because the purpose of the study required that the participants determine themselves if the situation was non-consensual. For that reason, it was believed that participants' knowledge of the full purpose of the study would have significantly changed their responses and would have invalidated the study's results. Additionally, this study is believed to be a worthwhile contribution to the field of DFSA, GRS and ACB wellbeing. Therefore, it was determined that incomplete disclosure was necessary and justifiable (Behnke, 2009; Yale University, 2023).

Moreover, participation in the study and the effect of the incomplete disclosure was assessed to be no greater than minimal risk. Participants were made aware of the incomplete disclosure at the end of the study, during debriefing, and were permitted to withdraw their data as per the American Psychological Association guidelines (APA) (Behnke, 2009). Participants were asked to fill out a debriefing form that provided them with more information on the purpose of the study. This form also asked whether they consented to their data being used or if they would like to withdraw their data. As per APA, I, as the investigator, assumed responsibility for any after-effect of the incomplete disclosure and for any rupture in the researcher-participant alliance. However, no negative after-effects were detected (Behnke, 2009; Yale University, 2023).

Participants were invited to a Teams meeting where the focus group discussions were held in English. Focus groups took place at the end of 2022 and early 2023. The discussions were scheduled to last between 60 to 90 minutes. However, due to technical difficulties, they ran between 90 minutes to 120 minutes. Participants often had issues logging into Microsoft Teams using the "guest" mode that allowed them to display their codenames instead of their real names. At the beginning of both focus groups, the investigator had to assist some participants in troubleshooting. Participants were provided with a consent form, demographic form, and confidentiality form (See Appendix E, F and G) to complete and submit by the eve of their scheduled focus group. Verbal consent was obtained at the beginning of the focus group. To protect confidentiality and safety the following protocols were put in place. Before the meeting, participants were asked to sign a confidentiality and safe space form, vowing to maintain a safe and judgement-free zone and to keep the group discussions confidential (see Appendix G). The vow was reiterated and verbally obtained at the beginning of the Teams focus group as well. Participants were asked to keep their cameras on, when possible, but their sound muted unless

they had something to share. The participants were asked to use a codename during the focus group to maintain confidentiality. They were informed that they may leave the focus group at any moment should they feel the need to. They were asked to send the host a private message to inform them before leaving so that the researcher is aware of the participant's intention to leave and does not mistake their departure as technical difficulties.

The study had two sections. Participants were first asked their thoughts and experiences regarding GRS in their communities regarding ACB women. Participants were then presented with a DFSA vignette and asked their impressions of it, their association with GRS and rape myths. The interview questions were asked along with additional relevant follow up questions. The meetings were recorded, and a transcript of the recordings was created and used for data analyses.

At the end of the meeting, the participants were debriefed on the true nature of the study. They were informed that the incidents described as sexual experiences were sexual assault situations. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask questions and to share their thoughts. The focus group closed with a 54321-grounding exercise to reduce post-interview anxiety. Each participant was provided with a debrief sheet with the name and contact information of the researcher and a list of resources should they need support following the focus group.

Results

Data Analysis

A Thematic and theoretical thematic hybrid was used for data analysis in the present study. Theoretical thematic coding was used to address specific research questions regarding the type of GRS internalized and their effects on participants. This was chosen because of the strong theoretical framework established by the theory of intersectionality and the GRS measure. From these theories, a list of preliminary codes was created to reflect the themes expected to be found in the data. This method guided the researcher in classifying the types of GRS and in the coding process to gain a richer understanding of participants' reports. However, it was not aimed at constructing or testing a theory, but merely in setting the foundation for future studies and in positioning participants' experience within established and emerging theories. Thematic analysis was also used for this study because the researcher thought it important to create meaning from the participants' experiences and perceptions outside of the expected codes and established theories. This means that the themes and most of the codes were generated from the data itself. Many researchers advocate for the theoretical and thematic hybrid and have used it in their research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Ligurgo et al., 2018; Proudfoot, 2022; Roberts et al., 2019; Saldana, 2013).

One participant, Danni, left early; their data was still included in the data analyses. This was expected given that the focus group began 40 minutes late due to another participant's technical difficulties. Carla, the remaining participant, consented to staying to finish the study. The study proceeded as an individual interview. Following the study, Danniwas unavailable for

the debrief. The researcher decided to include the data collected, because they left before the vignette portion, which was the section of the study that required a debriefing.

To increase confidentiality, participants were asked to use codenames during their focus group and in their demographic questionnaire. During data analysis the code names were replaced with new names. Demographic questions will have no identifiers. Interview transcripts and video recordings are stored on a password protected USB. Lastly, all recordings and identifying data will be deleted within five years.

The data consisted of the two interview transcript files gathered from the two focus groups. The transcriptions were created by Teams' automated live transcriptions. They were then edited and corrected by the researcher who used the recordings as a guide. The live transcriptions were fairly accurate, and most of the corrections were due to formatting. Theoretical and thematic analyses were used to identify repeated patterns and to establish themes. The literature on intersectionality and the measures for rape myths and GRS provided a strong framework for the analysis. The qualitative coding software, NVivo, was used. The codebook can be found in Appendix M.

The researcher followed the suggestive guidelines on IPA and thematic analysis from Smith & Osborn (2008) and Braun & Clarke (2006). The data analysis process was made easier by firstly interacting with the data in different ways at multiple times, which encouraged different forms of listening. For example, by focusing on reading the transcripts the researcher was able to understand the content of what the participants shared. Initial interpretations were noted but compared later to those made when the researcher listened to the audio of the focus groups which encouraged the listening of tones, emotionality, etc. This process of listening was

ongoing and allowed the researcher to follow the participants' worldview as accurately as possible. Lastly, watching the video allowed the researcher to listen to body language, language use and the interactions between participants.

After the listening sessions, the video recordings of the focus groups were reviewed as a whole. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the participants' worldview, their interactions with each other and to take notes of initial thoughts and potential themes. This is different from the previous steps as this process prioritized understanding the recordings and transcripts holistically instead of intentionally listening to discrete aspects and details. Then, time was spent reading the transcript with the aim of gathering an impression of the content, sentiments, and initial themes. The next steps involved separating participants' responses and organizing them into their respective cases for a total of 5 cases. Then the researcher read each case separately to gather an understanding of each participant's narrative. Notes were taken as needed.

After the initial listenings, readings and case creations, codes were created to capture meaningful single ideas. Groups of codes were then assembled to connect related codes. Codes were data driven and theory driven. This means that the questions asked were determined by the literature review, but the codes extracted were based on the data. The entire data set was coded, even information that at first glanced appeared irrelevant to the research. The researcher primarily focused on coding each case (participants) separately to get a clear idea of their narrative, and then used the file (focus group interview) for context and supplemental coding. Single codes (e.g., ACB women are sexualized) were then compiled into groups of codes (e.g., ACB women are objectified). Codes were grouped based on the associations made by participants, and the researcher. The researcher's associations were guided by their personal

understanding and their understanding of literature. For example, research shows that sexualization is a form of objectification (Haslam et al., 2013; Moradi, 2013). For that reason, the code: sexualization was categorized under the code group: objectification.

The codes and group of codes were used to identify repeated patterns. Themes and subthemes were created using word query, hierarchical map, and cluster map functions in NVivo. Some of the detected repeated patterns were confirmed with the participants during the focus group and others were identified based on the researcher's understanding of the data, the literature, and the theoretical framework of intersectionality. Specifically, an interpretivist-constructivist method (i.e., social constructivist orientation) was used as it considers both the individual and social contexts that influence participants' subjective interpretation of the world. Additionally, the researcher's own pre-theoretical and theoretical orientations was important during the determination of themes. The themes and subthemes were then compared to the overall data (both files) to check for consistency and validity.

Rape myths

Codes and themes for rape myths were coded using the established categories by McMahon and Farmer (2011): she asked for it, he didn't mean to, it wasn't really assault, she lied. However, in this study, the only category detected was "she asked for it". The identified codes and patterns were used to create themes that explain how participants used rape myths to make sense of sexual assault. The only detected rape myth among participants was victim blaming. This is further discussed in the findings.

Internalized Gendered Racial Stereotypes

Codes and themes were created using the established categories of internalized gendered racial stereotypes by Thomas et al. (2004). These include Jezebel, SBW and ABW. The identified codes and patterns were used to construct themes to better understand participants' perception of ACB women, their awareness and internalization of GRS as well as their perception of their prevalence. The themes were also used to gain an understanding of how GRS influences bystander behaviour, as well as bystanders' perception of the parties involved. Lastly, themes were used to explain how participants' internalization of GRS might affect the detection of sexual assault incidents.

Perception and Treatment of ACB Women

It was believed that a deeper understanding of participants' internalization of biases could be first gathered by exploring how they observed that ACB women are perceived and treated. Participants were asked to describe how they've experienced that ACB women are perceived by them, their community and society. Most reported perceptions were negative. These included reports of ACB women being seen as loud, ghetto and unprofessional. This was reported by both focus groups. With a few participants such as Bianca and Gina, reporting that ACB women are beautiful, amazing and trendsetters. In this case, "trendsetter" was coded as both a positive and a negative perception because it was mentioned in conjunction to ACB women's contributions being stolen without credit.

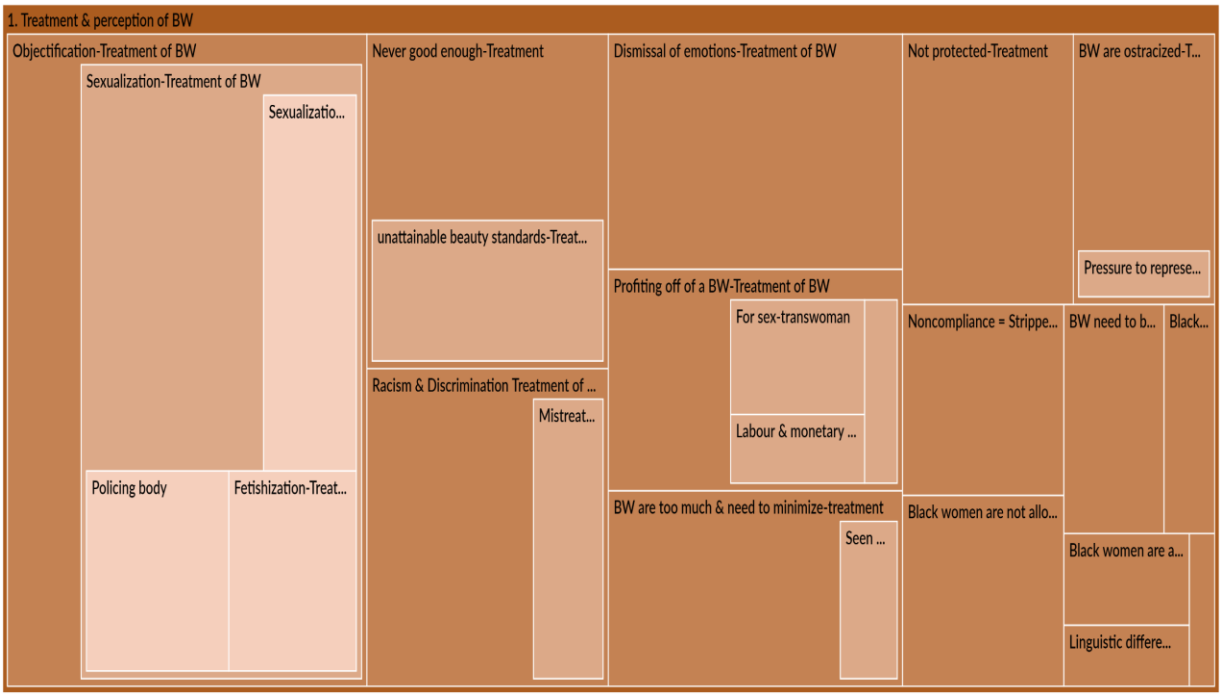
Participants were also asked to describe how they perceive that ACB women are treated by them, their community and society. All reported treatments were negative. A hierarchy chart was used to identify the patterns and most cited treatments (see Figure 1). The most cited

treatment was the objectification of ACB women through sexual objectification. Other commonly reported treatments, from most cited to least cited were: 2.) They are often measured to unrealistic standards and expectations. 3.) ACB women are often discriminated against at a systemic and individual level. 4.) Their emotions, opinions and experiences are often dismissed. These were reported in both focus groups.

The findings indicate that these ACB individuals, especially the women, are acutely aware of the negative ways that they are perceived by people, their communities, and their society. They also appear to be keenly aware of the mistreatment of ACB women because of their personal experiences and that of others. The findings suggested that these widely accepted perceptions and treatments might have wide-ranging negative effects on ACB women's status, wellbeing, health, and safety. These effects were further discussed in combination with the effects of the GRS.

Figure 1

Hierarchy Chart of Treatment of ACB women



Note. This is a visual representation of participants' cited perceived treatments of ACB women. The size of boxes indicates the amount of coding references. Larger size = more coding references. The smaller boxes within the bigger boxes illustrate subcategories; with the density of the shades representing hierarchy levels. Darker shade = high level. BW = Black women. Full name of cut off coding names from left to right: Sexualizati… = Sexualization; Racism & Discrimination Treatment of…. Racism & Treatment of BW; Mistreat…= Mistreatment; Labour & Monetary…= Labour & Monetary gain; Seen… = See as threats-Treatment; Pressure to represe…= Pressure to represent-Treatment; BW need to b…= BW need to be on guard-treatment; Black… = Black Women are Underestimated; Black women are a…= Black Women are Amazing and Beautiful; Linguistic Differe…= Linguistic Differences-Treatment.

ACB Women's Sexuality

Participants were asked to discuss how they believe that ACB women's sexuality is perceived by themselves, their community, and their society. Throughout the responses an incongruence regarding ACB women's sexuality was observed: 1.) high sexual objectification and 2.) ACB women's sexuality is taboo.

Primarily, participants disclosed that they perceived that ACB women's sexuality exists outside of the individual, and many expressed resentment. They reported the impression that it belongs to others, primarily heterosexual men, who treat ACB women's sexuality as theirs to consume. They reported that this is largely through objectification and sexual objectification. The participants in both focus groups defined sexual objectification as ACB women's personhood and value being limited to the purpose of the sexual gratification of others. They reported that ACB women are principally denoted by their physical attributes and are often seen as sex objects. Participants noted that this widely accepted belief has significant negative consequences for ACB women and even girls. In the best-case scenario, it undermines ACB women's agency over themself and their body; in the worst-case scenarios it reinforces violence against ACB women.

Contrastingly, participants reported that sexuality is often taboo within their communities. It is unclear whether that is in response to the sexual objectification of its women, but the likelihood is there and signals the need for additional research. Some participants such as Bianca noted that they were instructed to engage in certain self-protecting behaviours to avoid sexualization such as dressing in certain ways or avoiding certain behaviours that could be misinterpreted as an invitation. Participants in both focus groups noted the strained relationship

between ACB women and sexuality. A few explanations and insights were shared. Sama and Gina reported that due to the conservative environment ACB women are not allotted the space and opportunities to explore their identity in form of sexual orientation, gender, sexual preferences, and sexual pleasure. As a result of this and the aforementioned treatments of ACB women, many feel uncomfortable advocating for their pleasure during sex as they fear being dismissed (as per the findings) and being judged as greedy or sexually promiscuous by their partners. Additionally, many participants noted that the expectation of gender roles during heterosexual sex prioritizes the man's pleasure through the use of the woman's body. In contrast the women's role is to be a submissive and passive participant. For that reason, women's pleasure is not expected much less prioritized. At least one person from each focus groups noted that many of the ACB women around them report less pleasurable experiences. For example, Sama indicated that because of that lack of exploration and advocacy, ACB women do not feel confident and lack knowledge in pleasing their men. She reported that this leads to unsatisfactory sexual experiences for both parties.

