

ABSTRACT

PERSONETTE, MARISSA LEIGH. Controlling Images & Aversive Racism: How Race Influences Bystander Intervention in Campus Sexual Victimization. (Under the direction of Dr. Stacy De Coster).

This dissertation spotlights the race of the aggressors and targets in informing the bystander behavior of White college students by wedding race, racism, sexual violence, and bystander literature. Using a vignette survey distributed to 142 White college students, this research contributes to the growing field of literature examining the decision-making process of third-party onlookers choosing or failing to intervene in cases of sexual violence on college campuses. In order to fill important gaps in existing aversive racism and bystanders of sexual violence literature that fail to adequately consider how both the targets' and aggressors' race influences helping decisions, I aim to examine how race (from both an individual-level and a dyad-level) intersect with the campus context to predict prosocial behavior in situations of varying severity. By examining intra- and interracial bystanding behaviors, my study expands upon aversive racism theory by incorporating controlling images of Black women and men and stereotypes of White women and men rooted in White supremacy. Using data collected from two large four-year universities in the southeastern U.S., I find that the race of the target and/or aggressor influence bystanders' intentions to intervene differently in ambiguous and unambiguous situations. Ultimately, White college students are the most likely to report intentions to intervene in a White target/White aggressor dyad, regardless of situational severity. I argue my findings suggest bystander education programs targeting sexual violence prevention should be combined with educational programming designed to reduce racial harassment in the college context in order to increase White college students likelihood to intervene in situations that include students of color.

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Controlling Images & Aversive Racism: How Race Influences Bystander Intervention in
Campus Sexual Victimization.

by
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BIOGRAPHY

Marissa Leigh Personette was born on September 2nd, 1992 in Washington, DC to Debbie DiGilio and Don Personette. Upon graduating from high school in 2010, she attended University of Delaware where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Communications. After a few years of industry work, Marissa began the Sociology PhD program at North Carolina State University in 2017. She earned her Masters of Science degree in Sociology in 2019. Marissa's research primarily focuses on examining bystander intervention as a mechanism to reduce gender-based violence in a college setting. She is also interested in racial and gender inequality more broadly as they relate to issues beyond the college context.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Nearly one-quarter of women who attend college in the United States are raped or sexually assault during their college careers (Cantor et al. 2015; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000; Sinozich and Langton 2014). Although we lack data on how often bystanders are present in cases of sexual violence on college campuses specifically, research shows that onlookers are present in at least 29% of rapes and sexual assaults more generally (Planty 2002). As such, sexual violence prevention advocates and scholars have embraced prosocial bystander training as a promising method to reduce the rate of campus sexual violence (Banyard, Moynihan, and Plante 2007; Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan 2004; Bennett, Banyard, and Garnhart 2014). Bystander intervention programs focus broadly on instructing students to notice problematic situations that require intervention and on teaching safe and effective techniques for intervention (Banyard et al. 2004). The emphasis on bystanders moves past the singular focus traditionally placed on teaching young women how to avoid sexual victimization, underscoring that the entire campus community can help prevent sexual violence. Katz and Moore's (2013) meta-analysis of bystander intervention program effectiveness reports significant effects of bystander education on intentions to intervene and actual intervention on behalf potential victims of sexual violence.

We know very little, however, about whether or not bystander intentions and interventions vary depending upon the race of potential victims or aggressors in sexual violence scenarios. Research shows that Black people are significantly less likely than White people to receive bystander support in a variety of situations, including medical emergencies and other types of emergencies (Gaertner, Dovidio, and Johnson 1982; Garcia et al. 2022; York Cornwell and Currit 2016). Nevertheless, campus sexual violence research, policy, and training programs tend to ignore the possibility that bystander intervention intentions and actions may vary

depending on the race of victims. Taking a colorblind approach that fails to consider the race of victims inadvertently centers White victims and assumes White women's victimization experiences reflect the experiences of all college women (Richie 2012; Wooten 2017). A White-centric approach here is particularly problematic because Black college women experience more sexual victimization and report less satisfaction with support offered for coping with sexual victimization than do White college women (Gross et al. 2006; Testa and Dermen 1999).

One result of the prioritization of the White victimization experience in research and training programs is that college students may envision all victims of sexual violence to be White, leading them to prioritize intervening on behalf of White victims and not viewing Black women as legitimate victims in need of intervention. Race scholars maintain that the lack of legitimacy afforded Black women as victims of sexual violence is further exacerbated by racist and sexist controlling images that define Black women as too promiscuous or too strong to be real victims of sexual violence (Collins 1990). Controlling images of Black women most certainly combine with cultural narratives that prioritize White women as worthy or legitimate victims (Christie 1986; Frankenberg 1993; Parrott and Parrott 2015) to influence how bystanders view potential situations of sexual violence and the need for intervention. However, research and training programs afford scant attention to victim race in articulating the processes leading to bystander intervention and in defining best practices for increasing proactive bystander intervention.

Campus bystander intervention research and education programming has paid even less attention to the race of perpetrators than to victims' race. Controlling images research posits Black men are perceived as violent, sexual predators, particularly towards White women (Collins 1990; Davis 1981; Smith et al. 2016). Deeply ingrained racial biases may make it such that

White college students, in particular, are more likely to envision Black men as sexual predators and thus in need of social control through bystander interventions. That is, bystanders may be more quick to intervene in potentially problematic situations in which the aggressor is a Black man on account of controlling images defining all Black men as dangerous predators. However, the effect of controlling images of Black men on bystander intervention intentions may be tempered by two competing processes. First, White college students may perceive Black men as so dangerous that intervening in a problematic situation between a Black man and a woman of any race feels too dangerous for their own personal safety. Second, the college context adds complexity to understandings of the typical rape scenario conjured up in cultural images of Black sexual predators and White victims. Campus sexual violence prevention educators have made a concerted effort to raise awareness of the high prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses, often spotlighting college fraternities as dangerous spaces rife with the risk of sexual violence (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). These education programs have not centered race explicitly, offering imagery and scenarios focused nearly exclusively on White-on-White sexual violence in party settings. This is consistent with research showing that fraternities – particularly those in which race and gender privilege coalesce to breed widespread mistreatment of women – are White spaces and spaces where sexual violence is particularly prevalent on college campuses (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DeSantis 2007; Ray 2013). Given the nature of the educational campaigns focused on sexual violence on campuses, it is possible that college students conjure images of White men more so than Black men as potential perpetrators of campus sexual violence who require bystander control and intervention.

Given that instances of sexual violence involve interactions between perpetrators, victims, and social contexts, understanding how race shapes bystander intervention intentions

requires consideration of each of these factors. In particular, research on sexual violence must consider how the race of victims and race of offenders operate independently and in tandem to inform bystander decision-making and must take into consideration the macro-context (e.g., college campus) and the micro-context of the situation in which the sexual violence unfolds. Research on bystander behavior highlights that the micro-context, or situation, matters for understanding intervention intentions by highlighting the fact that situations that are perceived as more straightforwardly risky are those in which bystanders are most likely to intervene (Bennett, Banyard, and Edwards 2017; Bennett et al. 2014; Fischer et al. 2006, 2011). For instance, a situation in which a man is attempting to remove an intoxicated woman from a party to a private space is more readily identifiable as problematic or serious than a situation in which a man is aggressively pursuing an obviously uninterested woman. Research on aversive racism shows that the severity of a situation influences the extent to which bystanders are likely to intervene on behalf of Black and White victims in various emergency situations (Kunstman and Plant 2008). As such, it is likely that the race of victims and offenders in sexual violence situations intersect with characteristics of the situation, including how serious or unambiguously risky the situation appears to the bystander.