As can be seen, there exists a conflicting image of the ACB women's sexuality. There appears to be the expectation that they are sex symbols and made for sex. Contrastingly, accounts show that many feel uncomfortable about their sexuality, their ability to perform and their pleasure. Some may even be unable to perform well. Additionally, participants reported that sex remains taboo in their communities which stands in contrast to ACB women being viewed as hyper-sexual. What remains consistent however is the lack of agency over their sexuality, which appears to be a result of sexual objectification and conservative practices.

The findings indicate that ACB individual are acutely aware of the negative ways that ACB women are perceived sexually by individuals, their communities and society. They appear

to also be aware of the sexual experiences of ACB women through their own and that of others. The findings suggest that these widely accepted perceptions and treatments might have significant negative effects on ACB women's ability to advocate for themselves when it comes to their safety and sex. The results show that this could be a result of being disempowered, fear of being dismissed, and fear of being stereotyped as hypersexual.

Gendered Racial Stereotypes (GRS)

With the aim of understanding the existence, awareness, and internalization of the stereotypes of interest: Jezebel, SBW and ABW; participants were asked to share some well-known stereotypes regarding ACB women in their personal relationships, their communities, and their society. At first some participants had difficulty identifying them. With Bianca stating that she actively refrains from relating to the stereotypes and makes the conscious effort to avoid generalizing others through them. This suggested that GRS were once a significant authority in her life. This was later confirmed by Bianca. The most cited characteristics were that ACB women are masculine, loud, ghetto and lazy, which align with the SBW and ABW stereotypes. All the participants maintained that these characteristics are untrue. They indicated that stereotypes such as laziness are false given the labour that ACB women have contributed to society. Carla noted that certain characteristics (e.g., being loud) are not exclusive to ACB women. However, she reasoned that it might be regarded as negative particularly when someone from an ACB community exhibits the behaviour. As participants discussed the perceived negative traits, they expressed frustration, contempt and confusion given the perceived double standards and inaccuracies.

The first stereotype identified by Gina, Bianca and Sama was the angry Black woman (ABW). They indicated that this stereotype maintained that ACB women are inherently angry, ill-tempered and aggressive. Participants made known their disagreement and disapproval of the stereotype and linked it to the practice of women's valid emotions being dismissed. Additionally, they noted that oftentimes the anger expressed is righteous but is treated as an overreaction. As per the hierarchy chart, the most cited GRS for both focus groups was the Jezebel stereotype. With all participants indicating that they have heard of it, have noted its effects on the treatment of ACB women and have had to modify themselves as a result of the stereotype. They described the Jezebel as the image that ACB women are hyper-sexual, seductive, sexually adventurous, and sexual objects. This suggests that the Jezebel could be one of the most prominent GRS. It is important to note that the Jezebel stereotype is often cited in conversations pertaining to sex and body autonomy (Bakari, 2919; Wooten, 2016). Therefore, whether is it the most prominent between the three studied GRS cannot be determined, especially when ABW was the first one mentioned in the discussions. Many participants, such as Sama, Gina, and Carla also identified the SBW (Strong Black woman) stereotype as prevalent within society. It was the third most cited stereotype according to the hierarchy chart. Participants defined the trope as the expectation that ACB women are independent, capable caretakers, protective and both mentally and physically strong. Lastly, the mammy stereotype was reported by Sama and Bianca but was not discussed further. This stereotype depicts ACB women as unattractive, motherly, caretakers.

Internalization of Gendered Racial Stereotypes (GRS)

As mentioned previously, there is a theme of paradoxes that is present throughout the focus groups. Although all participants verbally rejected the accuracy of the stereotypes, they expressed negative emotions regarding their prevalence in the world and they noted their

consequences in various areas; it still seems that the stereotypes have been internalized by the participants and their communities to varying degrees. In fact, participants were asked about the level of their internalization of the three GRS (ABW, Jezebel and SBW). Participants were asked how much of themselves believe and identify with the discussed stereotypes. Choosing zero percent would indicate that no parts of themselves identify and 100% would indicate that all of themselves identify. Participants' self-report ranged between 0% to 60% of internalization. Most reported being in the middle. Participants such as Bianca indicated that 20% of themselves believed and identified with the GRS, while Gina reported 60%. It is important to note that although Sama and Danni reported 0%, no participant reported that they never internalized the tropes. This demonstrates the pervasiveness of these stereotypes in the conscious and subconscious of ACB individuals. In fact, Sama explained that she chose 0% following multiple burnouts due to the discussed stereotypes. She indicated that as a result, she intentionally established strong boundaries to protect against the beliefs and learned to embrace herself authentically. Alternatively, other participants, such as Gina indicated that they are at the beginning of the process of deconstructing the GRS. These findings demonstrate the impact of GRS, and they suggest the degree to which they harm ACB individuals, even those who are conscious of its harm. This is clear in the way that participants described having to relearn their identity and heal from its outcomes.

Participants were asked if there were any stereotypes that they identified with. Gina, who reported that GRS were largely internalized, identified the most with the SBW trope and reported distancing herself from the Jezebel images. Participants were then asked to share the effects of the internalization of the stereotypes in their lives and their concept of self. Most participants, including Sama, who reported 0%, cited that they have intentionally worked to deconstruct these

stereotypes in their own lives. This suggested that the impact of these stereotypes is not only limited to how ACB women are treated but extends to the way that ACB women see themselves and maybe their behaviour.

Gina reported that she is attempting to deconstruct the SBW stereotype by becoming more aware of her emotions and comfortable with being vulnerable. She indicated that the Jezebel stereotype made her uncomfortable with her body and sexuality and led to her covering up and overcorrecting. She reported that she is currently in the process of learning to embrace her body and her sexuality. Bianca stated proudly that she is currently teaching her younger sisters to not be silenced by the ABW trope. She reported encouraging her sisters to speak up when uncomfortable and to question things that do not benefit them. She shared that she had once struggled with that same stereotype and started to actively work against it in her personal life. Although she indicated finding success in her pursuit, she reported that there is still pressure to represent herself as the opposite of the ABW trope in her professional life. This suggests that there might be socioeconomic consequences to being labelled as one of the GRS. Danni had reported no internalization of the stereotypes and indicated that they did not identify with any of the tropes. However, they noted that despite their effort and success in deconstructing the stereotypes for themselves, they find it difficult interacting with ACB individuals who appear to adhere to those stereotypes. They expressed a sense of confusion and conflict regarding their discomfort and disapproval. They maintained the belief, nevertheless, that despite their discomfort and disapproval that there is no difference in their treatment of the women. However, it is important note they indicated that they perceive those who adhere to the stereotypes differently. It was unclear whether differently was positive or negative. This suggests that despite

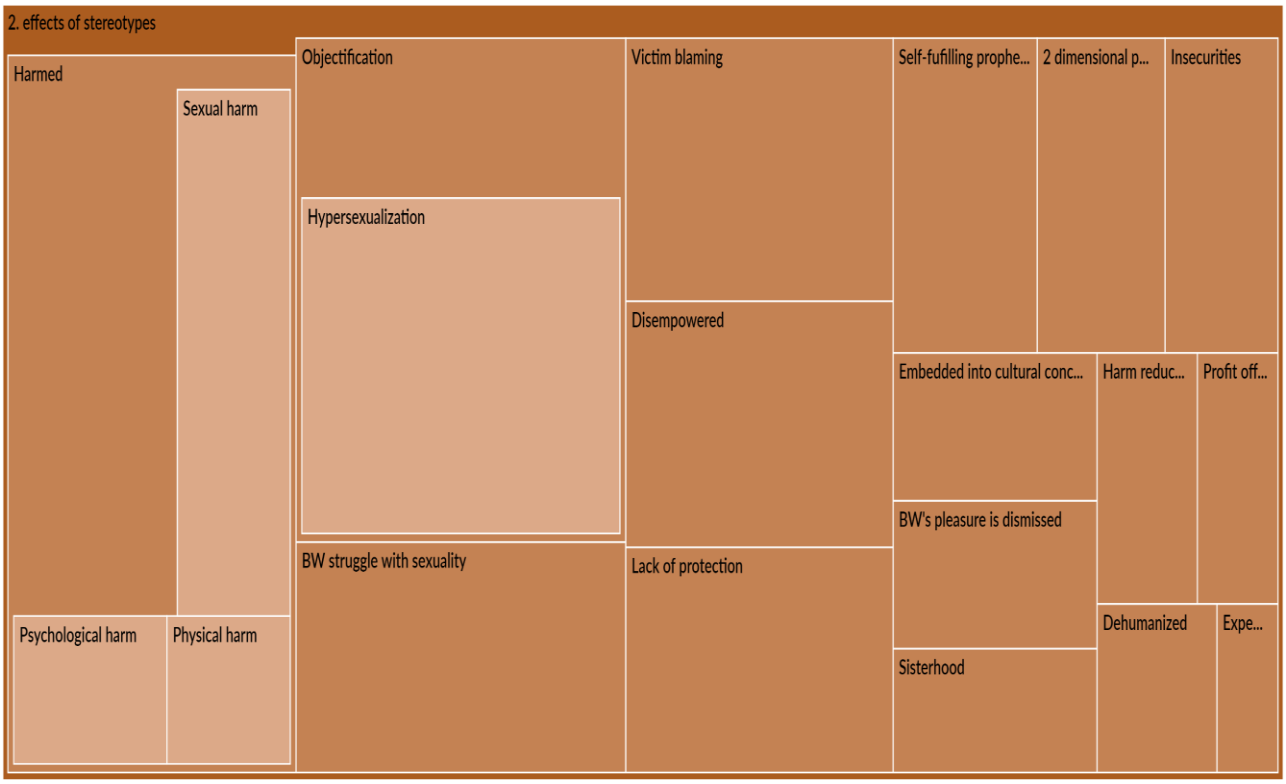
the conscious effort and perceived success at the deconstruction of GRS, they still moderately impact these ACB individuals' daily experiences.

Effects of Gendered Racial Stereotypes (GRS)

These findings illustrate that even through the rejection of the tropes, increased awareness, and efforts to deconstruct these learned biases, parts of the stereotypes remain deeply embedded in the collective and individual consciousness and can affect an ACB person's relationship with themselves, and others. The discussions also indicate that GRS affect how ACB individuals are treated and perceived by others. The participants were asked to describe some of the perceived overall effects of GRS. Using a hierarchy chart, the most cited overall effects were identified (see Figure 2). Most were negative, with one positive effect reported. The following were cited: 1.) belief that GRS were related to harm, 2.) belief that GRS were related to sexual objectification, 3.) belief that GRS were related to disempowerment of ACB women, 4.) belief that GRS were related to the sisterhood effect.

Figure 2

Hierarchy chart of Perceived Effects of GRS



Note. This is a visual representation of participants' cited perceived effects of GRS on ACB women. The size of boxes indicates the amount of coding references. Larger size = more coding references. The smaller boxes within the bigger boxes illustrate subcategories; with the density of the shades representing hierarchy levels. Darker shade = high level. Full name of cut off coding names from left to right: Self-fulfilling Proph… = Self-fulfilling Prophecy; 2-Dimensional p…= 2-Dimensional Portrayal; Embedded into Cultural Conc= Embedded into Cultural Consciousness; Harm reduc…= Harm Reducing Behaviours; Profit off…= Profiting off of a BW; Expe…= Expected to protect BM; BM= Black men.

The most common effect of GRS was harm with physical harm such as violence and sexual violence being the most cited. Participants reported that this harm could be perpetuated by essential professionals such as the police and health care providers. They also indicated that they have observed a general disregard for ACB woman's bodily health and safety. Participants exemplified their beliefs with examples regarding the excessive use of force against ACB individuals by the police. Danni and Carla noted that the medical field taught and reinforced the belief that ACB individuals feel less pain. They shared that this belief to this day translates to reduced pain management practices by providers caring for ACB patients and labouring mothers. Participants also reported that many of the harm experienced by ACB women are perpetuated by ACB men who perceive an "invitation" from an ACB woman to control her, to sexually assault her, or to cause bodily harm or death. From these findings it can be inferred that GRS might limit the way that ACB women are perceived which might make it difficult for others to perceive them as human with a full-range of emotions and traits. This could facilitate harm. Moreover, this could interfere with ACB women's sense of agency over themselves and their bodies. Because of this objectification, many ACB women might not be protected, and their harm appears to be minimized and normalized.

The second most cited effect was objectification through sexualization. This was defined as the perception of ACB women as inherently hyper-sexual and as sex objects. Through this perception ACB women's primary purpose is sexual as opposed to inherently human. Some participants, such as Bianca, Danni, Gina, and Sama, also reported that ACB women are often fetishized and appreciated primarily for their bodies and not their personalities and their characteristics. Gina commented that many ACB men have shared the belief that the curvier the woman, the more pleasurable the sex. Gina and Sama reported often hearing that ACB women

are especially good for sex because of their body shape: such as the stereotypical full butt and thighs. However, the comments heard regarding their character traits are usually negative and harmful. Sama and Danni reported that ACB women are usually expected to look a certain way. She cited the term “coke bottle” body, which is a woman with a small waist and bigger buttocks and thighs. She noted that these expectations are reinforced by ACB individuals, especially the ACB men. Gina and Sama pointed out the inaccuracies regarding ACB women’s body being typically curvy. This indicates that although some ACB women might be aware of these expectations, they might also reject them. Gina noted that ACB women tend to come in all shapes and sizes, however the narrative cited by Sama of the ‘coke bottle” shaped ACB woman remains prevalent and widely accepted. This signifies that despite the rejection by some ACB individuals, this belief might be internalized by their communities and is reinforced by the sexual objectification of ACB women. Gina noted that those who tend to fetishize are exclusively interested in the experience and the body of ACB women with little to no romantic interest. This suggests that ACB women are often primarily seen as body parts with specific sexual functions distinct from their personhood. As Gina indicated, there lacks the interest and valuing of the person as a whole.

The participants reported that this sexualization occurs even in childhood. Bianca, Gina, and Sama expressed belief that ACB girls develop faster than girls of other races either because of biology or perception. They along with Danni indicated that as a result, many ACB girls are sexualized prematurely and are forced to grow up faster. This reported shared belief suggested that there are some unchallenged internalized biases regarding the maturity of ACB children which might result in their adultification. There also appears to be an expectation within the communities that ACB girls will experience sexual harm because of their perceived maturity.

Ironically, because of that fear, caretakers of ACB girls are likely to sexualize them at an early age by commenting and policing their behaviours and body. This appears to be done in effort to teach the girls self-protective strategies to minimize their sexuality and likelihood of experiencing sexual violence. This is apparent in Bianca's recounting of being scolded at the age of 10 by one of her aunts because she bent over to take an item out of the fridge. She reported that her aunt instructed her on how to do so modestly so that she did not draw attention to herself and her backside. Experiences such as these illustrate the magnitude of the sexualization of ACB women and girls alike. They also suggest that the harm caused as a result of sexualization could be extensive. However more research is needed to further understand its effects.

The third cited effect of the GRS was the disempowerment of ACB women. Disempowerment in this case was defined as the inability to authentically express and defend oneself leading to lack of safety. It is also the lack of belief of being able to change the outcome of a situation. This could be due to lack of acquired skill such as assertive communicate, or clear expression of needs. Bianca and Sama noted that ACB women are taught from a young age to not question authority and to submit to others. They indicated that this is prominent in immigrant families where cohesion and obedience is valued over self-expression and individual rights. As a result, the skills of effective communication are underdeveloped and undervalued. Bianca, Danni and Sama noted that this appears to affect all areas of an ACB woman's life such as their professional life, their sense safety, their sex life and their relationship with themselves.

In addition to the lack of skill development, Bianca reported that ACB women are often taught to not speak up through the use of punishment. For example, an ACB woman's expression of discontent could elicit dismissal of their emotions by use of the ABW or the expression of anger in someone else. Danni reported that ACB women who attempt to express themselves are

often seen as threatening and categorized into one of the GRS, usually as an ABW. When viewed as ABW, they are antagonized and dismissed. The participants related this effect to ACB women not being able to remove themselves from harmful situations and being unable to defend themselves. Instead, ACB women might avoid advocating for themselves or might feel powerless and confused. Gina expressed her confusion regarding the perception that ACB women are often not protected but appear not permitted to defend themselves. She and Bianca noted the unfairness in what is perceived as the normalization of harm towards ACB women. The findings are showing that the reported disempowerment could be a result of the repeated dismissal of emotions as well as the discouragement and punishment received when an ACB woman attempts to express or protect herself.

The sense of disempowerment is also observed in the silencing of ACB women sexually. Danni, Gina, and Sama noted that ACB women are often unable to share their sexual preferences and needs due to the silencing and dismissal that they've experienced throughout their lives. Sama indicated that many fear being categorized as a Jezebel or as a demanding ABW and shamed for their sexual desires. Instead, they engage in sex as passive participants. Danni reported that this is especially impactful because of its subtlety as most ACB women are not aware that they have been conditioned to not prioritize themselves and their pleasure. Danni shared that many of their women friends disclosed their dissatisfaction in their sex life but feel incapable of changing their situation.

Among the many negative effects of GRS, participants cited one positive effect, named the sisterhood effect. They stated that because of their awareness of the stereotypes and the negative treatments of ACB women, they remain protective and vigilant over other ACB women. This alludes to ACB women bystanders potentially being able to detect the signs of danger

before others who are not women and not ACB. This could also suggest that they might have higher motivation to intervene. This positive effect is less commonly cited but it could be a powerful one, especially for bystander behaviour, so it warrants more research.

The effects of GRS appear to be interconnected and present independent of the type of GRS. However, to better understand the specific effects of each GRS, the types and their effects were explored.

Effects of Angry Black Woman (ABW). Participants were asked to share some perceived effects of the ABW stereotype. All reported effects of the stereotype were negative. Bianca shared that the ABW stereotype often leads to ACB women's emotions, opinions and experiences being dismissed by those around them. Sama and Gina agreed with her observation. Bianca noted that often the emotions expressed are valid but because of the ABW image, ACB women are seen as being unprovokedly angry and regarded as being unreasonably aggressive or "too much". This leads to their emotions and experiences being invalidated and ignored by others. Bianca statement brought to attention two things. Firstly, ACB women appear to be punished for expressing their discomfort and unhappiness. She used the example of a psychologist on TikTok being harassed online and labelled as aggressive by men following her commentary on romantic relationships. This could indicate that ACB women are not allowed to defend and express themselves without repercussions. Secondly, it seems that ACB communities might be failing to see the harm done to those ACB women who are attempting to defend themselves. This signals how GRS might influence bystander behaviour. It is possible that bystanders might not be able to detect the risk of harm because of the ABW stereotype and might dismiss any attempts carried out by the victim to defend themselves.

In addition to the dismissal of ACB women, the ABW might be reinforced through confirmation bias and self-fulfilling prophecy. Confirmation bias states that people have the tendency to pay attention to information that supports their beliefs and ignore information that do not. While self-fulfilling prophecy states that people's beliefs and expectations of someone can affect how they treat that person and could lead to the person behaving in a way that was expected. Moreover, because humans are naturally emotional creatures, the expression of anger or displeasure is expected. However, whenever ACB women express a reasonable emotion, it can reinforce the belief that they are naturally and unreasonably angry. Individuals who do not challenge their belief of this stereotype will fail to see the experience that supports the fact that anger is a universal human emotion and instead use it to support their belief in ABW. Likewise, these individuals behave dismissively towards ACB women due to their belief in ABW which could result in ACB women behaving angrily towards them. This effect was noted by Bianca who found that others would often cite the stereotype as a reason to dismiss her expressed emotions which resulted in her becoming angrier. It is important to note that this effect has been reported for other GRS as well but participants appeared most vocal in relation to the ABW

Participants indicated that many ACB women are conditioned to not defend themselves out of fear of being perceived as the ABW which has many of the discussed negative consequences. They might also not defend themselves because they do not feel that they have the right to. Bianca expressed that ACB women's inability to defend themselves might be especially dangerous because it leaves them unable to effectively mitigate and protect themselves in harmful situations. It could also lead to serious threats and requests for assistance being missed or ignored by those around them. Sama and Bianca suggested that these harmful situations would include psychological harm as well as physical harm such as sexual assault.

Effects of the Strong Black Woman (SBW). Participants were asked to reflect on the effect of the SBW as perceived in their life, in their communities and in society. They cited that the SBW leads to the expectation that ACB women can defend and protect themselves and others from harmful situations. This translates to physical as well as emotional strength. Carla noted that because of this expected ability of being self-protecting, many ACB women are not protected by others. Potentially because of this lack of protection and expectation to self-protect, Gina reported that ACB women are adverse to being perceived as vulnerable. Additionally, many feel unable or not safe enough to be vulnerable and feel the need to remain hypervigilant. Although not explored in this study, it is expected that this could have long-term health effects. In fact, Sama noted that she found herself suffering from multiple burnouts because of the manifestation of this GRS in her personal life and her community. In addition to potential health effects, Gina reported that potential obstacles to connecting with others and with herself. The constant need to be on guard could lead to the disconnection from emotions which leads to disconnection from self and inability to foster deep intimate relationships.

As illustrated by Sama, the SBW stereotype might have the underlying belief that ACB women are strong and therefore expected to suffer. Sama noted that she feels that she and other ACB women are expected to “take the hits” but are not taught how to recover from them. This is probably due to the reported belief that ACB women are infinitely strong and capable which could lead to the normalization of their suffering. This GRS if internalized by others could significantly affect their bystander behaviour by reducing their protective behaviours due to the expectation that the victim does not feel pain or require help; however more research is needed to test this potential relation.

Effects of the Jezebel Stereotype. Participants were asked to reflect on the effect of the Jezebel as perceived in their life, in their communities and in society. Most cited effect was the oversexualization of ACB women and the perception of them as sex objects who are hypersexual. There are some noted similar effects that have been found to be related to both ABW and Jezebel as well as between Jezebel and SBW. Lack of protection was cited as an effect in for both Jezebel and SBW stereotypes. However, there was an observed difference. SBW can lead to less protection due to the belief that the ACB victim does not need help during risky situations. In contrast, the Jezebel stereotype has been found to shame women for their sexuality and for their objectification. As a result, during harmful situations, Bianca and Danni noted that Imani would be blamed and judged; and consequently not be protected.

All the participants reported that ACB women who have been harmed are often blamed for their outfits, their level of intoxication and their behaviour. They indicated that they are often depicted as a Jezebel that lured men into assaulting them. So, it seems that for the participants the lack of protection extends to the aftermath of situations as well and whether there is justice. Carla noted that this effect reaches beyond personal and social situations . She maintained that this can be observed in the way that ACB women are treated by the reinforcement and by how victims are depicted in the media. She recounted the story of a woman, Lauren Smith-Fields, who had a bumble date in her home and was found dead the following day with evidence of alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity. However, Carla stated that no further investigations were pursued. She detailed vividly that the news displayed a picture of Lauren in a club, in a revealing outfit, and drinking while they portrayed the man, who is White as a smiling man with a backpack hiking out on the mountains. Carla contended that this is a clear example of how ACB

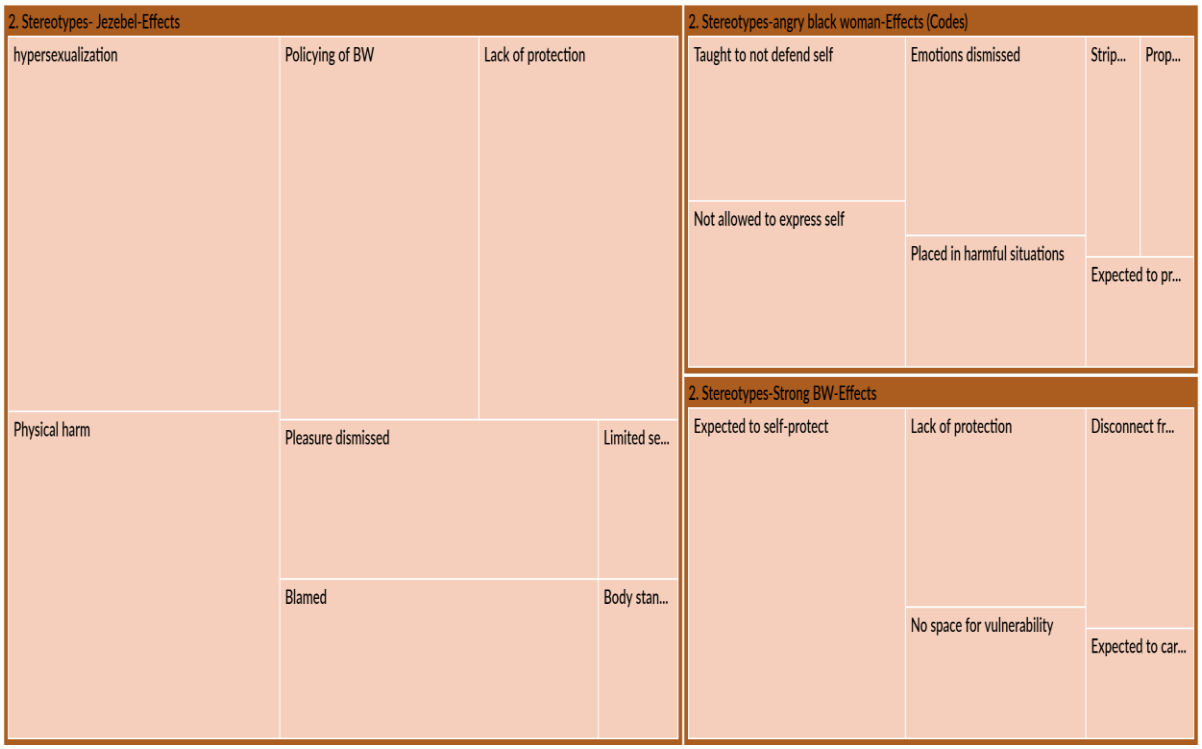
women are depicted as Jezebel with the aim of deflecting accountability, reattributing blame to the victim and not protecting ACB women victims.

Interestingly, participants cited harm as an effect of both the Jezebel and ABW stereotype. All participants noted that the Jezebel stereotype facilitates the harm of ACB women because it depicts women as sexual objects who lures men. They noted that the stereotype has been found to be extremely harmful because it perpetuates the belief that ACB women want attention and want to be assaulted. Additionally, it removes accountability from the people who do harm and redirects it to the body of the ACB woman for being inviting. In contrast the ABW stereotype perpetuates harm indirectly and directly. Indirectly, because as reported previously, ACB women are silenced and dismissed which then limits their ability to advocate for themselves and protect themselves. As a result, they are unable to manage harmful situations and are unable to remove themselves. Directly, Sama and Bianca stated that it can increase the likelihood of harm because others might react angrily and attempt to silence a perceived ABW with the use of violence.

As can be seen, certain effects of GRS were remarked in multiple categories (see Figure 3) However, the details surrounding these noted similar effects are distinct. For example, the reported lack of protection might be a noted similarity in Jezebel and SBW, but the explanation provided by the participants was different. For example, SBW could result in less protection out of the expectation of ACB women's superhuman strength. Alternatively, the Jezebel could result in less protection because of blaming. Ultimately, it appears that participants noted many shared effects between the types of GRS, which could suggest that although distinct, the categories might serve similar functions. These functions, according to the participants, are reported to be that GRS significantly harm the people that it depicts.

Figure 3

Hierarchy Chart of Effects by GRS



Note. Visual representation of participants' cited perceived effects by types of GRS on ACB women. The size of boxes indicate the amount of coding references. Larger size = more coding references. The smaller boxes within the bigger boxes illustrate subcategories; with the density of the shades representing hierarchy levels. Darker shade = high level. BW = Black woman. Full name of cut off coding names from left to right: Limited se… = Limited Sexual Understanding; Body stan…= Body Standard; Strip…= Stripped of Womanhood; Prop…= Self-fulfilling Prophecy; Expected to pr…= Expected to Protect Self; Disconnect fr…= Disconnect from Self & Emotions; Expected to Car…= Expected to Care and Protect Others.

Rape Myths

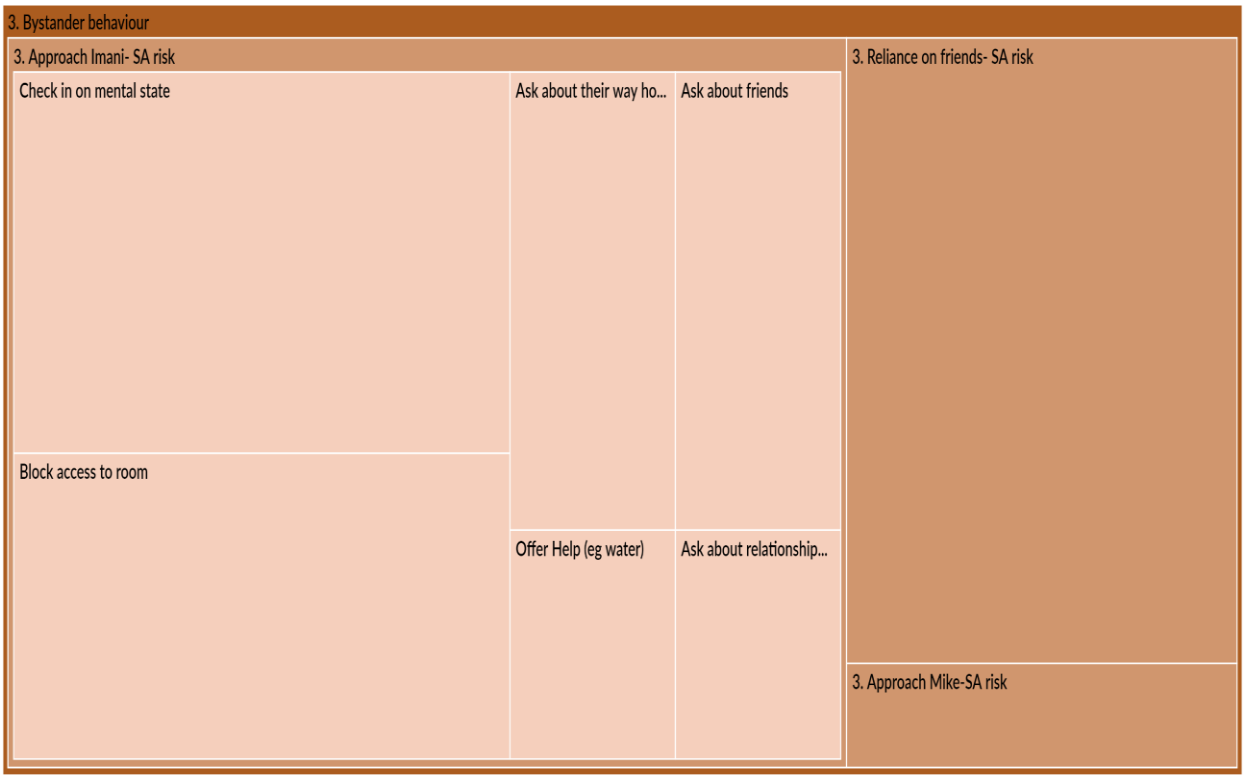
Participants seldom used rape myths in their understanding of the sexual assault incident. The only rape myths cited by two participants were victim blaming and potentially the minimization of sexual assault. Sama noted that she believes that both parties (Imani and Mike) should be held accountable for their decisions and actions. Contrastingly, she stated that she would take note of the situation with the aim of holding Mike accountable the following day if a DFSA took place. This signals a potential conflict between rape myths and her understanding of sexual assault. She also noted that Imani should not have had as much alcohol if she knew that she could not handle it. Additionally, Bianca and Sama expressed conflict between the tendency to put the responsibility on the victim and the need to help and protect her.