My dissertation takes into consideration the race of victims, race of offenders, and the severity of potential sexual violence scenarios to unpack the complexities of how race informs White college students bystander intentions in cases of potential sexual violence. In doing so, I draw on the theory of aversive racism, work on controlling images of Black men and women, insights from research on White privilege, and sexual violence bystander research to derive competing hypotheses about how the race of potential sexual violence perpetrators on college campuses and the race of their targets operate to influence intervention intentions among White

bystanders. I employ a survey-based experimental design with experimentally manipulated vignettes to test competing hypotheses about how the race of potential perpetrators and potential targets operate independently and in tandem to influence intervention intentions across situations of varying risk/severity. I also analyze responses to open-ended responses to questions asking survey participants to explain their reported intentions to intervene to prevent potential sexual violence or to remain bystanders. I analyze the quantitative data using logistic regression models and identify emergent themes in the qualitative data to provide insight into the processes shaping intervention intentions and how race operates explicitly or implicitly to inform these processes. The dissertation includes two studies in which the vignettes vary with respect to their level of severity.

The next chapter of the dissertation provides a theoretical framework for understanding how race informs bystander intervention intentions. The first study of the dissertation focused on a relatively ambiguous scenario in which a young man is making physical advances on a fully conscious target without consent in a public setting is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the second study, which focuses on a more straightforward scenario in which a young man is attempting to remove an intoxicated young woman to a private space. I conclude the dissertation with a brief comparison of findings, discussion of contributions, directions for future research, and limitations of the present study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

BYSTANDER RESEARCH

Researchers and activists have come to understand the importance of bystanders for combating sexual violence on college campuses. In light of the relevance of bystanders, research attention has focused on understanding the factors that help predict whether people who witness problematic sexual encounters on college campuses will step in to thwart potential sexual violence. Studies show that individual characteristics of bystanders and situational factors influence decisions to intervene in risky situations in which sexual violence may unfold. Consistent findings from this research are that women are more likely than men to report intentions to intervene in situations of campus sexual violence (Banyard et al. 2007; Brown, Banyard, and Moynihan 2014; Burn 2009; Nicksa 2014), and individuals who reject damaging rape myths that normalize sexual aggression against women are more likely to intervene in cases of sexual violence than those who accept rape myths (Banyard 2008, 2011). The effects of race, age, and social class on prosocial intervention are mixed (Bennett et al. 2014; Brown et al. 2014; Hoxmeier, Acock, and Flay 2020; Weitzman, Cowan, and Walsh 2020; Wy 2021); however, research does suggest that perceiving similarities to the victim with respect to race, sex, and social class increases the likelihood of intervention, perhaps because the bystander empathizes with the potential victim (Bennett et al. 2014; Katz et al. 2015; Schwartz and Clausen 1970). Thus, characteristics of bystanders and victims prove relevant for understanding bystander intervention.

In addition to the characteristics of bystanders and victims, characteristics of the situation prove consistently relevant for understanding bystander intervention intentions. Definitions of situations as problematic have their roots in objective circumstances, including the severity of the

situation, the presence of multiple onlookers, and the relationship of the bystander to the victim. Research consistently shows that people are more likely to intervene in situations that are particularly severe or unambiguously problematic, situations in which there are high costs for not helping, and situations in which there are multiple onlookers who could intervene (Bennett et al. 2017, 2014; Fischer et al. 2006, 2011).

To date, researchers have not centered race in understanding bystander intervention. Some studies have focused on how the race of the bystander influences decisions to intervene, producing inconsistent findings (Bennett et al. 2014; Brown et al. 2014; Hoxmeier et al. 2020; Weitzman et al. 2020). The race of victims has received some attention in the literature with researchers finding, for instance, that White women are more likely to intervene in situations involving a White victim than they are to intervene when the victim is Black (Katz et al. 2017). The race of perpetrators and racialized interpretations of offenders, victims, and situations have not been studied thoroughly, and the literature is sorely lacking a theoretical framework from within which to study how racialized narratives and biases shape intervention intentions in situations of campus sexual violence. I address this gap in the literature by bringing theories of aversive racism, controlling images, and white privilege to bear on understandings of aggressors, victims, and situations as White college students process decisions to intervene in varying situations of campus sexual violence.

AVERSIVE RACISM

The theory of aversive racism posits White people can consider themselves to be non-racist and support principles of racial equality, while also holding deeply rooted, often unconscious prejudiced attitudes towards Black people (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004:3; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986). Race scholars argue these unconscious biases stem from “biased institutional

policies, practices, and structures...[that] are omnipresent, hidden from consciousness, and insidiously move people towards notions of White supremacy, normalizing racist attitudes, beliefs and behaviors” (Sue 2017:707). The findings from studies of aversive racism theory suggest that in ambiguous situations bystanders are likely to fall back on unconscious racial biases and behave discriminatorily because there are not clearly defined social norms of non-racist behavior. In contrast, in more severe and less ambiguous situations, bystanders are likely to help victims of all races equally, and unconscious racial biases are less likely to influence their intervention intentions because norms for how they are supposed to behave are very clear (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004). In these severe situations, aversive racists will behave in ways they have learned to be non-racist so as to avoid being labeled as racist -- something they are highly averse to. However, the function of severity appears conflicting in *high severity* situations. Recent research indicates that bystanders are actually more likely to intervene differently on behalf of Black and White victims in emergency situations, which involve an imminent threat of physical harm or a medical emergency, because it is easy to justify inaction in that the cost of helping, as a bystander, is too great (Garcia et al. 2022; Kunstman and Plant 2008; Saucier, McManus, and Smith 2010; Saucier, Miller, and Doucet 2005; York Cornwell and Currit 2016).

Instead, what may drive bystanders’ perception of situational severity is their perception of the different victims that are driven by the unconscious racial stereotypes inherent in aversive racism. The theory of aversive racism must take into consideration how the perception of people who are Black leads White bystanders to perceive situations as inherently less severe. Based on the cost-reward model of helping behavior (Dovidio et al. 1991, 2017), when the cost of helping is high, bystanders are less likely to help, regardless of how high the costs of not helping are. The perception of cost-versus-reward, however, is inherently impacted by aversive racism (Murrell

2021). Murrell (2021:65) states, “One could argue that aversive racism may produce racially biased process ambiguity, thus increasing the bystander effect when the victim is a person of color.” White bystanders may perceive emergency situations as less severe when there is a Black victim compared to a White victim in order to justify their inaction without appearing to be prejudiced (Kunstman and Plant 2008). Additionally, helping someone in a high emergency situation likely requires prolonged help and interracial contact, which would disincentivize helping by White bystanders under aversive racism theory (Dovidio et al. 2017; Kunstman and Plant 2008). To understand what influences perceptions of Black and White men and women, we consider the internalized stereotypes about each of these groups.

This theory can be applied to understand how White college students decide whether or not to intervene in situations involving Black actors. White college students may hold deeply ingrained prejudices toward Black people that would make them less likely to intervene on behalf of a Black target compared to a White target, particularly in ambiguous situations. Aversive racism does not consider how the race of the perpetrator might influence bystander helping behaviors, but literature about sentencing decisions in criminal court suggests White jurors are more likely to find Black defendants guilty compared to White defendants when they are given excuses they can use that are not explicitly based in race or “non-race-based” excuses to justify their discriminatory behavior (Johnson et al. 1995; Knight, Giuliano, and Sanchez-Ross 2001). Expanding on these findings, White college students may be more likely to intervene in situations where there is a Black aggressor because they hold negative beliefs and feelings about Black men, particularly their stereotyped role in sexual violence perpetration.

Aversive racists use “non-race-based” excuses to justify their discriminatory behaviors against both Black women and men without challenging their self-concept of being non-racist

(Gaertner and Dovidio 2005; Saucier et al. 2010, 2005). For example, when faced with a Black target, the aversive racist may not directly state they do not feel Black women are legitimate victims of sexual violence, but instead may argue they will not intervene because they do not know how to get involved, they cannot understand what was happening, and/or they do not perceive the situation to be serious enough to warrant intervention.

CONTROLLING IMAGES

The deeply ingrained prejudiced attitudes toward Black men and women are rooted in racist and sexist stereotypes that have become hegemonic ideologies developed to justify the oppression and mistreatment of Black people (Collins 1990:69). Particularly in ambiguous situations, aversive racists may draw on controlling images to justify their lack of helping behaviors in situations with a Black target or, in contrast, their heightened likelihood of helping in situations with a Black aggressor. In this section, I have also incorporated stereotypes of White men and women as they relate to sexual violence.

Black Men as Black Beast Rapist

The myths of the “Black Beast Rapist” and “criminalblackman” have been used over time by White communities to justify the mistreatment of Black men because these myths suggest Black men are violent, dangerous, and criminal unless properly controlled (Amos and Parmar 1984; Collins 1990; Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). Actual considerations of Black men’s behaviors are not necessary for Black men to be automatically perceived as dangerous (Bell 2017). The myth of the Black Beast Rapist preying on White women is ultimately just that -- a myth disproved by the facts showing that most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler, George, and Barrett 2005) and that most Black men are not rapists. Despite evidence to the

contrary, when White women fear rape, they frequently envision rape by a Black man (De Welde 2003).

Black Women as Jezebel & Sapphire/Strong Black Woman

The Jezebel and Sapphire myths engender images of Black women as hypersexual and unnaturally strong and angry. These images inform Black women's everyday lives and uphold hierarchical race and gender systems. The Jezebel myth is a representation of deviant Black female sexuality that was created as a means to control Black female sexuality (Collins 1990:81) and to justify atrocities committed by White men against Black women in the form of sexual violence (Donovan and Williams 2002; Omi and Winant 2014; West 2012). The Jezebel myth portrays Black women as sexually promiscuous and constantly desiring sex, which makes it impossible for them to experience sexual assault (West 2012; Wilson 1993; Wyatt 1992). This myth creates the perception that Black female survivors of sexual assault are undeserving of sympathy and diminishes their credibility as survivors who report their assaults because they are seen as having desired the sexual activity (Christensen 2013; Tillet, Quinn, and Simmons 2007; Wyatt 1992).

The Sapphire myth is the myth of the "angry Black woman," who emasculates men with her fierce independence (Benz 2020; Smith 1999). The Sapphire myth is frequently used against Black women when they speak up against social injustices. Black women's righteous indignation becomes comical (West 2012) or invalid because of their expression (Jones and Norwood 2016). Additionally, the Sapphire myth provides justification for a lack of sympathy toward Black survivors of sexual assault because they are perceived as incapable of feeling fear in the same way as White survivors (Benz 2020). A component of the Sapphire myth is the Strong Black Woman schema (also called the Matriarch, Black Superwoman and Black Amazon). Others are

unlikely to offer assistance or sympathy when a Black woman is struggling or experiencing victimization because the myth of the Strong Black Woman creates the perception that she can manage on her own (Smith 1999; Walker-Barnes 2014).

WHITE PRIVILEGE IN THE CAMPUS CONTEXT

White Women as Ideal Victims

White women have long been considered the only legitimate victims of sexual violence, leading researchers to deem them “ideal victims” who are seen as innocent, virginal, and in need of protection, particularly from Black men (Christie 1986; Crenshaw 1990; Davis 1981; Frankenberg 1993; Parrott and Parrott 2015). In contrast to the controlling image of a Black Jezebel, White women’s sexuality is seen as “restrained” and “civilized” (Frankenberg 1993:75). Indeed, violence against White women is treated as more serious and problematic than violence against Black women by the general public and in the criminal justice system (Davis 1981; Richie 2012; Wolfgang and Riedel 1973). However, certain aspects can threaten a White woman’s “true victim” status: Potter and Thomas (2012) find White women who are in abusive relationships with men of color are blamed for their victimization because they “should have known” these men are abusive in relationships. Thus, we see that controlling images of Black men coalesce with White women’s privileged status as victims to inform how they are perceived. This increased stigma that White women face in relationships with men of color suggests there may be nuance in how bystanders may perceive an interactional dyad with a Black man and a White woman. If they are perceived to be strangers, bystanders may understand the interaction through the archetype of a stranger Black Beast Rapist preying on an unsuspecting White woman and see a need to protect her and intervene. Alternatively, if bystanders perceive the dyad as in a

relationship, they may be more likely to blame the White woman for courting danger and not intervene.

Notably, the White women who are afforded legitimate victim status are most often middle-class women, including women attending college (Frankenberg 1993; hooks 2000; Parrott and Parrott 2015). Although all women fight an uphill battle in their attempts to be believed and not shamed for sexual victimization (Randall 2010), efforts have been made in recent decades to increase awareness of sexual violence on college campuses and to reduce victim stigma (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2004; Potter 2016). These efforts have largely centered White women as the victims of sexual violence or have remained colorblind, effectively centering the experiences of White women (Richie 2012; Wooten 2017). As such, these gendered efforts have proven most relevant for raising awareness of White women's need for community support, including bystander interventions, while virtually ignoring the needs racial and ethnic minority women.

White Men as Protectors or Fraternity Rapists

The ways in which White men are perceived as actors in cases of sexual violence are highly variable. Historically, White men have been viewed as the protectors of innocent, but weak, White women (Daniels 2021; Frankenberg 1993). In general, White men are not stereotypically considered rapists in the same ways Black men are (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). In most cases, White men have the presumption of innocence that Black men do not. White men benefit from the privileges of masculinity and Whiteness (Jaggers and Iverson 2012) and often receive the benefit of the doubt when accused of a crime (Harper et al. 2011). A White perpetrator is often considered to be an inherently good person who was influenced by circumstances or simply made a mistake (Cacho 2014). This diverges starkly from the Black

Beast Rapist trope and presumption of guilt applied to Black men. Scholars emphasize that violence committed by Black men is magnified while violence committed by White men is overlooked or invisible (Harris and Hanchey 2014). White men's violence against Black women is afforded particularly minimal academic and public attention (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). Ultimately, these practices uphold hegemonic race and gender structures.

Notably, however, the context of violence matters for how it is perceived. Campaigns to address campus sexual violence have centered White men as potential threats to White women. The cultural image of the college fraternity rapist is one of a privileged, young White man who engages in sexual violence during or after fraternity parties/events, an image that research shows has some validity (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Given the academic and public attention afforded to problems of sexual assault on college campuses, and particularly in the fraternity setting, the cultural image of the White fraternity rapist is one familiar to most members of the college community. This cultural image may mean that White, male aggressors are not afforded the privileged presumption of innocence, particularly by women, in college settings. That is, students may be equally likely to envision White men as sexual threats in the context of a campus party as they are to view Black men as such.

The White fraternity rapist imagery may be stronger in the minds of women than men. Indeed, Lisak (2004) notes most college men perceive perpetrators of sexual violence as a stranger rapist wearing a ski mask and carrying a weapon. As such, "good guys" like themselves (other White college men) are unlikely to be labeled as rapists. In contrast, White college women may be more likely to have been exposed to stories about fraternity rape committed by White college men and fear being victimized. Thus, White college women may be more likely to

perceive White college men as potential rapists. However, research has not spoken explicitly to this possibility.