Bystander Behaviour

Four of the five participants remained until the vignette sections of the focus group: Bianca, Carla, Gina, and Sama. The vignette took place at a university house party. It featured a potential victim, Imani and a perpetrator, Mike. It depicted Imani as inebriated and alone before she is approached by the seemingly sober Mike and led to a room. Participants were asked to determine what they think could be happening in the vignette presented. All participants who took part in the vignette section identified the situation as non-consensual and unsafe. Consent was defined as not being inebriating, respecting boundaries, being safe. They also shared the belief that consent can be withdrawn, although they expressed fear that Mike might not agree. They also indicated that there are different types of consent such as non-verbal or explicit consent.

Figure 4

Hierarchy Chart of Intended Bystander Behaviour



Note. Visual representation of participants' cited intended bystander behaviour. The size of boxes indicate the amount of coding references. Larger size = more coding references. The smaller boxes within the bigger boxes illustrate subcategories; with the density of the shades representing hierarchy levels. Darker shade = high level. SA= Sexual Assault. Full name of cut off codes from left to right: Ask about their way ho…= Ask About their Way Home; Ask about relationship…= Ask about Relationship with Mike.

Participants shared their intended bystander behaviour based on the vignette presented. The most cited bystander behaviours were identified using a hierarchy chart (see Figure 4). The primary intervening method cited was to rely on Imani's friends and to approach Imani. All participants indicated that they would approach Imani to check on her mental state, inquire about her friends' whereabouts, block Imani from entering the room and ask her about her transportation home. Both focus groups incorrectly recalled or expected Imani to be with a friend, so they reported that they would rely on her friend to bring Imani to safety. Sama indicated that she would look for Imani's friend and inform them of what she witnessed with the hope that the friend would know what to do. Bianca reported that if she were unable to stop Imani, that she would take note of the events in the case of the occurrence of assault. She and Carla also expressed disappointment in the friend either leaving Imani or not protecting her. None reported recalling that Imani's friend left the party earlier. These findings suggest the significant impact friends might have in reducing the occurrence of sexual assault. Of course, it is possible that the friend might also be unsure of what to do.

Some victim blaming occurred in one group. Two participants, Bianca and Sama reflected that Imani should have been more careful, should have enacted the "buddy system" and should have known not to drink too much while partying. Sama also indicated that both parties (Imani and Mike) should be accountable for sex even if one is visibly more intoxicated. However, Sama indicated that she would intervene on behalf of Imani. It is possible that this could be another conflict between internalized beliefs and identifying the signs of sexual assault. Bianca maintained that Imani was behaving how someone who is partying would behave and that she cannot be held completely accountable. All participants maintained that they would attempt to intervene in some way. Some, such as Bianca and Gina expressed fear regarding

Imani being resistant to their help. They reported that they felt that there was a limit to what they could do. Gina and Sama indicated that they felt that they were in Imani's "business" by intervening. They expressed feeling uncomfortable and defined the situation as "complicated". Bianca wondered the lengths that one should go to protect someone in DFSA situations, indicating that the accountability might also fall on Imani. Carla reported that she would speak to Mike, the suspected perpetrator, but most indicated being uncomfortable with the idea.

Effect of Gendered Racial Stereotypes (GRS) on Bystander Behaviour

To explore how GRS might affect bystander behaviour, participants were asked whether they think that their internalization of any of the GRS might influence how they view or treat Imani. All the participants indicated that they do not believe that any of the stereotypes would influence their behaviour as bystanders. Bianca indicated that she perceived Imani as enjoying her time in a similar manner that she would. Another participant, Sama, reported that she did not approve of what she perceived as Imani's lack of regard for the "code of conduct" by drinking alone and becoming intoxicated. However, she maintained that the stereotypes would not influence her behaviour. Carla, from a different group indicated that Imani appeared to be enjoying her time but expressed concern with the fact that she was alone and without the protection of her friends.

Participants were asked whether they feel that certain GRS would be protective and might mitigate harm when it comes to bystander behaviour or Mike's behaviour toward Imani. All participants indicated that all the stereotypes discussed have no protective factors in the described scenario. In fact, they reported that they believed that perceived adherence to the stereotypes might cause more harm. They indicated that Imani's labelling into a stereotype by

bystanders could occur quickly and unobtrusively in response to small changes in Imani's behaviour. They also reported that the change in stereotype labeling could result in significant differences in bystander response.

Firstly, participants identified that Imani's behaviour would most likely be perceived as Jezebel. Bianca reported that because of this party guests might disregard the effects of alcohol on Imani's inebriation, perceived openness, and perceived flirty behaviour. They might explain it as Imani being hypersexual and interested in sex because she is a Jezebel. She noted that her swaying or potentially using people to lean on could be seen as flirty which could lead to her being a target. In other words, the perception of her behaviour as a Jezebel could be incorrectly interpreted as an invitation for sexual assault. Which could also lead to reduced proactive behaviour from party guests and therefore less protection for Imani. Additionally, the Jezebel stereotype could facilitate the use of fetishization to justify DFSA. Gina believed that the following day, Mike would brag of ACB women as being "good in bed" which would further perpetuate the Jezebel stereotype and invalidate Imani's claim of non-consent. She and Bianca noted that both reduced bystander response and justification is even more likely in mixed-race settings because of the reduced awareness in the impact of GRS. They indicated that the rate of protection would be higher if bystanders were ACB women because of the shared understanding.

When participants were asked of other GRS that could affect bystander behaviour , Bianca, Gina, and Sama noted that Imani could be categorized as the ABW if she responded to Mike in a less positive way. Bianca reported that Imani is entitled to being angry about Mike's approach but noted the power imbalance between a man and woman which would be exploited. She expressed concern that the power imbalance could further be acerbated if there is a racial difference. The participants expressed fear that Imani might be labeled as the ABW which could

elicit an angry response from Mike and bystanders. This could escalate to Mike or bystanders using intimidation tactics such as bullying and ripping her clothes or physical violence as an attempt to restore the power. Participants indicated that this escalation to physical violence is probably facilitated by the objectification of Imani.

The SBW's effects on bystander behaviours was described by participants as the expectation that Imani would be able to defend herself. Carla noted that oftentimes ACB women's independence is interpreted as not needing protection and being physically strong and masculine. For those reasons, she indicated that bystanders would assume that Imani would be able to mitigate harmful situations and she would be able to fight Mike off.

The participants were asked whether there is someone from the vignette that they identified with. This was done to understand the context in which the participants responded. One participant from each focus group, Bianca, and Carla, reported identifying as Imani either through past personal experiences or that of friends. One participant, Sama, reported that she works hard to not be in Imani's situation by having multiple safety plans. One participant, Gina reported that she does not identify with anyone from the vignette.

Sexual Safety Education in University Institutions

The current research was interested in participants' experiences of sexual safety and education at their respective universities: University of Ottawa, University of Saint Paul, and Carleton University. Sama reported receiving no sexual health or safety information from her university. Gina, Carla, and Bianca reported receiving limited sexual health information. They indicated that most of the programming centered on physical sexual safety through contraceptives. They reported receiving an excessive amount of male condoms at multiple

occasions. They reported not receiving any female condoms. All participants reported a lack of sexual health and safety discussions and information from their universities in general. They noted the lack of information regarding consent and reducing DFSA. Participants were asked if they were aware of resources and safe spaces if needed. Gina and Bianca reported that they are vaguely aware of some of the events held by the resource centres around the school such as Womxn Centre and the centre for racialized students (RISE). They also recalled that there might be counselors if support is needed. They indicated that most of the information and discussions appear to be spearheaded by the student federations as opposed to being directly from their university. There appears to be an agreement among participants that there lacks education and awareness efforts towards sexual safety, health, and wellness in their universities.

From these findings it can be gathered that most sexual education efforts are centered around harm reduction of the physical effects of sex such as unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). There also appears to be more of a focus on heterosexual physical safety and male condoms. There also appears to lack information regarding consent and its importance. Lastly, no students reported being aware of programs that provide information on DFSA and its prevention. This suggests that sexual safety could be prioritized less than contraception despite the high incidences of DFSA. Based on what the participants shared, there appears to be more effort directed at managing the effects of sexual assault as opposed to preventing and reducing its occurrence. With that being said, it appears that there is awareness of the resources available to them by some students. There also appears to be some important discussions regarding sexual wellbeing for racialized students that are being held in pockets of the institutions through resource centres. However, it is important to note that their reach might be limited based on the responses given by the students who seemed unsure. This reported lack

of sexual safety and wellness is a theme that parallels that of the participant's lives who reported receiving no or limited sexual health education from their parents and their family.

Themes of Dehumanization

From the focus group discussions, four emergent themes were identified: 1.) GRS are used to dehumanize ACB women, 2.) ACB individuals internalize their dehumanization, 3.) GRS affect bystander through dehumanization, 4.) universities reinforce that dehumanization through their lack of interventions. These themes were present in both focus groups and were identified based on the frequency of citation by participants.

Firstly, codes were created to capture the meaning of what participants shared. Then from those codes, groups of codes were compiled. Codes were grouped based on their relations to one another. For example, treatment of ACB women code group consisted of single codes such as: "emotions dismissed" and "unattainable standards". Certain single codes were broken down further to create "children" codes. For example, the code, "approach Imani" in bystander behaviour was made up of six codes such as: ask about friends, block access to room, etc. From these codes and code groups some repeated patterns were identified.

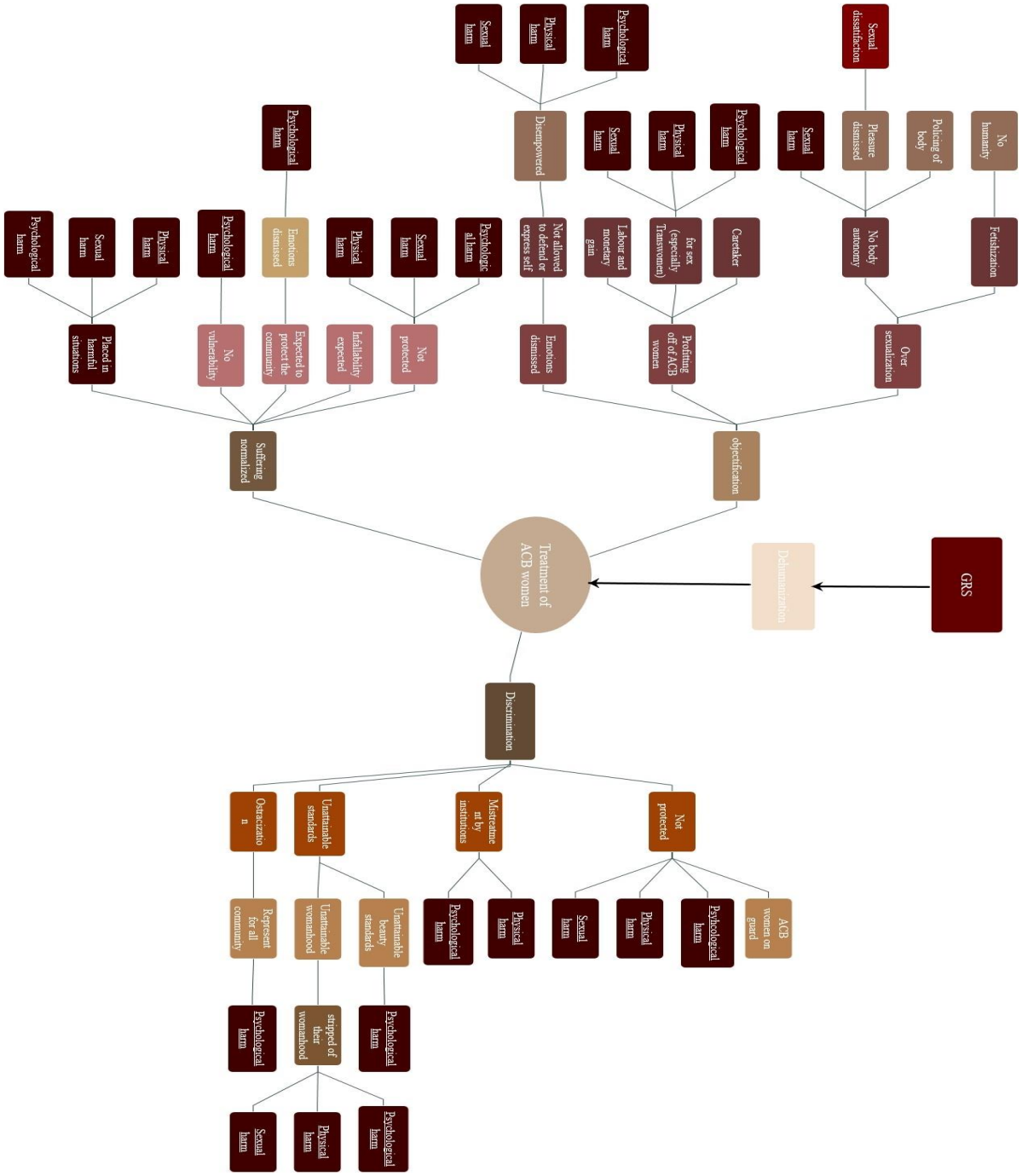
To clarify the themes, various hierarchical charts and concept maps were created. Hierarchical charts were created for each code group such as "treatment of ACB women", "bystander behaviours" etc. to detect the most cited codes, their aggregates, and their source. These charts were then compared to facilitate the identification of repeated patterns and potential themes. From that, began the identification of the overarching theme of dehumanization. The student researcher then proceeded to create concept maps to further illustrate the relations between the codes (see Figure 5). From that three other themes were identified. These themes were identified based on the data and largely independent from established theoretical

frameworks of objectification, discrimination, and dehumanization. However, these frameworks were consulted and used for the understanding and describing of the results.

The first theme identified is that ACB women are dehumanized by internalized biases such as GRS. These are manifested through objectification, discrimination, and the dismissal of ACB women's emotions. The second theme is that this dehumanization is known and internalized by ACB individuals. This is observed in the way that the participants were able to share their beliefs regarding their perception which remained consistent from participant to participant. Moreover, participants expressed significant distress and difficulty because of their awareness. They also indicated working or having worked toward deconstructing the discussed internalized biases. The third theme is that GRS influence bystander behaviour through dehumanization. This was reported when participants noted that Imani would primarily be perceived as a Jezebel. They also indicated that the categorization to any of the other GRS would be detrimental to Imani in the sexual assault vignette. They reported that it could lead to victim blaming, reduced bystander support for Imani and could even escalate the situation. The fourth theme is that the participants' universities offered limited sexual health and safety information and resources. Moreover, these practices could reinforce the dehumanization of its students. This also illustrates how dehumanization could be multi-leveled as evident in large-scale systems such as in established institutions. This was observed in the way that only some of the students knew of these resources with limited awareness of them. Additionally, no students indicated that their university made efforts to touch on the effects of dehumanization on sexual assault. Lastly, the effect of objectification could be observed in the way that most of the reported efforts were focused on the physical aspects of sex and on male condoms.

Figure 5

Mind Map of Themes and Codes



Note. This is a visual representation of key themes from the focus groups. Dark brown colour = harm (psychological, physical and sexual).

Discussion

The persistent and unique nature of post-secondary DFSA signals that there might be a lack of understanding regarding its nature. Alternatively, it is possible that the findings are not effectively applied to result in positive change. This study argues that it is both, it is possible that the literature is primarily focused on solving the correlates (e.g. alcohol) of sexual assault with less attention to its roots in inequality leading to a limited understanding of the issue (Bakari, 2019; Benoit, 2015 Carraway, 1999; Wooten, 2015). For example, many universities have resulted to limiting alcohol use as an attempt to reduce the rates of sexual assault. However, Armstrong et al. (2006) and Gross et al., (2006) found that limiting alcohol use does not reduce incidences of sexual assault and might in fact result in the opposite. Additionally, many researchers have investigated the psychological determinants of perpetrators and victims while others have looked at the contextual determinants (Armstrong et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2000; Kingree & Thompson, 2014; West, 2016; Wiersma-Mosleyet al., 2023). Although these findings are important to the literature and to the understanding of sexual assault, they are approached from an individualistic lens as opposed to a systemic or community-based approach. This means that the understanding and the approach of this multi-faceted issue is often one-sided. As a result, the effectiveness of interventions might be limited and short-lasting (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; DeGue et al., 2012).

It can be argued that marginalization, though it disproportionately harms those marginalized, harms everyone, including those with privilege. Beauvoir (1976) theorized on the interconnectedness of humans. The uplifting of certain voices and the exclusion of many others limits the validity of findings; this impacts all research (Daly, 2020). Therefore, the theory argues that it is not possible to have the meaningful impact that many researchers hope for during

their research when others are oppressed and excluded from the conversation. This highlights how marginalization has impacted the advancement of all literature. Specifically, this exclusion can lead to a disjointed and partial view of issues as complex as DFSA. In brief, it is likely that the lack of research deriving from an intersectional lens has widespread adverse affect on ACB communities, other communities, and the literature as a whole.

The effects can be observed in the way that the literature often disregards the historical and systemic roots of sexual assault. As a result, few studies have looked at the impact of well establish systems, such as sexism and racism, have on sexual assault. This study found that ACB women are persistently perceived in negative and inaccurate ways, and as a result encounter significant undue treatment. These negative perceptions appear to stem from the history and maintenance of misogyny, racism and heterosexism and is know as the practice delegitimization (Haslam, 2006; hooks, 1981; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Kendall, 2021; Moradi, 2013; West, 2006). Participants reported that they are aware of the roots of these stereotypes and expressed their disapproval. However, the findings show that they are often reinforced by participants themselves and everyone in their lives irrespective of gender. These negative perceptions and GRS appear to be the same ones noted by prominent scholars such as hooks (1990) and Crenshaw (1989) decades ago, illustrating the permanency and potency of these stereotypes.

Dehumanization of ACB Women

Observed throughout the discussion was the theme of ACB women being dehumanized through the use of GRS. Dehumanization is defined as the interpersonal and societal process of perceiving and treating a person as other or not human at all (Gervais, 2013; Haslam, 2006;

Haslam et al., 2013; Gothreau et al., 2023; Kronfeldner, 2021). As a result, groups and people who are dehumanized are often denied some or all human traits, emotions, and abilities (Haslam, 2006; Kronfeldner, 2021). These groups and people are also attributed negative characteristics and excluded from being seen as respectable and human through delegitimization (Haslam, 2006). These definitions were supported by the findings of this study which shows that ACB women are often portrayed in reductive and negative ways that highlight their body parts and unflattering traits such as being loud, ghetto, unprofessional and lazy. Many participants reported that ACB women's emotions and opinions are often dismissed. This suggests that ACB women are perceived as lacking full human traits and nuance and are portrayed as object-like and as having limited abilities.

Moreover, it appears that ACB women must fit into one of the GRS and any perceived trait must fit neatly into that category or she is reclassified into a more appropriate group. For example, participants noted that Imani would originally be seen as a Jezebel unless she expressed anger and disinterest towards Mike. They noted that this would then lead to her being seen as an ABW and treated as such. This suggested that ACB women can be categorized in more than one GRS, but probably not at the same time. Further demonstrating the limited nuance and humanity allotted to ACB women.

One noted practice specific to ACB women is dehumanization through the stripping of womanhood or femininity. As Danni noted, this practice is especially normalized because of the limited ways that ACB women are portrayed which they noted as being primarily functional such as for sex or caretaking. They reflected that once women's traits threaten these functions they are stripped of their womanhood. Current findings show that this is done by defining ACB women as inherently aggressive, masculine, and strong which presents them as something other than

woman. These characteristics stand in stark contrast to the hegemonic feminine ideal of White heterosexual women being delicate, physically weak, and submissive (Collins, 2002; hooks, 1981; Noble, 2013). As a result, ACB women are delegitimized, which Haslam (2006) noted is an effective vehicle towards exclusion and discrimination.

As participants, such as Danni noted, womanhood although often used to oppress, has significant protective factors. Women who adhere to hegemonic femininity are more likely to be protected and helped (Collins, 2002; Haaken, 2017; hooks, 1981). They are also more likely to be designated as "off limits" to assault (Armstrong et al., 2006; Kendall, 2021). This perceived deficit in feminine characteristics could explain this study's findings of ACB women being often harmed and not being protected by those around them, their community their institutions. Moreover, previous findings suggest that ACB women who are perceived as Jezebel SBW and ABW are perceived as lacking in femininity (Collins, 2002; Donovan & Williams, 2002; Gillum, 2002; hooks, 1981). Although this study did not explore this relation, the belief that ACB women who are perceived as Jezebel and ABW would be seen as "fair game" was detected. This supplements claims made by Armstrong et al., (2006) and Kendall (2021). Additionally, by leaving ACB women at a constant deficit, it perpetuates the feelings of powerlessness, confusion and of not being enough. This could explain why Gina and Sama reported emotional distress and insecurities when they try to meet these unattainable standards.

Furthermore, the findings identified objectification as one of the most common ways that ACB women are dehumanized. Because of objectification they are regarded as objects. As a result, their human traits are disregarded and their instrumental qualities are emphasized (Gervais, 2013; Gothreau et al., 2023; Haslam, 2006; Haslam et al., 2013). Similarly, sexual objectification is the focus on the sexual body parts and function of the individual (Gervais,

2013; Gothreau et al., 2013). Current findings show that ACB women are often either seen as hyper-sexual, care-takers, protectors of their community and trendsetters. The sexual objectification of ACB women results in them being viewed as sex objects. This perpetuates the belief that ACB women's main function is for the consumption of men. This could explain why current findings show that ACB women are described in explicit physical ways, their consent and pleasure is not prioritized, and their emotions are dismissed (Kronfeldner, 2021). This illustrates the myth that sex is not a mutual act between two or more people but rather the use of an ACB woman's body. The body, according to recent findings, is believed to be especially constructed for a man's sexual experience. This definition of sex, which highlights the objectification principle of instrumentality, disturbingly matches that of previous sexual assault definitions (Kronfeldner, 2021). Participants noted that this instrumentality or reduction to sexual body parts and function is especially pronounced in women who do not adhere to societal standards such as ACB cisgender and transgender women, Gay and lesbian ACB women, disabled women, and gender-nonconforming individuals (Benoit et al., 2015; Coulter et al., 2017; Kronfeldner, 2021; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015; Staples & Fuller, 2020).

Participants noted that experienced objectification and sexual objectification results in the diminished agency, autonomy, and advocacy of ACB women. This has been found in other studies as well which suggest that objectification is manifested in seven ways, four of which are reflected in the findings: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, and denial of subjectibility (Gervais 2013; Haslam, 2006; Kronfeldner, 2021). This study found that the denial of autonomy and agency resulted in ACB women's bodies and behaviours being policed, and fetishization. Moreover, they were often not allowed or able to advocate for themself, their safety, their sexual needs, and sexual pleasure (Gervais, 2013). This was found to have many

negative effects to varying degree which ranges from reduced sexual exploration and pleasure and in the worse case scenarios it led to increased exposure to harm (Gervais, 2013).

The findings of this study align with previous ones that suggest that dehumanization of ACB women was found to facilitate discrimination at the systemic, community and individual levels which leads to ostracization, physical and psychological harm (Gervais, 2013; Haslam, 2006; Kronfeldner, 2021; Moradi, 2013). Current and previous findings state that this is maintained by the unattainable Eurocentric and hegemonic feminine standards. The discrimination of ACB women is apparent in the news (Moradi, 2013). Carla's account of Lauren Kim-Fields' passing poignantly illustrated how the news proceeded to objectify and stereotype her, while concurrently portraying her alleged killer as a friendly White man who loves nature. This practice is believed to perpetuate victim blaming and the delegitimizing of ACB women's experiences even in death (Kronfeldner, 2021). It also clearly illustrates the existence and reinforcement of the dehumanization of ACB women at multiple levels (Gervais, 2013; Haslam, 2006).

Internalization of Dehumanization

The second theme states that ACB individuals are cognizant of their experienced dehumanization and internalize it to varying degrees. This internalization might be most detrimental to ACB women and to those with an additional social identities such as women who are queer or with disabilities (Moradi 2013). For instance, Sama noted that she suffered multiple burnouts because of these harmful ideals.

The internalization of the SBW can be noted in the reported disconnection from the self and emotions. As a result of needing to be strong and infallible Gina noted that she learned to

disregard her own emotions. She stated that she is currently unlearning this habit but finds it difficult. This aligns with previous research which shows that the internalization of the SBW can lead to minimizing of physical and emotional needs (Donovan, 2011; Thomas et al., 2004; Watson & Hunter, 2015). Similarly, the internalization of ABW was found to limit the expression of ACB women (Ashley, 2014; Thomas et al., 2004). As stated by Bianca, no expression of emotions, opinions or objections were seen as acceptable. As a result, ACB women learn to remain quiet, and to not advocate for themselves (Ashley, 2014; Thomas et al, 2004). The internalization of Jezebel was observed in participants' reports of diminished sexual satisfaction and agency and advocacy, which aligns with previous findings (Gervais, 2013). All participants noted that they do not agree with these GRS, however they all indicated having to work towards deconstructing what they unconsciously learned.

Dehumanization and Bystander Behaviour

Findings suggest that the dehumanizing perceptions of ACB women can influence bystander behaviour. Participants reported that based on Imani's drinking and friendliness, she could be categorized as a Jezebel as opposed to being perceived as a person engaging in the normal social human behaviour of drinking. They anticipated that this categorization could lead to her being targeted. This supports findings from previous studies, which detected an unspoken rule about who is "fair game" based on certain characteristics (Armstrong et al., 2006). Studies found that individuals who are flirty and intoxicated would also be judged as less respectable which could elicit less positive bystander behaviour (Burn, 2008; Dupuis & Clay, 2013; Gillum, 2002; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Pugh et al., 2016). Correspondingly, participants cited that being sexually objectified and perceived as a Jezebel could result in being judged, blamed by party guests, and could increase the risk of victimization by individuals such as Mike

(Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Pugh et al., 2016; Hetzel-Riggin et al., 2021). This also aligns with previous findings that show that dehumanization manifested as objectification, is related to increased gender-based violence (Awasthi, 2017; Cheeseborough et al., 2020; Gervais & Eagan, 2017; Gillum, 2002; Zounlome et al., 2019). Participants repeatedly voiced their distaste for the implication of ACB women inviting men's attention by being attractive or intoxicated. They also voiced concern for Imani being perceived in a similar way by Mike and bystanders.

Overall, dehumanization positions an ACB woman's sexuality outside of herself and maintains it as her main function, while disregarding her human traits such as subjectivity and autonomy. This is troubling as partygoers could assume that Mike's attention is a wanted outcome without considering Imani's rights and emotions. The findings suggest that party guests could also have miscategorized Imani's behaviour as inherently flirty and seductive as a Jezebel instead of being the effect of her intoxication. Therefore, Participants anticipate that bystanders would assume that the goal of Imani's behaviour is the attraction of Mike. As a result, they would be less likely to intervene and more likely to not notice the events as they escalate. Participants also feared that if the assault occurred that bystanders would further use the Jezebel stereotype in the aftermath to judge and silence Imani. Sama maintained that the partying scene is not a safe space for ACB women who might be perceived as a Jezebel. She reported that, bystanders could easily become perpetrators who would bully or intimidate her by ripping her clothes, calling her names, or drawing on her if she were to fall asleep.

Participants noted that Imani could be perceived as an ABW which independently and compounded with the Jezebel stereotype could escalate the situation. Bianca and Sama expressed fear that Imani's anger or objections to Mike could lead to bystanders and Mike using

intimidation and violence against her. This negative response to ACB women's attempts at advocacy or expressing their emotions was cited throughout the study. The theme repeated throughout is that GRS strip ACB women of human abilities such as their autonomy, emotions, and safety while facilitating its reinforcement. The findings show that strong negative reactions are often expected when ACB women display traits that disprove their perceived limited abilities.

Participants noted that ACB women are also expected to adhere to the SBW. This means that they would be expected to defend themselves if needed. Carla noted that many bystanders would expect Imani to speak up or to fight Mike off if she were not interested in him. Sama noted that in addition to the expectation of being capable of protecting herself, she feels that she is expected to "take the hits". This statement brings forward the underlying but substantial belief of the SBW, which is that ACB women are inevitably expected to suffer. Comparable expectations have been found by many studies that found that many believe that sexual assault is a normal and inevitable part of women's lives (Benoit et al., 2016; Zounlome et al., 2019),.

It seems that participants anticipated that bystanders would not detect the harm being done or perhaps that they would assume it is normal. As per dehumanization's denial of subjectivity principle, SBW removes the inherent human vulnerability of feeling pain and ascribes it to ACB women's mythical strength (Gervais 2013; Haslam, 2006). As a result of their assumed Amazonian strength, it is believed that they do not need the support of others as regular people might. The findings suggest that bystanders would either not detect the risk or ignore it with the expectation that Imani would not need help. This entrenched belief likely stems from slave practices where ACB women were forced to endure harsh labour, physical punishment, and sexual violence (hooks, 1981; Kendall, 2020; West, 2006; Zounlome et al., 2019). These

findings show that these practices although centuries-old, have significant impact on how ACB women are dehumanized by bystanders and their community alike. Bianca noted that in addition to the normalization of suffering, ACB women are not taught how to recover from the pain that they have endured. This could explain why Watson and Hunter (2015) found that ACB women who identify with the SBW stereotype reported lower help-seeking attitudes. From the findings it can be gathered that participants believe that many fail to recognize the harm done to ACB women and many become angry and dismissive when they attempt to point it out (Watson & Hunter, 2015; Zounlome et al., 2019).

These findings demonstrate the harmfulness of these stereotypes as they dehumanize ACB women and in turn force them into two-dimensional inaccurate categories that actively harm them and their communities. Recent findings show that none of the stereotypes have protective factors and that they all cause significant harm ranging from psychological harm such as burnouts to and physical harm such as sexual assault. From this, it can be concluded that GRS function as a powerful tool to dehumanize ACB women. Their influence extends to bystander behaviour and could result in reduced positive bystander behaviour such as intervening and might promote negative bystander behaviours such as antagonizing the victim.

The ability to detect and willingness to approach seemed higher than previous studies (George & Martinez, 2002; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017). All participants identified the risk of sexual assault and reported an intention to intervene. It is possible that these findings might not be representative due to the small sample size. It is also possible that some participants' identification with Imani, could have enabled them to detect risk and made them more willing to intervene. This was supported by the sisterhood effect noted among participants who reported that they would be highly discerning of safety cues regarding Imani. They

indicated that they feel a sense of responsibility to protect fellow ACB women because of their own unfavorable experiences and their observations of the negative perceptions and unfair treatment.