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT: COLLEGE PARTIES & SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION

The context of a college campus party is critical to consider when examining the function of aversive racism theory and the salience of controlling images. In general, situations with the potential for campus sexual violence in a college environment are highly ambiguous. Bystanders in these situations must make decisions on whether or not to intervene, as well as how to intervene, without definitive knowledge of the actor's intentions in the situation. Bystander research on campus sexual violence finds one of the most significant barriers to intervention that college students face is uncertainty about whether intervention is wanted or required by the potential victim in the situation (Bennett et al. 2014; Burn 2009; Yule and Grych 2020). Under the tenets of aversive racism theory, in these situations that are rife with ambiguity, college students are likely to fall back on their unconscious biases when interpreting these interactions and deciding whether intervention is warranted.

One type of sexual assault that has received significant attention on college campuses is incapacitated sexual assault, where the victim is too intoxicated to give consent for sexual activity. Indeed, research has found penetrative sexual assault is more likely to be done perpetrated with drugs and/or alcohol rather than physical force (Cantor et al. 2015, 2019; Lawyer et al. 2010; Tyler, Hoyt, and Whitbeck 1998). Incapacitated sexual assault is most likely to happen at house parties (Lawyer et al. 2010). Because of the increased attention by scholars about the prevalence of incapacitated sexual assault, campus prevention programming has increased its focus on consent and the conditions under which people are not able to give consent for sexual activity, particularly in the event of intoxication (Beres 2020). As such, college

students may be more confident recognizing the signs of someone at risk for incapacitated sexual assault and be more likely to report intentions to intervene compared to more ambiguous situations.

However, while college students may be trained to recognize incapacitated sexual assault, research suggests victims of sexual violence who report using drugs and/or alcohol before their assault are more likely to be blamed for their victimization (Burn 2009; Dupuis and Clay 2013; Harrison et al. 2008; Peralta 2010). Bystanders are more likely to assume the risk of intervention when they perceive the potential victim to be “worthy” of their help (Burn 2009). Because women who drink heavily are seen as violating the norms of femininity (Harrison et al. 2008), they are more likely to be blamed for putting themselves at risk of sexual victimization (Peralta 2010).

In addition to considering what type of sexual assault may be the most recognizable to college students, we must also consider what type of perpetrator might be the most recognizable in the college party context. As discussed above, many college students, particularly women, see fraternities as settings where the risk of sexual violence is prevalent. As White, affluent men are most likely to be members of fraternities (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DeSantis 2007) and most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler et al. 2005), a White college man preying on a White college woman may be the most salient image of a sexual assault that occurs in a college party setting. Specifically, this image may be particularly salient when thinking specifically about incapacitated sexual assault. Research finds participation in fraternities is associated with an increased likelihood of perpetrating incapacitated sexual assault (Franklin 2010). Consistent with the fact that fraternity members are more likely to be White, Palmer, McMahon, and Fissel

(2021) find White college men are more likely to report a proclivity to perpetuate an incapacitated sexual assault compared to Black or Latino college men.

This context-specific threat of a White college man victimizing a White college woman, particularly using drugs and/or alcohol, may indeed be more salient than the otherwise constant threat of the Black Beast Rapist preying on helpless White women. However, research on this remains conflicted: some scholars suggest the myth of the Black Beast Rapist remains salient in the college setting (Curington, Lundquist, and Lin 2021; Varelas and Foley 1998), while others argue that myth is no longer part of college students' consciousness (Foley et al. 1995; George and Martínez 2002).

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF RACE & BYSTANDER RESEARCH

Although it seems clear that the broad discussions of race drawing on aversive racism, controlling images, and White privilege have bearing for understanding bystander interventions, research to date has made little use of theories of racism to explain bystander decision-making in cases of college sexual violence. These theories are relevant for understanding how the race of the victim and perpetrator influences bystanders' intervention intentions and behaviors. If White college students, even unconsciously, hold images of Black men as sexual predators and Black women as sexually promiscuous or unnaturally strong, they will be unlikely to report intentions to intervene in the same way as they would for White actors. Specifically, if these students do not challenge their White privilege operating in tandem with their anti-Black biases, specifically in college spaces, they are likely to perceive a White woman as more deserving and in need of their help.

Moreover, race can shape how White college students perceive problematic sexual situations. The perceived severity of problematic sexual encounters has proven relevant for

understanding intervention intentions; however, we need to consider that racial identities complicate findings about the perception of situational severity. Given that college sexual assault is seldom viewed as an immediate situation as is the case for the types of medical emergencies more often studied from the aversive racism perspective, there are gaps in understanding regarding the varying degrees of severity in problematic sexualized interactions at college parties. Will bystanders respond to these situations in similar ways as they respond to medical or other types of emergencies?

Applying the theory of aversive racism, it is more likely that in a situation where the risk of sexual victimization is not ambiguous, bystanders will perceive the severity to meet the level of necessary action with clear norms for intervention, regardless of the race of the actors. If college students have recognized specific aspects of an interaction as having a high potential to lead to sexual violence, it may be harder to justify non-intervention. Race and racialized images may be less salient in cases where the situation is unambiguous and fits an archetype of sexual violence. However, situations with the potential for sexual violence are typically highly ambiguous in a college environment and are, therefore, situations in which bystanders must contemplate the situation without clear knowledge of what is going on and the intentions of the actors in the situation. It is possible that, regardless of the heightened risk of sexual violence in less ambiguous situations, the unique characteristics of sexual violence may lead bystanders to continue to behave in ways informed by their biases against Black men and women.

Most campus sexual assault bystander research does not consider how the race of the potential target and aggressor might influence bystanders' intervention intentions (for an exception, see Katz et al. 2017). However, some research examines how race influences college students' perceptions of victims post-sexual assault. This literature can be used to inform how

college students' may perceive targets of sexual violence pre-assault. Lewis and colleagues (2019) find that Black women are blamed more for their assaults and perceived as more promiscuous compared to White women, though this study does not vary the race of the perpetrator. When considering *both* the race of the perpetrator and victim, one study reports that victims of interracial rape are viewed as more responsible for their assault compared to victims of intraracial rape (i.e., Black women are blamed more when assaulted by White men and White women are blamed more when assaulted by Black men) (George and Martínez 2002). This finding is inconsistent with historical myths of the Black rapists preying on a White victim (Davis 1981), but the authors speculate that the finding is a result of negative stereotypes of White women who fraternize with Black men (Hernton 1965; Petroni 1973).

More recent research that examines interracial dating suggests that White women who date Black men are considered low class and sexually promiscuous by White men (Flores 2020; Potter and Thomas 2012). White women who are in abusive relationships with men of color do not have access to the same “true victim” status that other White women are given, and instead are blamed for their victimization because they “should have known” men of color are abusive in relationships (Potter and Thomas 2012). Additionally, White college men perceived Black women who date White men to be more sexually promiscuous, consistent with the Jezebel controlling image (Flores 2020). However, these findings about interracial dating are in a consensual relationship context, so they may not be consistent with findings from a non-consensual sexual victimization context.

In contrast to these findings, Varelas and Foley (1998) find White participants attribute *less* responsibility to White women raped by a Black man compared to a Black woman raped by a Black man – thus attributing less blame in that interracial context. Indeed, this study finds

participants in this study uphold the myth of the Black rapist in that participants generally react more negatively and blame the perpetrator more in situations in which there was a Black perpetrator compared to a White perpetrator (Varelas and Foley 1998).

Katz and colleagues' (2017) study is one of the few to examine how race influences bystander intervention in a situation that could lead to an incapacitated sexual assault. However, they only evaluate White college women and do not control the race of the perpetrator. They find the White female respondents generally feel less responsible to intervene on behalf of a Black victim and perceive the Black victim as experiencing more pleasure from an incapacitated assault compared to a White victim (Katz et al. 2017). Incapacitated sexual assault is generally recognized as a more severe situation in sexual assault literature and prevention programming (Beres 2020). This suggests that, in contrast to aversive racism theory's function of severity, perhaps the unique nature of stereotypes about Black women being unbelievable or unsympathetic victims of sexual violence leads bystanders to still act differently in high-risk situations with Black and White women.

While these studies are informative, they do not consider that there is both inter-race and intra-race variability in the extent to which bystanders have internalized racial prejudices and controlling images of Black men and women that most likely inform their decisions to intervene by shaping their perceptions of the victims and offenders in problematic situations. There is a dearth of literature examining how the race of the perpetrator in campus sexual violence situations might influence White college students' intentions to intervene. If a bystander holds beliefs that most rapes are perpetrated by Black men, situations involving White men might be viewed as less serious than those involving Black men and they may be less likely to report intentions to intervene. Alternatively, if college students have been trained to recognize campus

sexual assault, especially incapacitated sexual assault, as occurring between a White college man and a White college woman that may be the only racial dyad they may be particularly likely to intervene in this dyad.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this dissertation, I expand upon aversive racism theory by exploring how the race of the perpetrator *and* victim differentially impact how White college students behave as bystanders. Additionally, most research examining aversive racism comes from quantitative experimental data (see Saucier et al. 2005). Thus, qualitative research exploring the justifications and mechanisms of differential helping responses of targets and aggressors of different races remains limited. In this project, I use a mixed-methods approach, including open-ended survey responses, to evaluate justifications that White bystanders provide for intervening or not. Finally, my research contributes to understanding how bystanders' intentions to intervene in situations of potential campus sexual violence are different in scenarios with differing levels of severity.

As such, my dissertation will address the following research questions:

1. How does the race of the target influence White college students' intentions to intervene? How do college women and men discuss their perceptions of Black and White targets differently?
2. How does the race of the aggressor influence White college students' intentions to intervene? How do college women and men discuss their perceptions of Black and White aggressors differently?
3. How does the interaction of the races of the target and aggressor influence White college students' intentions to intervene? How do college women and men discuss their perception of these dyads differently?

4. How does the seriousness/severity of the situation operate alongside the race of the target and/or aggressor to inform White college students' decisions to intervene? How do White college students utilize non-race-based excuses in situations of varying severity?

CHAPTER 3: RACE, BYSTANDER INTERVENTION, AND RELATIVELY AMBIGUOUS SITUATIONS OF UNFOLDING CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, scholars and activists have spent an increasing amount of time and resources working to understand bystander intervention in campus sexual violence (Banyard 2008, 2011; Brown et al. 2014; McMahon 2010). However, research and policy tend to ignore how college students' understanding of race might influence their decisions to serve as prosocial interveners or inactive bystanders. When race is considered, studies often focus singularly on White college women's experiences with campus sexual violence, assuming White women's victimization experiences reflect the experiences of all students (Richie 2012; Wooten 2017). The focus on White women's victimization experiences is particularly problematic because Black college women experience sexual victimization at a greater rate than White college women (Cantor et al. 2019; Gross et al. 2006; Testa and Dermen 1999). Research suggests Black women are not seen as legitimate victims of sexual violence as a result of bystanders' internalization of controlling images of Black women as super strong and inherently promiscuous (Benz 2020; Donovan and Williams 2002; Varelas and Foley 1998). Additionally, even less attention has been paid to how the potential perpetrator's race might complicate these findings, even though controlling images of Black men as violent sexual predators are likely to come into play (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009).

In this chapter, I will use the theory of aversive racism, coupled with controlling images of Black women and men, to evaluate how racialized perceptions of Black and White women and men influence White college students' intentions to intervene on behalf of a Black or White

woman in ambiguous situations that could lead to campus sexual assault by a Black or White man.

Aversive racism theory posits that many people acknowledge past racial injustices, support principles of racial equality, and consider themselves to be non-racist while simultaneously harboring what are often unconscious negative feelings, ideologies, and images toward Black people and Black communities (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004:3; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986). In other words, even people who believe they are non-racist often harbor and act upon unconscious biases. Extrapolating from this theory, White college students may hold deeply ingrained prejudiced attitudes that may make them less likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a Black target compared to a White target in the same situation. Furthermore, these students may use colorblind or seemingly non-race-based explanations for why their intervention intention rates are lower for Black targets than White targets (Saucier et al. 2005).

While aversive racism theory serves as a useful starting point, it only considers how the race of the victim may impact the action of the bystander. Aversive racism theory does *not* take into account how the race of the perpetrator coupled with the race of the victim may differentially impact how White individuals behave as bystanders. Additionally, most research examining aversive racism has come from quantitative experimental data (see Saucier et al. 2005), which does not provide information on the justifications and mechanisms of differential helping responses. By utilizing a mixed-methods approach, I will be able to look at overall intervention intention trends while simultaneously evaluating justifications White bystanders provide for getting involved or failing to intervene in a situation with White and Black targets

and perpetrators. In this paper, I will be expanding on the theory of aversive racism by taking into account the race of the perpetrator as well as the race of the victim.

AVERSIVE RACISM

Researchers consistently find that White bystanders are more likely to help White victims than they are to assist Black victims in non-sexual assault situations (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000; Gaertner and Dovidio 1977; Hodson, Dovidio, and Gaertner 2002; Kunstman and Plant 2008; Saucier et al. 2005). A shared group identity breeds a sense of closeness and understanding that makes people feel more responsible toward members of their in-group (Brewer 1979), particularly in ambiguous situations in which bystanders may be prone to avoid responsibility (Aberson and Ettlín 2004). Shared racial identity may also be salient when considering the shared racial identity of White bystanders and White aggressors, which may lead to less intervention to prevent nefarious behaviors among these aggressors. However, bystander research on sexual violence has not examined this possibility.

Aversive racism theory can be used to understand *why* White college students may perceive Black victims and aggressors differently than White victims and aggressors and, by extension, why these college students may behave differently when faced with a White or Black victim and/or perpetrator. Aversive racists are both averse to Black Americans and averse to the idea of being considered prejudiced (Gaertner and Dovidio 2005; Pearson, Dovidio, and Gaertner 2009; Saucier et al. 2010). According to the theory of aversive racism, aversive racists often go out of their way to appear non-racist in situations where the norms of non-racism are clearly defined and deviation from the norms would lead them to be perceived as racist. However, in novel situations or situations that are not quite clear, aversive racists are likely to discriminate against Black people because they draw upon unconsciously ingrained images of Black people

and communities in their decision making (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004). If confronted with the fact that their actions are indicative of unconscious racial biases that perpetuate racial inequalities and injustice, the aversive racist offers explanations for their behaviors that are not rooted in race or “non-race-based” excuses (Gaertner and Dovidio 2005; Saucier et al. 2010, 2005). For instance, when faced with a Black victim, an aversive racist will not state that they did not intervene because the victim is Black, but instead may argue they did not intervene because it was unclear what was happening, they didn’t know how to get involved, and/or nothing too serious would have happened because other people were around. Nevertheless, this person may have made the decision to intervene on behalf of a White victim in an identical situation.

CONTROLLING IMAGES

Controlling images are racist and sexist stereotypes that have become hegemonic ideologies developed to justify the oppression and mistreatment of Black people (Collins 1990:69). These images can be used to understand what unconscious negative biases aversive racists fall back on in ambiguous situations. Controlling images inform perceptions and actions, as they “dictate how to treat individuals and groups on the basis of skin color and other physical features” (Harris 2017:49). The strength of hegemonic ideologies is exhibited by the fact that individuals who accept controlling images apply them to people who are Black regardless of their actions or behavior (Collins 1990; Meghji 2019; Smith 1999; West 2012).