Additionally, most participants reported similar race and gender to Imani which could heighten the sense of responsibility and intention to intervene as per the findings of previous research (Bridges et al., 2021; Donovan, 2007; Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017). Most previous studies were completed with a mixed or primarily White sample. This means that participants might have had reduced sense of responsibility and intention to intervene because of the differences in ethnicity and gender between the depicted victim and the bystanders (Katz, Merrilees, LaRose et al., 2017; Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier et al., 2017). This demonstrates the importance of replicating this study with a bigger sample. It also emphasizes the importance of centering ACB voices in the studies of bystander behaviour when it comes to DFSA. Social desirability might also be higher in focus groups which could have influenced participants' responses and expressed intent to intervene (Bergen & Labonte, 2020)

Even though all participants identified the situation as sexual assault they avoided using the word assault. Instead, they used words such as "taking advantage" or "no consent". The reason for this remains unclear. It is believed that it could have been out of concern of upsetting the other participants or out of fear of overstepping and accusing Mike. This apprehension could be observed in the incongruence between their conception and their hypothetical behaviour. Participants conceptualized the situation as unsafe due to Imani being unable to consent but reported that they would defer to Imani's decision to continue to engage. Usually in dangerous situations, bystanders do not stop to check with the victim regarding whether to remove them

from a situation. Oftentimes, bystanders spring into action and confront the perpetrator and create distance between the perpetrator and victim. Contrastingly, although these participants were capable of identifying a threat, many reported being afraid of overstepping. This suggests that intervening does not adhere to the socially accepted behaviours of a party guest as stated by previous research (Armstong et al., 2006). They found that there is a subscription to maintaining the party atmosphere and protecting predatory behaviour. This could also be linked to participants' fear of being perceived as the ABW which they indicated could be particularly harmful in these situations.

Participant's apprehension to defining the situation as assault and their fear of overstepping, further suggests that DFSA could be regarded as an immoral sexual act but not as a serious crime and violation of a person. This is observed in participants' perception of the situation as sex that could be harmful depending on Imani's state of mind as opposed to it being sexual assault. This could be a result of the poor understanding of consent, the acceptance of sexual violence in society, and the internalization of rape myths which state that "real" rape constitutes of force, or the use of weapon (Kelley, 2023; Kendall, 2021; Zounlome et al., 2019). As a result, sexual assault facilitated by implicit coercion or by drugs are not considered assault but merely immoral. From these findings it can be gathered that even students with a strong understanding of consent, internalized biases, positive bystander behaviour and sexual assault have some internalization of the discussed biases, struggle with their understanding of DFSA and require additional support regarding their bystander behaviour. Lastly, these findings illustrate the normalization of sexual assault even within the students who reject it.

As discussed, the occurrence of sexual assault and DFSA are worrisome. However, according to participants, there is lack of program centered on prevention and promotion of safe

sex. This is disappointing, because universities are crucial agents in the reduction of DFSA (Wooten, 2016). However, findings show that most of their efforts are directed at the controlling of STIs and unplanned pregnancies. This is observed in the reported distribution of male condoms and the lack of information regarding the dangers of alcohol, prevention of DFSA and the promotion of sexual safety. Additionally, little to no information is provided regarding the effects of GRS on bystander behaviour. This is disadvantageous because currents findings show that these beliefs are embedded in our communities and society. Also embedded is the acceptance of DFSA on university campuses (Armstrong et al., 2006). It can be argued that universities' reinforcement of dehumanizing practices, focus on physical contraception and lack of focus on sexual safety and DFSA prevention further reinforces that acceptance.

This study demonstrated the importance of centering ACB communities in the discussion of sexual assault especially given the historical and systemic roots (hooks, 1981; West, 2006; Zounlome et al., 2019). It is important to keep that conversation alive to better understand complex issues such as sexual assault. This study supports the need for more intersectional research on the effects of GRS on bystander behaviour during DFSA. It contributes to better informing the development of Canadian universities' prevention programs that center ACB safety. ACB students remain especially vulnerable, as they are rarely centered during sexual assault prevention efforts (Burns et al., 2019; Woten, 2017; Zounlome et al., 2019).

It is important to note that the study assessed students' knowledge of sexual health and safety approaches in their universities. It did not directly assess the efforts made by those institutions. Therefore, it is unclear whether the problem is the lack of available resources or the lack of knowledge of these resources. However, it can be argued that either possibility remains troubling, as it signals a lack of accessibility to support.

Limitations

The study made some important findings however some limitations were present. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small. According to Smith & Osborn (2008) a small sample size is not severe in IPA as it allows for deeper exploration. The goal is not to generalize but to deeply understand and to serve as one unit of data for which to build on. However, the small size means that there is limited data gathered. This also means that any attrition could significantly affect the data. One participant had to leave early due to time restriction. For that reason, the second half of the focus group turned into an individual interview. The lack of interaction with others might have led to less exploration of the issues.

This study was centered on the experiences of anglophone participants. This led to the exclusion of francophone ACB participants who might be significantly marginalized as per the accounts of Gina and Sama from the study and findings by Benoit et al., (2015). Additionally in Canada, ACB individuals tend to speak French more than English in their homes. They are among the largest groups of francophones in Canada but might have limited access to services and space due to the language barrier and discrimination (Benoit et al., 2015; Simpson, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2019). This suggests a missed opportunity for a deeper understanding of sexual assault in ACB communities. Given the diversity of ACB communities, future research should remain cognizant of the language barriers and aim to include as many languages as possible (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2022, Statistics Canada, 2019).

During the screening process, two prospective participants opted out of the study after being advised of potential discussions around non-consensual experiences. This signals that the sample consisted of a specific population. It might not include survivors of sexual assault due to the triggering topic. It could also attract those who might be interested and passionate about the

topic and who feel comfortable discussing the topic of sexual safety and GRS. This means that the population of ACB individuals who are the most vulnerable to the effects of GRS and sexual violence might not have been represented in this sample. More research is needed, and it might be helpful to design it to include different groups of ACB individuals.

The study did not establish a definition of "woman". Participants were given the opportunity to define as they would like, and the interviewer made sure to use inclusive language. However, because of this open stance, it is unclear whether the participants' perceptions were of exclusively cisgender women or of all women such as cisgender and transgender. Although the sample included individuals who identified as queer and gender queer, and there were intentional inclusions of the experiences of same-sex couples and of transgender women; it is important to recognize that Cisgender heterosexual women were most often discussed throughout the focus group. Furthermore, due to the heterosexual and cisgender privilege it is possible that this lack of definition might have resulted in the findings mostly centering on cisgender heterosexual ACB women (Staples & Fuller, 2021). As expected, this othering can reinforce marginalization as noted by intersectionality. For example, queer ACB women reported elevated levels of sexual assault (Benoit et al., 2015; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). Just as the participants noted that stereotyped ACB women might be targeted for sexual violence the same is found for transgender women and gender-nonconforming ACB individuals (Coulter et al., 2017; Kendall, 2021; Staples & Fuller, 2021). This illustrates the significance of including diverse experiences in the discussions as they might affect the bystanders' responses and foster an inclusive space.

The sample consisted of mostly cisgender women. The perception of men (both cis and trans), transgender women and gender-nonconforming individuals was severely lacking.

Although all the participants' perspectives were invaluable; it is especially important to have a diverse sample that would be representative of a true social setting. Additionally, it would have been important to gather the perspectives of cis-gender men as they are often the perpetrators and have social power (Benoit et al., 2016). Future studies should make an effort to intentionally recruit and explicitly state the welcoming of transgender, gender-nonconforming and cis-gender men's contributions to research.

It was unclear whether participants pictured Mike as ACB. This is important because this study aimed to study sexual assault within ACB communities. It is believed that their responses could vary based on Mike's perceived ethnicity as noted by Bianca (Donovan, 2007).

Lastly, the findings of this study were largely hypothetical and were not a result of observed bystander behaviour. Thus, the anticipated effects of GRS on bystander behaviour were based on the perceptions of participants and not of actual bystanders. At various parts of the study participants were asked to imagine themselves as bystanders but responses could differ if the situation took place in real life. It is also important to note that these bystanders were aware of the GRS and their effects which could have influenced their responses and intentions. Additionally, the previous discussions regarding GRS could have influenced their responses. It is likely that when faced with the real threats of DFSA, the presence and effects of GRS could be largely subconscious and implicit. Which could lead to two possibilities among many. Firstly, it could make it significantly difficult for bystanders to become aware of their biases and deconstruct them in the moment which could negatively influence ACB bystander behaviour. Alternatively, it is possible that the effects of GRS are so implicit that they do not make a difference in ACB bystander behaviour. The latter is not likely, as recent findings suggest the

strong influence of GRS. However, these possibilities signal the need for further research and the use of diverse methodologies in the exploration of this topic.

In Conclusion

In Conclusion, the findings show that participants perceived that ACB women are negatively depicted and treated by those around them, their communities, and established systems. The most cited negative treatments by participants were: 1.) the objectification of ACB women; 2.) the unattainable standards; 3.) discrimination and racism; 4.) the dismissal of ACB women's emotions and experiences. The reported depictions and treatments were believed to be rooted in the systemic dehumanization of ACB women. With many participants noting that ACB women's humanity appears to be severely limited and controlled by others. This dehumanization was found to be internalized by ACB individuals to varying degrees, even for those who consciously aim to deconstruct their internalization. The present study also found that GRS function as a powerful tool to dehumanize ACB women due to their representation of ACB women as 2-dimensional people. The dehumanizing function of GRS was explored to understand how it affects bystander behaviour. Findings suggest that they might lead to negative bystander behaviour such as ignoring, victim blaming, and intimidation. Importantly, all participants identified the vignette as assault and expressed concern for the victim, Imani. They all shared their intended bystander behaviour which indicated intervening in various forms. Most common bystander behaviour was to address Imani or to request that her friends intervene.

Student reported not being confident about their knowledge or being unaware of sexual safety programming and resources on their campuses. This indicated a lack of accessibility to support for these ACB students. This also suggests that participants were no provided any DFSA prevention information from their universities. This is important to note because Benoit et al.,

(2015) would assess these students as highly vulnerable to sexual violence in Canada because all identified as young and racialized and many as women, gender-nonconforming, part of the LGBTQ+, francophone etc. This is additionally alarming given the steady and high prevalence of DFSA, on Canadian campus. Therefore, it would be important to investigate whether students, especially ACB students, are being supported by their universities when it comes to the prevention of DFSA.

These findings suggest that historical and sociocultural contexts could in fact influence the experiences of ACB survivors and bystanders. They also further illustrate that unlike what many ethnicity-neutral university prevention programs seem to assume, DFSA does not exist independent of sociocultural and historical contexts (Grimes, 2021; Wooten, 2016; Zounlome, 2019). It questions the assumption of the "ideal victims" and calls for additional research that inquires into the experiences of racialized and marginalized students when it comes to DFSA (Carraway, 1999; Pietsch, 2010; Wooten, 2016). Furthermore, the findings illuminate the need for culturally-competent and intersectional prevention programs.

Future Directions

Statistics Canada (2019) found that the ACB population has doubled in size in the past 20 years. This growth is projected to continue. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the proportion of ACB women, both immigrant and Canadian born, with a post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2020). As Canada's population diversifies, and ACB women's post-secondary enrollment increases it is imperative that research and institutions alike develop tools and resources to protect and support racialized women.

Additional qualitative and quantitative research are needed to further investigate ACB experiences in relation to DFSA. Moreover, it would be advantageous to test the possible relation

between dehumanization, GRS and DFSA through quantitative approaches. It would also be important for future research to develop theories regarding these suspected relations through the method of grounded theory. Principally, the use of the intersectional lens would be crucial in the inclusion and thorough exploration of the experiences of diverse identities within ACB communities such as queer, men, gender-conforming and individuals. The findings of the present study can be expanded in future research with the aim of developing culturally-competent and identity-affirming DFSA prevention programs.

Despite, these important findings, universities' efforts towards sexual assault prevention remains unknown by its most vulnerable students. It would be important for universities to work towards investigating their students' knowledge of existing services and resources intentionally and collaboratively and to work towards improving the awareness of their student population. It is also imperative that these powerful institutions invest intentionally into developing sexual safety and DFSA prevention programs to better protect their students as they are especially vulnerable to sexual assault during their years in post-secondary (Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et all, 2009; Lasky et al., 2017; Senn et al; 2014).

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Appendix A

REB Certificate

UNIVERSITÉ
SAINT·PAUL
UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICAT D'ÉTHIQUE
ETHICS CERTIFICATE

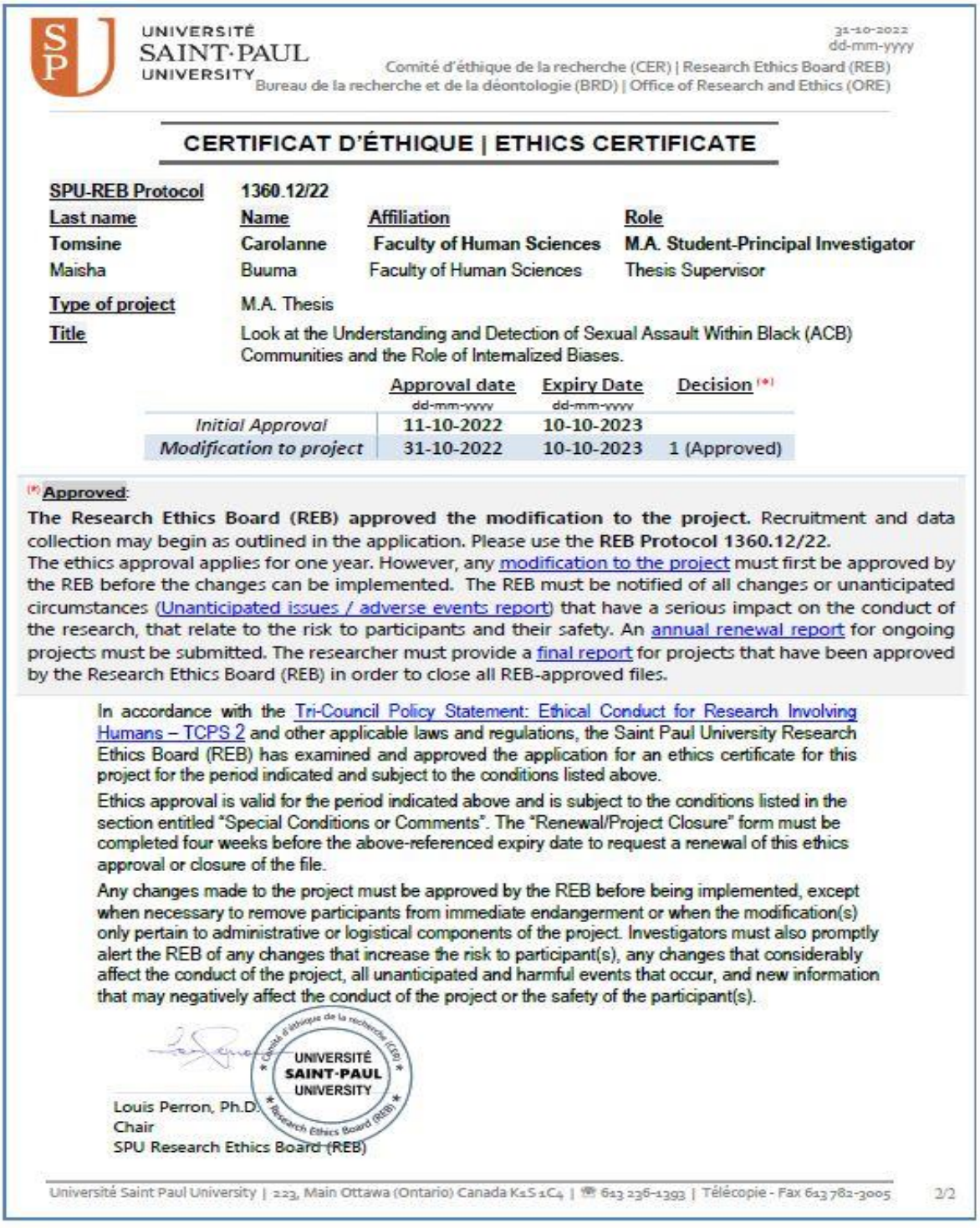
1360.12/22 - Carolanne Tomsine

M.A. Candidate (Student number: 6416149)

Look at the Understanding and Detection of Sexual Assault Within Black (ACB) Communities and the Role of Internalized Biases

October 31, 2022

Université Saint Paul University
223, Main Ottawa (Ontario) Canada K1S 1C4
Tel 613 236-1393 Fax 613 782-3005
https://ustpaul.ca



UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-PAUL UNIVERSITY

31-10-2022
dd-mm-yyyy

Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CER) | Research Ethics Board (REB)
Bureau de la recherche et de la déontologie (BRD) | Office of Research and Ethics (ORE)

CERTIFICAT D'ÉTHIQUE | ETHICS CERTIFICATE

SPU-REB Protocol	1360.12/22		
Last name	**Name**	**Affiliation**	**Role**
Tomsine	**Carolanne**	**Faculty of Human Sciences**	**M.A. Student-Principal Investigator**
Maisha	Buuma	Faculty of Human Sciences	Thesis Supervisor

Type of project M.A. Thesis

Title Look at the Understanding and Detection of Sexual Assault Within Black (ACB) Communities and the Role of Internalized Biases.