Black Beast Rapist

The myths of the “Black Beast Rapist” and “criminalblackman” have been used over time by White communities to justify the mistreatment of Black men because these myths suggest Black men are violent, dangerous, and criminal unless properly controlled (Amos and

Parmar 1984; Collins 1990; Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). Actual considerations of Black men's behaviors are not necessary for Black men to be automatically perceived as dangerous (Bell 2017). The myth of the Black Beast Rapist preying on White women is ultimately just that -- a myth disproved by the facts showing that most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler et al. 2005) and that most Black men are not rapists. Despite evidence to the contrary, when White women fear rape, they frequently envision rape by a Black man (De Welde 2003).

White Men as Protectors or Fraternity Rapists

The ways in which White men are perceived as actors in cases of sexual violence are highly variable. Historically, White men have been viewed as the protectors of innocent, but weak, White women (Daniels 2021; Frankenberg 1993). In general, White men are not stereotypically considered rapists in the same ways Black men are (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). In most cases, White men have the presumption of innocence that Black men do not. White men benefit from the "privilege of masculinity" (Jagers and Iverson 2012) and often receive the benefit of the doubt by their White counterparts when accused of a crime (Harper et al. 2011). A White perpetrator is often viewed as "an inherent good person who made a tragic mistake" (Cacho 2014:1086). In particular, White men raping Black women have received minimal academic and public attention (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). Scholars argue that in proximity to the Black Beast Rapist trope, violence committed by White men is overlooked or invisible (Harris and Hanchey 2014). This may be because these assaults do not feed into tropes that serve to uphold hegemonic race and gender structures.

However, it is critical to note that White *college* men may be perceived as fraternity rapists. Studies have established that campus sexual violence commonly occurs during or after fraternity parties/events (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007),

and fraternity members are more likely to be sexually aggressive than college men who are not members of fraternities (Loh et al. 2005; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). White, affluent men are more likely to be members of fraternities than other race and class groups (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DeSantis 2007). Fraternity sexual assault has received significant academic and public attention, thus college students may be more likely to envision a White college (fraternity) man as a perpetrator of sexual violence, especially in a college party setting. Given increased attention to problems of sexual assault on college campuses, and particularly in the fraternity setting, the cultural image of the white fraternity rapist may mean that white men aggressors are not afforded the same privileges, particularly by women, in campus-related settings as they are elsewhere.

The White fraternity rapist imagery may be stronger in the minds of college women than college men. Indeed, Lisak (2004) notes most college men perceive perpetrators of sexual violence as a stranger rapist wearing a ski mask and carrying a weapon. As such, “good guys” like themselves (other White college men) are unlikely to be labeled as rapists. In contrast, White college women may be more likely to have been exposed to stories about fraternity rape by White college men and fear being victimized. Thus, White college women may be more likely to perceive White college men as potential rapists. However, research has not spoken explicitly to this possibility.

Jezebel & Sapphire/Strong Black Woman

The Jezebel and Sapphire myths are dominating controlling images of Black women as hypersexual and unnaturally strong and angry. These images inform Black women’s everyday lives and uphold hierarchical race and gender systems. The Jezebel myth is a representation of deviant Black female sexuality that was created as a means to control Black female sexuality

(Collins 1990:81) and to justify atrocities committed by White men against Black women in the form of sexual violence (Donovan and Williams 2002; Omi and Winant 2014; West 2012). The Jezebel myth portrays Black women as sexually promiscuous and constantly desiring sex, which makes it impossible for them to experience sexual assault (West 2012; Wilson 1993; Wyatt 1992). This myth creates the perception that Black female survivors of sexual assault are undeserving of sympathy and diminishes their credibility as survivors who report their assaults because they are seen as having desired the sexual activity (Christensen 2013; Tillet et al. 2007; Wyatt 1992).

The Sapphire myth is the myth of the “angry Black woman,” who emasculates men with her fierce independence (Benz 2020; Smith 1999). The Sapphire myth is frequently used against Black women when they speak up against social injustices. Black women’s righteous indignation becomes comical (West 2012) or invalid because of their expression (Jones and Norwood 2016). Additionally, the Sapphire myth provides justification for a lack of sympathy towards Black survivors of sexual assault because they are perceived as incapable of feeling fear in the same way as White survivors (Benz 2020). A component of the Sapphire myth is the Strong Black Woman schema (also called the Matriarch, Black Superwoman and Black Amazon). Others are unlikely to offer assistance or sympathy when a Black woman is struggling or experiencing victimization because the myth of the Strong Black Woman creates the perception that she can manage on her own (Smith 1999).

White women as Ideal Victims

White women have long been considered “ideal victims” of sexual violence (Christie 1986; Crenshaw 1990; Parrott and Parrott 2015) because they are seen as innocent, virginal, and in need of protection, particularly from Black men (Davis 1981; Frankenberg 1993). In contrast

to the controlling image of a Black Jezebel, White women's sexuality is seen as "restrained" and "civilized" (Frankenberg 1993:75). Indeed, violence against White women is treated as more serious and problematic than violence against Black women (Davis 1981; Richie 2012; Wolfgang and Riedel 1973). However, certain aspects can threaten a White woman's "true victim" status: Potter and Thomas (2012) find White women who are in abusive relationships with men of color are blamed for their victimization because they "should have known" these men are abusive in relationships. Nonetheless, it is critical to understand that even the most ideal victims are sometimes not believed, shamed, and blamed for their assault by the public, the media, and the criminal justice system which upholds intersecting patriarchal and racial hierarchies (Randall 2010).

COLLEGE CAMPUS AS CONTEXT

Aversive racism theory is particularly salient in a college context. Situations with the potential for sexual violence are typically highly ambiguous in a college environment and are, therefore, situations in which bystanders must contemplate the situation without clear knowledge of the intentions of the actors in the situation. Bystander research has consistently found that college students express uncertainty about whether intervention is wanted or required in situations that may lead to sexual violence (Bennett et al. 2014; Burn 2009; Yule and Grych 2020). In such situations, they are likely to fall back on unconscious biases when figuring out what is happening and determining whether or not intervention is needed.

Additionally, in recent years, colleges have moved to raise students' awareness of acquaintance or date rape in campus sexual violence prevention programming, as this is the most common form of sexual assault (Hanson and Gidycz 1993; Koss 1998). As such, college students may be more uncertain about how to interpret and react to a vignette depicting a stranger assault.

This uncertainty is likely to increase students falling back on their unconscious prejudiced attitudes *and* provide a colorblind or non-race-based excuse for why they may not report intentions to intervene in situations with a Black actor.

Finally, as discussed above, many college students, particularly women as they are most likely to be victimized, have internalized fraternities as dangerous spaces rife with the risk of sexual violence (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). As White, affluent men are most likely to be members of fraternities (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DeSantis 2007) and most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler et al. 2005), in a college context, a White man preying on a White woman may be particularly salient. Indeed, some research finds female students of color view college sexual violence prevention programming as focusing exclusively on White-on-White assault dyads (Karunaratne and Harris 2022; Worthen and Wallace 2017). Other research argues that college sexual violence prevention programming takes a colorblind approach, that is not speaking about race at all, but this approach still prioritizes White victims (Iverson 2017; Korman et al. 2017). This context-specific threat of sexual violence may indeed be more salient than the otherwise constant threat of the Black Beast Rapist preying on a helpless White woman. Indeed, some research on college campuses shows that the myth of the Black Beast Rapist remains salient in this setting (Curington et al. 2021; Varelas and Foley 1998), while other researchers argue that the myth is no longer part of college students' consciousness (Foley et al. 1995; George and Martínez 2002).

HYPOTHESES

White college students have been exposed to controlling images of Black women as overly sexual and/or too strong to require assistance before or during an assault throughout their lifetimes (Donovan and Williams 2002; Katz et al. 2017). Therefore, despite even the best

intentions, they are likely to hold either overt or unconscious biases rooted in these stereotypes. As such, White college students are unlikely to form intentions to intervene on a Black woman's behalf because they identify Black women as either not worthy of or not requiring help. Additionally, as White women are more often seen as helpless, ideal victims of sexual assault (Christie 1986; Crenshaw 1990; Parrott and Parrott 2015), White bystanders are likely to be quicker to come to her aid. As such, I posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a White potential victim compared to a Black potential victim in ambiguous situations of potential sexual violence.

Research examining how the race of the perpetrator in campus sexual assault situations influences bystanding is extremely limited. The theory of aversive racism does not explicitly take into account how the race of the perpetrator may influence bystander helping behavior. However, research about aversive racism's function in racial disparities in legal decisions can inform predictions about how the race of the perpetrator may function in this context. Researchers have established that jurors are more likely to judge Black defendants as guilty and sentence them more harshly than White defendants when they are given apparent colorblind or "non-race-based" excuses they can use to justify their discriminatory behavior (Johnson et al. 1995; Knight et al. 2001). Connecting this research with the explicit stereotype of the Black men as rapists, it is likely that White bystanders would perceive the Black perpetrator as more dangerous to the potential victim than a White perpetrator. Additionally, White bystanders are more likely to see members of their in-group positively and give White perpetrators the benefit of the doubt. Thus, White bystanders may see a strong need to get involved and help the victim when the aggressor is Black, but not see the situation as particularly risky when the aggressor is White. Expanding

upon these findings on aversive racism's function in the legal system, I state the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a (Danger to Target): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene in ambiguous situations with a Black aggressor compared to a White aggressor.

However, the race of the aggressor may influence intentions to intervene in a different way. Research on bystander intervention consistently shows that people are more likely to intervene if they feel safe doing so, particularly when the potential victim is a stranger (Bennett and Banyard 2016). Given Black men are stereotyped as dangerous and criminal, White bystanders may be less likely to intervene in situations with Black aggressors because they fear for their personal safety. Under aversive racism theory, bystanders would explain their lack of intention to intervene using non-race-based excuses, emphasizing the risk without acknowledging that their perception of risk is shaped by the fact that the aggressor is a Black man (Saucier et al. 2005). In addition, bystanders may have been exposed to information about the risk of sexual violence on campus with examples that focus on White fraternity aggressors and thus be more likely to want to intervene when there is a White aggressor. As such, I posit a conflicting hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b (Danger to Self): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene in ambiguous sexual assault situations with a White aggressor compared to a Black aggressor.

Most bystander research focused on race and bystander behavior have solely focused on the race of *either* the victim *or* offender. However, it is critical to consider the interaction of both the victim's and offender's race in how bystanders make intervention decisions because they are

perceiving both simultaneously (Spohn and Spears 1996). To fully understand the function of race in these situations, we must consider how racial stereotypes of both actors in a dyadic interaction interrelate to inform bystanders' perceptions of danger and vulnerability.

The sole emphasis on a Black aggressor *or* a White target oversimplifies the imagery of the Black Beast rapist who poses a danger to White women, in particular. The race of the victim and perpetrator in this imagery are not coincidental, but very purposefully identifying the simultaneous race of the offender *and* victim. The Black Beast rapist trope was developed to instill fear in the White public that Black men were going to target and victimize innocent White women (Davis 1981). This myth of the Black Beast rapist was perpetuated in order to justify the lynchings of Black men by White men (Amos and Parmar 1984; Davis 1981); White men argued they were “aveng[ing] Black men’s assaults on White Southern womanhood” (Davis 1981:186). Images of a Black man preying upon a Black woman do not serve the same function as those of a Black man preying upon a White woman or of a White man preying upon women of any race. The latter images fail to convey targeted messages that simultaneously uphold intersectional misogyny and racism. Thus, the imagery most likely to elicit strong responses from bystanders is of a Black aggressor and a White target. As such, I state the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3a (General): White bystanders will be most likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a Black aggressor and a White target.

However, increased attention to campus sexual assault in the past decades offer a different racial composition of the most common and problematic dyad in the particular setting of college campuses, particularly in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). The imagery is of a White fraternity man targeting a vulnerable, often intoxicated, White woman. Indeed, many PWIs' sexual assault prevention programs focus on White intraracial assault dyads or use a

colorblind approach that still prioritizes the experiences of White victims (Iverson 2017; Karunaratne and Harris 2022; Korman et al. 2017; Worthen and Wallace 2017). As such, White college students' intentions to intervene in a situation with a Black man targeting White woman may be tempered by the college-context association of a White sexual aggressor and a White victim. With this specific context in mind, I state a contradictory hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3b (Campus Specific): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a White aggressor and a White target.

I anticipate that the open-ended responses will also illuminate the process by which White college students make decisions about whether or not to intervene. The theory of aversive racism suggests that explanations for lack of intervention intentions in situations with a Black target and/or aggressor will not focus on the race of the aggressor or target, but may contain hints of unconscious biases. Thus, explanations for lack of intervention intentions in White target and/or aggressor scenarios may differ from those offered in Black target and/or Black aggressor scenarios. In particular, the theory of aversive racism would predict noticeable differences in the ways White college men and women discuss the targets and aggressors. White women may demonstrate more empathy toward White targets, who share both their gender and racial identity, over Black targets, while White men may offer justifications and understandings of the behavior of White aggressors over Black aggressors on account of their shared gender and racial identity. Moreover, potential interveners may unconsciously draw upon controlling images of Black men and women in their intervention intentions, though these unconscious biases will be coded in their explanations of their intentions.

METHODS

There are a number of ethical and practical difficulties with conducting real-world experiments on the decisions onlookers make in cases of sexual violence that make vignettes particularly useful for studying such decisions. Following prior research on bystanding (Bennett and Banyard 2016; Bennett et al. 2014; Nicksa 2014), I test my hypotheses using an experimental vignette study design that varies the race of perpetrators and targets in a relatively ambiguous scenario that could lead to sexual violence. There are four variations of the vignette, each with a distinct combination of aggressor and target race (Black aggressor/Black target, Black aggressor/White target, White aggressor/Black target, White aggressor/White target) using distinctly racial names, consistent with other bystander research signaling target and aggressor race (Katz et al. 2017; Lewis et al. 2019). Each participant was randomly assigned to view one race variant of the relatively ambiguous situation that takes place in a public setting and where the target is fully conscious.

The vignette read: *“At a house party, you walk into the kitchen to see a woman, [Tanisha/Emily], standing against a wall in a crowded area sipping a drink. It looks like she is waiting for somebody. Behind her, a man, [Jamal/Greg], walks over to stand very close to her, looking her up and down. He taps her arm to get his attention. [Emily/Tanisha] looks at him, disinterested, then turns her back to him. [Jamal/Greg] looks annoyed, shaking his head, and grabs [Emily/Tanisha] by the waist to turn her around again. [Emily/Tanisha] looks agitated, backing away from [Jamal/Greg] with her hands up.”*

Respondents were asked to answer a series of close-ended questions capturing demographics and social psychological constructs, as well as questions specific to the scenario that capture how vulnerable they perceive the woman to be in the scenario, how dangerous they

perceive the man to be, and whether or not they would intervene in the scenario. The close-ended questions about the scenario were followed by open-ended questions asking respondents to explain their responses.