	Approval date dd-mm-yyyy	Expiry Date dd-mm-yyyy	Decision (*)
Initial Approval	11-10-2022	10-10-2023	
Modification to project	31-10-2022	10-10-2023	1 (Approved)

(*) **Approved**:

The Research Ethics Board (REB) approved the modification to the project. Recruitment and data collection may begin as outlined in the application. Please use the **REB Protocol 1360.12/22.**
The ethics approval applies for one year. However, any modification to the project must first be approved by the REB before the changes can be implemented. The REB must be notified of all changes or unanticipated circumstances (Unanticipated issues / adverse events report) that have a serious impact on the conduct of the research, that relate to the risk to participants and their safety. An annual renewal report for ongoing projects must be submitted. The researcher must provide a final report for projects that have been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) in order to close all REB-approved files.

In accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 and other applicable laws and regulations, the Saint Paul University Research Ethics Board (REB) has examined and approved the application for an ethics certificate for this project for the period indicated and subject to the conditions listed above.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-PAUL UNIVERSITY
Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CER) * Research Ethics Board (REB)

Louis Perron, Ph.D.
Chair
SPU Research Ethics Board (REB)

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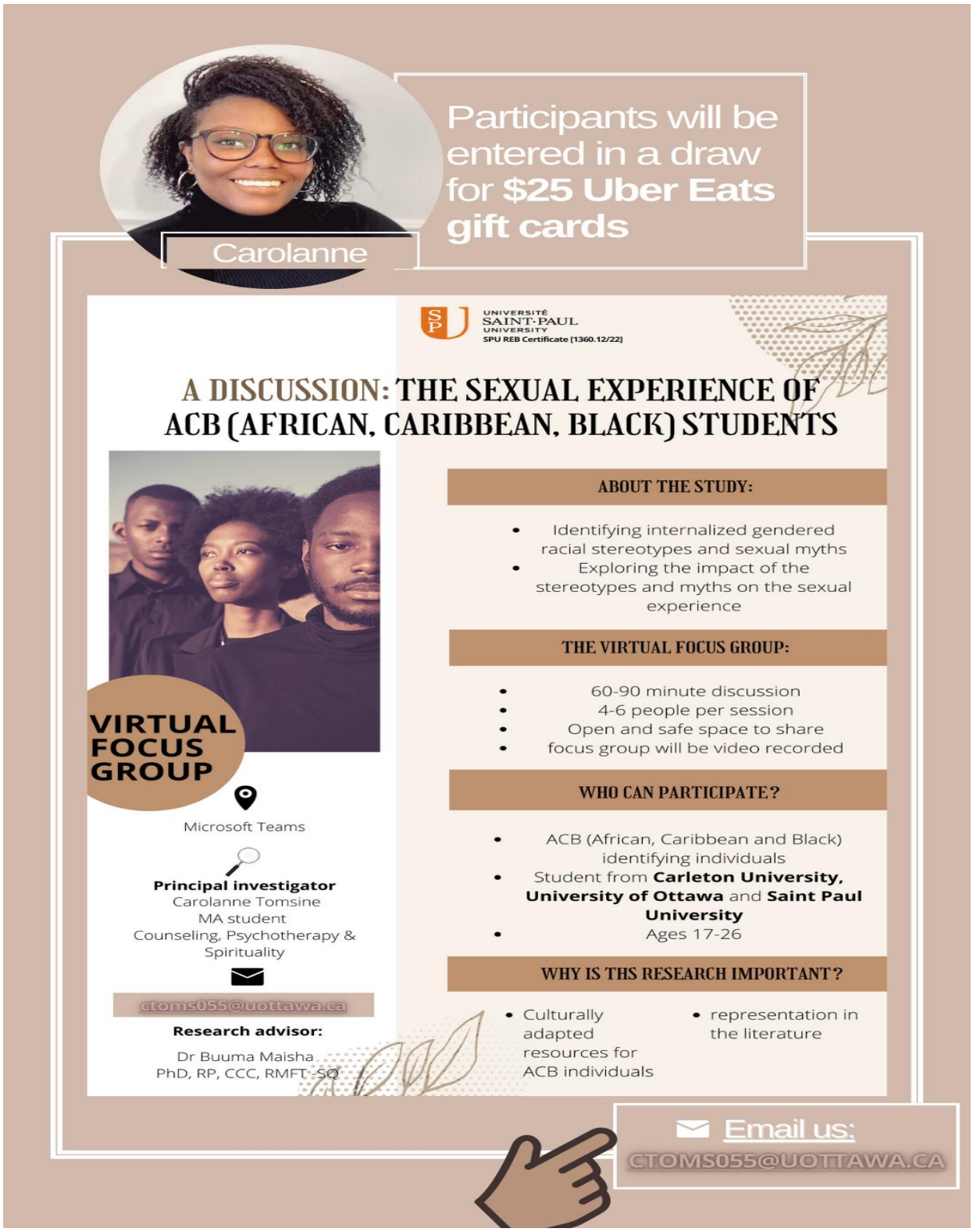
2/2

Appendix B

Recruitment Poster



Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-PAUL UNIVERSITY
SPU REB Certificate [1360.12/22]

A DISCUSSION: THE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE OF ACB (AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN, BLACK) STUDENTS

VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUP

Microsoft Teams

Principal investigator
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Dr Buuma Maisha
PhD, RP, CCC, RMFT-SO

Do you identify as *African, Caribbean or Black (ACB)*? Are you a University student from *Carleton University, University of Ottawa or University of Saint Paul*? Are you between the ages of *17 and 26*? If you've answered yes to all 3 criterias then you are invited to participate in the research named above. This project is being led by Psychotherapy, Counseling, and Spirituality MA student, Carolanne Tomsine of Saint Paul University. This project will be supervised by Professor and Dr. Buuma Maisha of Saint Paul University. Your voluntary participation could contribute to increasing knowledge in research that is centered on Black experiences, which to date remains underrepresented. This kind of research is necessary to support the well-being and safety of ACB individuals. Furthermore, the findings of this project will aim to inform the development of culturally-adapted resources and safety measures in University settings.

Your participation will consist of one 60-90 minute virtual focus group with 4-6 other people. In this safe and confidential space, you will be asked to share your thoughts on a vignette that will be presented to you. You are welcome to share as much or as little as you are comfortable with. Participants will be entered in a draw for $25 UberEats gift cards.

If you have any questions or are interested please contact the primary investigator, Carolanne Tomsine, at ctoms055@uottawa.ca.More information will be provided to you in the initial contact.

We thank you in advance for your interest and participation.
Carolanne Tomsine
Principal investigator
MA student

Appendix D

Screening and Consent Scripts

Screening and information script

Hello, is this _____? Pronouns

My name is Carolanne Tomsine from the study that you signed up for. Is now still a good time to talk?

- I would like to ensure that you are a student of one of our local universities?
- Are you between the ages of 17-26?
- Do you identify as African Caribbean or Black? How do you define that?
- Did anyone refer you?

Great! So as you already know, I am conducting a focus group about the role of internalized biases on the sexual Experiences of African, Caribbean and Black students. This group discussion is part of my Masters studies at Saint Paul University. I'm working under the supervision of Dr Buuma Maisha here at Saint Paul University, within the school of Counseling, Psychotherapy and Spirituality. Thank you for your interest in participating in my research. Before I go over everything, do you have any questions so far?

The focus groups will take place this Fall/Winter on Microsoft Teams. Please note that the focus group will be recorded but all recordings will remain secure. Do you have any questions or concerns regarding this?

I will be facilitating the discussions. Discussions will last about 60 to 90 minutes. You will be presented a vignette- a hypothetical situation and you will be asked to share your thoughts on it.

You will also be asked to share your personal experiences if you feel comfortable to do so. Please note that the discussions might revolve around consensual and non-consensual experiences that might be triggering, especially to someone who has past experiences with sexual assault. Would you be comfortable with proceeding? If you need more time to decide you can take it and contact us if you choose to move forward. Do you have any questions about that?

If participants is okay with proceeding

You will be in a group with about 3 other people. One of my priorities is to ensure that your identity remains confidential. So, I will ask that you choose a codename to use throughout the study. Participation is completely voluntary. This means that you can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. You can also choose to not respond to certain questions.

Your contribution is very important. There is a need for research that centers on Black experiences, especially on this topic. With the findings we can develop better resources and support for people just like you. Students who participate will be entered in a draw to win one of two $25 uber gift cards. Any questions about that? If you know of anyone who would want to participate and who you would be comfortable with participating please tell them about this opportunity.

Would you be interested in proceeding? Great! Within the next few weeks or days, you will receive a doodle poll to choose your preferred meeting time. Please use your codename. You will also receive another email with a link from Survey Monkey with some consent forms and a questionnaire. Please sign your real name in the consent forms. I will send you a third email to confirm the date of the meeting and password. I ask that you fill and return the forms 2 days

before your scheduled focus group date. Please remember to choose a codename and to use the same one throughout. You might find it helpful to write it down somewhere secure.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix E

Consent Form

Title of the study: ***A Look at the Understanding of Sexual Experiences Within African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) Communities and the Role of Internalized Biases***

SPU Ethics Certificate: 1360.12/22

Primary Student Researcher: Carolanne Tomsine

Master of Art student, Counseling and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University

Ctoms055@uottawa.ca

Research Supervisor: Buuma M. Maisha PhD, RP, CCC, RFMT-SQ

Associate Professor, Counseling and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University

613-236-1393 ext. 2461

bmaisha@ustpaul.ca

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by *Carolanne Tomsine and Buuma Maisha (supervisor)*

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to explore the understanding of the ACB (African, Caribbean, Black) communities when it comes to sexual experiences. Participants' internalization of biases and its impact on the perception of certain situations will be investigated. The results of this study will inform the advancement of future research on the topic

and the development of educational materials, as well as the promotion of safe sexual experiences on Canadian campuses.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of 1 online focus group discussion that will last between 90 minutes to 120 minutes during which I will engage in discussions with other participants. The focus group has been scheduled for *(place, date and time of each session)*. I will also be asked to complete a 5-minute questionnaire with some demographic questions and participate in a focus groups. The focus groups will consist of 4-6 participants.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I volunteer some personal information in a group discussion and reflect on some difficult situations. This may cause me to feel uncomfortable and emotional. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks. All participants will be asked to take a vow of confidentiality, names will not be shared among participants. A respectful and safe space will be maintained during session. A vignette will be used to minimize feelings of discomfort and distress. This means that the situation(s) discussed will not be based on my personal experiences (unless I wish to share) but on that of a fictional character.

Benefits: My participation in this study will contribute to the advancement of my knowledge and understanding. Additionally, the results will be used to prevent incidents similar to those discussed in the study within ACB communities. It will also inform educational and social support initiatives for ACB individuals.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purpose of this research and the development of future research and initiatives. I understand that my confidentiality will be protected. Everyone will be asked to sign a confidentiality and safe space form, consenting to maintain a safe and judgement-free zone and to keep what was shared within the group confidential. Focus group transcripts and recordings will be password protected.

Data collection is done via email/ Internet; in order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser and locking your screen or device when you are no longer using them / when you have completed the study.

Anonymity will be protected in the following manner: my name will be separated from my response. I will be using a codename during the focus groups. During data analyses the code names will also be separated from the responses. I understand that I will be asked to keep my camera on during the study and that it will be recorded but that my name and other personal information will be protected. The participants of my focus group and the researchers will be the only ones that know of my participation. My contributions, and identity will not be shared with any of the other focus groups. Focus group transcripts and recordings will be password protected.

Conservation of data: The data collected *(zoom recordings of focus group, transcripts, notes, forms and demographic questions etc.)* will be kept in a secure manner. They will be kept on a

password protected USB and can only be accessed by the researchers on a password protected computer. Additionally, all files that can be password-protected will be locked. Lastly, all recordings and identifying data will be deleted within five years.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal might still be used. If I choose to withdraw during the focus group, I will send the researcher a private message on zoom before leaving the session. The researcher will check in with me at the end of the focus group to ensure that I am okay.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by *Carolanne Tomsine* of the *(Master of Art student, Counseling and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University), which research is under the supervision of (Buuma Maisha).*

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research and Ethics, Saint Paul University, 223 Main Street, Ottawa, ON K1S 1C4
Tel.: (613) 236-1393

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____Date:_____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date:_____

Appendix F

Demographic Questions

1) Choose Codename (remember or write it down somewhere):

_____

2) Identifying gender (choose one):

a) Female

b) Male

c) Nonbinary

d) Other: _____

e) Prefer not to say:

3) Age (choose one)

a) 17-19

b) 20-23

c) 24-26

4) Current level of education (choose one)

a) 1st-2nd year undergraduate

b) 3-4th year undergraduate

c) Graduate (MA)

d) Graduate PhD

e) Please check off if this is your second undergraduate program _____

5) Ethnic identity(ies) (choose all that applies):

a) Black (born and primarily have roots in Canada)

b) Caribbean/West Indies identifying (born or primarily have roots in the Caribbean or West Indies)

c) African identifying (born or primarily have roots in Africa)

d) Afro-Latino (born or primarily have roots in Latin America)

e) Other: _____

6) Religion or spiritual identities (choose all that applies):

a) Agnostic/Atheist

b) Buddhist

c) Christian

d) Hindu

e) Jewish

f) Muslim

g) Spiritual _____

h) Other _____

7) Political orientation (choose one):

a) very conservative

b) conservative

c) moderate

d) liberal

e) very liberal

f) Prefer not to say

g) Other _____

8) Relationship status (choose one):

a) Single and celibate

b) Single and dating

c) In a casual relationship

d) In a serious, committed relationship

e) Married

f) Widowed

g) Divorced/separated

h) Other (please specify)

9) Sexual orientation (choose one):

a) Asexual

b) Bisexual

c) Gay or lesbian

d) Heterosexual

e) Pansexual

f) Questioning

g) Other _____

h) Prefer not to say

Appendix G

Commitment to Confidentiality of Personal Information

Certificate of Ethics: 1360.12/22

I, _____ as a participant in *A Look at the Understanding of Sexual Experiences Within African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) Communities and the Role of Internalized Biases* study undertake not to communicate, disclose or reveal in any way whatsoever to anyone who has not signed an undertaking of confidentiality concerning this research, any personal or sensitive information that may be communicated to me in the course of this research, or the names of individuals entrusted to me.

Commitment to Maintaining a Safe Respectful Space

I, _____ understand that this is a safe space for I and others to share their views, beliefs, feelings and experiences. I vow to treat everyone in the focus group with respect. I understand that it is not my place to judge other's decisions and experiences.

I agree not to disclose any personally identifiable information and to maintain a safe space.

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Appendix H

Focus Group Question Guide

1. What are your thoughts and views on Black women?
2. What are the stereotypes that come to mind when you think of Black women?
3. How much do you believe in the characteristics of Black women that we have just discussed? 0-100%
4. Based on the stereotypes that we named, how do you think that they affect the way that Black women are treated and perceived?
5. Based on our discussions how do you compare Black women to women of other races?
6. What are your thoughts on Black women's sexuality?

VIGNETTE (Imagine your outfit, hairdo, your mood, etc.)

7. Imagine yourself in this situation- what do you think is happening?
    a. If some people consider it SA:
        i. Any other thoughts?
        ii. What would you say to someone who would say that its not SA? Where do you think they would be coming from? What do you think they would be basing their response on?
            1. What part of that do you think makes sense for you?

8. Imagining yourself in the vignette. What were your impressions and assumptions of Imani? How did you picture her? Do any the stereotypes that we discussed come to mind?
    a. Keeping the stereotypes discussed in mind what are some that would affect positively or negatively the way that you would interact with her in this scenario?
9. Do you identify with any of the people in this vignette? (sober guy, Imani or “you”). What happened?
10. Have you ever received any safe sex information in university?
11. We’ve discussed a lot today. Before we close does anyone have any other thoughts that they would like to share? Is there anyone that feels that they have changed their minds and would like to share more?

Appendix I

Vignette Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier, et al., (2017)

It is a typical Friday night and you are invited to a party that one of your classmates is throwing. You don't know the person very well, but since there isn't anything else going on tonight, you decide to go by yourself. You expect you'll run into some friends there.

When you first arrive, you realize that all of the drinks are gone. You are sober because you didn't have anything to drink before the party either. You walk to the back of the house looking for other people you know. As you look around you see empty beer bottles on a beer pong table, some people dancing, and empty bottles by a staircase leading up to some rooms. As you are standing, you look around for people you might know. You spot a girl you think you know from a class. She seems real drunk. She's talking to a girl you don't recognize, who says, ''Bye, Imani" and leaves. Just as you are considering leaving too, you see a seemingly sober guy who you think you might recognize. You see him approach Imani who has now just spilt her drink on herself. He takes a tissue from his pocket and starts to wipe the spilt drink from her sleeve. He seems to have no problem with coordination as he leans over her to introduce himself and starts to whisper into her ear. The sober guy then points the way to the stairs and leads Imani who is swaying back and forth, up the stairs with his hand low on her back. You see him open the first door and notice that there is a dresser, lamp, and bed in the corner of the room. The door closes behind them.

Appendix J

Study Debriefing

Title of the study: ***A Look at the Understanding of Sexual Experiences Within African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) Communities and the Role of Internalized Biases***

SPU Ethics Certificate: 1360.12/22

Principal investigator: Carolanne Tomsine

Master of Art student, Counseling and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University

Ctoms055@uottawa.ca

Research Supervisor: Buuma M. Maïsha PhD, RP, CCC, RFMT-SQ

Associate Professor, Counseling and Spirituality, Faculty of Human Sciences, Saint Paul University

613-236-1393 ext 2461

bmaisha@ustpaul.ca

Incomplete Disclosure: Incomplete disclosure was used for this study. This means that you were not informed of the real purpose or nature of the study. This research is in fact about sexual assault as opposed to consensual sexual experiences. The researchers were interested in exploring the role of gendered racial stereotypes and rape myths on bystanders' understanding and detection of sexual assault within ACB (African, Caribbean, Black) communities. This information was withheld as to not influence your responses. The researcher understands that this revelation could lead to you feeling uncomfortable. For this reason, you will find more

information below. You are encouraged to ask questions and you reserve the right to withdraw your data (see *Right to Withdraw Data* section). Please do not disclose research procedures and/or purpose to anyone who might participate in this study in the future as this could skew the results of the study.

How was this tested?

In this study, you were asked to imagine yourself in the vignette as a bystander. The vignette depicted subtle hints of drug-facilitated sexual assault. You were informed that the study was studying sexual experiences as opposed to sexual assault as to not influence the responses. Researchers were interested in whether participants identified the incident as sexual assault. All participants were asked to reflect on their endorsement of certain biases such as gendered racial stereotype (e.g. strong Black woman) and rape myths (e.g. victim blaming) and to share them in a group discussion. The effect of participants' endorsements of biases on their ability to detect sexual assault, their bystander behaviour, their perspective on the assault and victim were also explored. Additionally, the participants' real-life experiences as bystanders were discussed.

Main questions:

Studies indicated that biases such as gendered racial stereotypes and rape myths can affect the way that the victim is perceived. Studies also suggest that the victim's race can significantly influence bystander behaviour. However, most studies have not considered Black experiences and consisted of primarily White participants. Additionally, studies have yet to investigate the relation between those biases and bystanders' ability to detect and their perspective on the sexual assault incident. Subsequently, this research is interested in exploring that relation. The

researchers aimed to explore the role of gendered racial stereotypes and rape myths on the understanding and detection of sexual assault within ACB (African, Caribbean, Black) communities.

Why is this important to study?

Bystanders are present in 1/3 of sexual assault incidents and can be potent preventors of sexual assault if properly educated and supported. It is important to note, the experiences of racialized sexual assault bystanders and survivors are uniquely impacted by their race and gender among other identities. However, educational and prevention efforts have yet to consider or account for their impacts. This is especially disappointing because studies have suggested that the ethnic neutral approaches to prevention lack effectiveness in ACB populations. This suggests that ACB bystanders are less supported and ACB individuals like Imani, are less protected. This study will aim to fill the gap in the research and to inform future research on this topic. Additional it aims to contribute new knowledge that can inform the development of educational materials and sexual assault prevention efforts on Canadian campuses.

What if I want to know more?

If you are interested in learning more about this research or have any questions, please ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact:

Carolanne Tomsine [Principal investigator] at ctoms055@uottawa.ca

If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is completed (or a summary of the findings), please contact Carolanne Tomsine at ctoms055@uottawa.ca.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Office of Research and Ethics Services recherche-research@ustpaul.ca. Telephone: 613-236-1393 or 1-800-637-6859.

If you would like more information and resources on sexual assault, please see the infographic from the *Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres* attached.

Right to withdraw data

You may choose to withdraw the data you provided prior to debriefing, without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Please note that although your data will not be used, due to the nature of the study, it will not be possible to delete video recordings or transcripts. However, your identity and data will remain confidential as they would if not withdrawn. Please initial below if you do, or do not, give permission to have your data included in the study:

_____I give permission for the data collected from or about me to be included in the study.

_____I DO NOT give permission for the data collected from or about me to be included in the study.

Resources

It is important to note that the internalized biases discussed such as the rape myths and gendered racial stereotypes are myths. This means that they are largely accepted beliefs that are false and have not been supported by research.

If you feel upset after having completed the study or find that some questions or aspects of the study were distressing, talking with a qualified clinician or counselor may help. If you feel you would like assistance, please contact one of the following ACB mental health services for support: Counseling Connect: https://www.counsellingconnect.org/.

Additionally, if you find the discussions in this study triggering due to previous experience(s) with sexual assault, you can find resources and support on the infographic from *Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Centre* (https://www.sadvtreatmentcentres.ca/assets/resource_library/public/Was_I_Drugged_and_sexually_assaulted.pdf). You can also contact the mental health services mentioned above.

Thank you again for your participation.

Appendix K

Updated Rape Myth Scale Revised: (IRMA)- Revised

Subscale: She Asked for It

1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control.

2. When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.

3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped.

4. If a girl acts like a slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble.

5. When girls are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was unclear.

6. If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex.

Subscale: He Didn't Mean To

7. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex.

8. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.

9. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control.

10. If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally.

11. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing.

12. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape.

Subscale: It Wasn't Really Rape

13. If a girl doesn't physically resist sex—even if protesting verbally—it can't be considered rape.

14. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape.

15. A rape probably didn't happen if the girl has no bruises or marks.

16. If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape.

17. If a girl doesn't say "no" she can't claim rape.

Subscale: She Lied

18. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it.

19. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys.

20. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped often led the guy on and then had regrets.

21. A lot of times, girls who claim they were raped just have emotional problems.

22. Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was a rape.

Appendix L

Stereotypical Roles for Black Women Scale (SRBWS)

1. Black women are often loud and obnoxious.

2. Black women are all about sex.

3. Black women have to be strong to survive.

4. Black women need to nag others to get a response.

5. Black women will use sex to get what they want.

6. Men can be controlled with sex.

7. If given a chance, Black women will put down Black men.

8. Black women are often treated as sex objects.

9. I am often expected to take care of family members.

10. If I fall apart, I will be a failure.

11. Black women are usually angry with others.

12. I often put aside my own needs to help others.

13. I often feel ignored by others.

14. I find it difficult to ask others for help.

15. I feel guilty when I put my own needs before others.

16. I do not want others to know if I experience a problem.

17. People often expect me to take care of them.

18. People respond to me more if I am loud and angry.

19. I tell others that I am fine when I am depressed or down.

20. People treat me as if I am a sex object.

21. It is difficult for me to share problems with others.

22. I should not expect nurturing from others.

23. I am hardly ever satisfied.

24. Black women are out to get your man.

25. I often have to put someone in their place, read them or check them.

26. Young Black women are gold-diggers.

27. I often threaten to cuss someone out.

28. Sex is a weapon.

29. I am overworked, overwhelmed, and/or underappreciated.

30. Black women are demanding.

31. I am always helping someone else.

32. I will let people down if I take time out for myself.

33. It is easy for me to tell other people my problems.

34. I feel guilty if I cannot help someone.

Appendix M

Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
1. BW & Women of other races		2	24
1. BW's body		1	3
Beauty standard		1	3
Curvaceous body		1	3
1. BW's desirability		2	6
1. Definition of women		1	2
1. Immigrant child experience		2	3
1. Intersectionality		1	1
1. Need to mask		1	4
1. Power imbalance- men vs women		2	4
1. Sentiments & Emotions	The emotions and the overall tone throughout the discussions.	0	0

1. Expression of anger		2	7
1. Expression of conflict and confusion		2	4
1. Expression of disappointment		2	3
1. Expression of mistrust		1	1
1. Expression of unfairness		2	6
1. Treatment & perception of BW		0	0
Black women are amazing & beautiful		1	3
Black women are not allowed to defend themselves		2	8
Black women are underestimated (Codes)		1	3
BW are ostracized-Treatment		2	8

Pressure to represent-Treatment		2	2
BW are too much & need to minimize-treatment		2	12
Seen as threats-Treatment		1	3
BW are truth-tellers		1	1
BW need to be on guard - treatment	Might be under BW need protection	2	6
Dismissal of emotions-Treatment of BW		2	18
Linguistic differences-Treatment		1	2
Never good enough-Treatment	Unrealistic expectations and standards	2	11
unattainable beauty standards-Treatment		2	10

Noncompliance = Stripped of womanhood-Treatment		1	8
Not protected-Treatment		2	12
Objectification-Treatment of BW		2	12
Caretaker role		0	0
Sexualization-Treatment of BW		2	21
Fetishization-Treatment of BW		2	8
Policing body	Judgement for how BW choose to represent themselves	2	9
Sexualization-No control over it		2	11
Profiting off of a BW-Treatment of BW		2	7

BW are trendsetters		1	2
For sex-transwoman		2	5
Labour & monetary gain	How capitalism and society profit off of BW	2	3
Racism & Discrimination Treatment of BW		2	14
Mistreatment by healthcare & other		1	6
2. Conflicting ideas-myths		1	3
2. Deconstructing stereotypes		2	10
2. Effects by stereotypes		0	0
2. Stereotypes- Jezebel-Effects		0	0
Blamed		1	4
Body standard		1	1

Oversexualization		2	8
Lack of protection		2	6
Limited sexual understanding		1	1
Physical harm	sexual and physical assault	2	7
Pleasure dismissed		2	4
Policing of BW		2	6
2. Stereotypes-angry black woman-Effects (Codes)	need to further break down this section into other codes! Magenta = code breakdown	0	0
Emotions dismissed		1	3
Expected to protect self		1	1
Not allowed to express self		1	3
Placed in harmful situations		1	2

self-fulfilling prophecy		1	1
Stripped of womanhood		1	1
Taught to not defend self		1	3
2. Stereotypes-Strong BW-Effects		2	8
Disconnect from self & emotions		1	2
Expected to care and protect others		1	1
Expected to self-protect		1	4
Lack of protection		1	1
No space for vulnerability		1	2
2. effects of stereotypes		1	1
2 dimensional portrayal		2	8

BW struggle with sexuality		2	15
BW's pleasure is dismissed		1	6
Dehumanized		2	4
Disempowered	Unable to stand up for self	2	13
Embedded into cultural consciousness		2	6
Expected to protect BM	Expected to protect Black men	1	2
Harm reducing behaviours	BW often have to engage in harm-reducing behaviours to offset the effects of stereotypes	2	5
Harmed		2	19
Physical harm		2	4
Psychological harm		2	5
Sexual harm		2	13
Insecurities		2	7

Lack of protection		1	12
Objectification		2	9
Oversexualization		2	19
Premature sexualization		1	5
Profit off of BW		2	4
Self-fufilling prophecy	Intentional and unintentional reinforcement of the myths/stereotypes. Largely because people only pay attention to what supports their point of view.	2	9
Sisterhood		1	5
Victim blaming		2	14
2. Internalization of stereotypes		2	10
Reinforcement by ACB men and community		1	3
2. Lack of accuracy-stereotypes		2	5

2. Negative characteristics-attitude		1	1
2. Negative characteristics-Lazy (Codes)		1	2
2. Negative characteristics-loud		2	3
2. Negative characteristics-Materialistic and high maintenance		1	2
2. Negative characteristics-ghetto		1	3
2. Negative Characteristics-Masculine		2	9
2. Negative Characteristics-Superficial BW		1	1
2. Pleasurable sex is only for the men-myths		2	6
2. Roots of stereotypes		2	4
2. Stereotypes	Prominent Gendered racial stereotypes	0	0
2. Stereotypes- Jezebel		2	13

2. Stereotypes- Mammy		1	1
2. Stereotypes- Strong BW		2	8
2. Stereotypes-angry black woman		2	8
3. Angry BW = physical & SA harm- SA risk		1	2
3. Bystander behaviour		0	0
3. Approach Imani- SA risk		0	0
Ask about friends		1	2
Ask about relationship with Mike		1	1
Ask about their way home		1	2
Block access to room		2	4

Check in on mental state		2	5
Offer Help (e.g., water)		1	1
3. Approach Mike-SA risk		1	1
3. Reliance on friends-SA risk		2	6
3. complicated situation-SA risk		2	7
3. concern for Imani-SA risk		2	10
3. Consent defined	participants definition of consent. Yellow= might need to be coded breadkdown further	2	6
3. inebriation = nonconsent	The reason why a risk was detected	2	6
Consent = respecting boundaries		1	1

Consent can be withdrawn	Consent can be withdrawn at any point	1	1
Consent ensures safety		2	3
Nonverbal consent vs explicit consent		1	1
3. fear of Imani resistance- SA risk		2	6
3. hypersexualization = invitation - SA risk		2	17
3. hypersexualization = judgement- SA risk		2	9
3. Identification as Imani- SA risk		2	4
3. Imani is having fun-SA risk		2	3
3. Intervening = inserting self into someones business- RA risk		1	4
3. No stereotypes are protective-SA risk		1	3

3. Non-consent identified	Comments regarding participants identifying the risk	2	7
3. partying = unsafe- SA risk		2	5
3. protective behaviour-SA risk		1	2
3. Reaction to opposite opinions- SA risk		2	3
3. Room = sex -SA risk		1	1
3. Strong BW = self-protecting- SA risk		1	6
3. Unsure of what more to do-SA risk		1	5
3. victim blaming-myths		1	7
4. University sexual safety		0	0
4. condoms-Uni sex ed		1	4
4. Lack of female condoms-Uni sex ed		1	1
4. Lack of uni sex ed		2	8

4. services & resources- Uni sex ed		1	2