Sample

I collected data from undergraduate students enrolled in two southeastern universities in the fall of 2021. The enrollment at each of the universities is around 25,000 with approximately 65% of enrolled students identifying as White, qualifying the universities as Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). I contacted 6,000 randomly selected students (3,000 at each university) and kept the survey open for two months, during which I sent follow-up emails on a weekly basis to nonrespondents. A total of 311 students completed the survey (190 at University 1; 121 at University 2).

The response rate of 5.18%, falls short of the average response rate for on-line surveys. Fosnacht et al.'s (2017) examination of response rates reported that a response rate of 5-10% produces reliable estimates with a sample size of 500. The combined response rate (5%) and sample size (N=311) here falls short, likely because the survey was launched during a global pandemic during which college students experienced screen fatigue from taking courses and conducting much of their lives on-line.

Given that aversive racism theory focuses specifically on White Americans racial attitudes and White Americans racial attitudes and beliefs towards other racial and ethnic groups (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004), I focus the analyses on White students' responses to the scenarios. The total analytic sample for the analyses is 142. The small sample size does not meet the required sample size (N=200) often used as the minimum sample size for conducting SEM (Boomsma and Hoogland 2001; Kline 2005). On account of the response rate and sample size

ratio, I focus much of my analysis on the qualitative responses to questions about the scenarios. One hundred and thirty six (95.77%) of the respondents provided answers to the open-ended questions. For sample demographic information, see Appendix A, columns 1 and 2.

Measures

The substantive variables include: race of aggressor, race of target, the aggressor/target dyad, perceived severity/risk-level of the situation, perceived dangerousness of the aggressor, and perceived vulnerability of the target. Control variables capturing demographics and rape myth acceptance are also included in the regression models. Finally, the dependent variable captures the likelihood that respondents would intervene in the scenario with which they were presented. The precise measures used to operationalize the variables are presented in Appendix B.

Analytic Strategy

I estimate logistic regression models to predict the ordinal outcome variable, likelihood of intervention. Responses to open-ended questions in the survey instrument were coded using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). I blindly coded emergent themes without knowing the dyad of aggressor/target, and then ran queries to find the most commonly occurring themes across dyads as well as by gender across dyads. Three overall categories of responses emerged: responses that directly spoke to their reasoning for intervening or failing to intervene, descriptions of the man in the situation, and descriptions of the woman in the situation (see Table 3.2 for themes and Table 3.3 for themes broken down by respondents' gender).

RESULTS

Intentions to Intervene based on Target's Race

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, White respondents are significantly less likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a Black target than a White target (Table 3.1, row 1). The race of the perpetrator does not significantly impact respondents' intentions to intervene, failing to support either the Danger to Target or Danger to Self hypotheses. It may be that in fact both processes of danger to target and danger to self are operating simultaneously, thereby resulting in null coefficients since they result in opposing intervention outcomes.

The open-ended responses indicate that the White target is seen as more “vulnerable” or “scared” than the Black target (See Table 3.2, row 1, column 2 and 3). A woman who read the White aggressor/White target dyad responded, *“I think the woman was not interested and was trying not to be rude to the man so she just turned around. I then think she was probably terrified when the man grabbed her by the waist and turned her around.”* This response illustrates a common theme of seeing the White woman as afraid and vulnerable, further supported by this response from a White man who read the same dyad: *“The woman is clearly vulnerable and she would need some help to get out of this situation.”*

Although White women described both Black and White targets as vulnerable (Table 3.3, row 1, column 4 and 6). White men were almost three times more likely to see a White target as vulnerable compared to a Black target (Table 3.3, row 1, column 3 and 5). This is consistent with prior work emphasizing White men's internalization of their role as protectors, specifically of White women's sexuality (Daniels 2021; Frankenberg 1993). Moreover, White men are concerned with White women's safety *particularly* when she is paired with a Black man. White men were twice as likely to report a White target paired with a Black aggressor was vulnerable

Table 3.1: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Intervention Intentions

	White College Respondents (n=142)
Race of the actors (Binary Variables)	
(1) Black Target ^a	-.801* (.335)
(2) Black Aggressor ^b	-.589 ⁺ (.320)
Control Variables	
(3) Perception of Dangerousness	.248 (.235)
(4) Perception of Vulnerability	.138 (.178)
(5) Perceived Risk	.483 ⁺ (.250)
(6) Female Respondent	.208 (.363)
(7) Rape Myth Acceptance	-.131 (.280)
(8) School	-.628 ⁺ (.376)
(9) Mother's Education	-.342 ⁺ (.196)
(10) Father's Education	.117 (.178)
(11) Age	.084 ⁺ (.038)

⁺p<.1 ^{*}p<.05 ^{**}p<.01; ^aReference category is White target; ^b Reference category is White aggressor.

compared to a White target paired with a White aggressor (Table 3.3, row 1, column 13 and 17).

Likely, this trend is driven by fear of Black men preying on a White woman -- as emphasized

here by one man, who read the Black man/White woman dyad and reports that the woman is

Table 3.2: Qualitative Themes

	(1) Total (n=136)	(2) Black target (n=57)	(3) White target (n=79)	(4) Black aggressor (n=66)	(5) White aggressor (n=70)	(6) BA/ BT (n=27)	(7) BA/ WT (n=39)	(8) WA/ BT (n=30)	(9) WA/WT (n=40)	(10) Men (n=48)	(11) Women (n=88)
Descriptions of the Victim											
(1) Vulnerable or Scared	21.32% 29	17.54% 10	24.05% 19	27.27% 18	18.57% 13	25.93% 7	23.08% 9	10% 3	25% 10	20.83% 10	21.59% 19
(2) In Control of the Situation	17.64% 24	26.32% 15	11.39% 9	22.72% 15	12.86% 9	37.04% 10	12.82% 5	16.67% 5	10% 4	16.67% 8	18.18% 16
Descriptions of the Perpetrator											
(3) Dangerous/ Aggressive/ Predatory/Forceful	55.15% 75	45.61% 26	62.02% 49	60.61% 40	50% 35	51.85% 14	66.67% 26	40% 12	57.5% 23	47.92% 23	59.91% 52
(4) Aggressive	26.47% 36	21.05% 12	30.38% 24	27.27% 18	25.71% 18	19.52% 5	33.33% 13	23.33% 7	27.5% 11	20.83% 10	29.55% 26
(5) Predator/ Predatory	5.88% 8	3.51% 2	7.59% 6	9.09% 6	2.86% 2	3.70% 1	12.82% 5	3.33% 1	2.5% 1	6.25% 3	5.68% 5
(6) Drunk	16.91% 23	21.05% 12	13.92% 11	10.61% 7	22.86% 16	11.11% 3	10.26% 4	30% 9	17.5% 7	25% 12	12.5% 11
Intentions to Intervene											
(7) All Non-Race-Based Excuses	53.68% 73	66.67% 38	44.30% 35	59.09% 39	48.57% 34	74.07% 20	48.72% 19	60% 18	40% 16	56.25% 27	52.27% 46
(8) Wait and See	38.97% 53	47.37% 27	32.91% 26	42.42% 28	35.71% 25	51.85% 14	35.90% 14	43.33% 13	30% 12	41.67% 20	37.5% 33
(9) Scared to Intervene	12.5% 16	15.79% 9	10.13% 8	13.64% 9	11.43% 8	18.52% 5	10.26% 4	13.33% 4	10% 4	14.58% 7	11.36% 10
(10) Not too Serious	9.56% 13	19.30% 11	2.53% 2	10.61% 7	8.57% 6	18.52% 5	5.13% 2	20% 6	0	12.5% 6	7.95% 7
(11) Speculation of Relationship	4.41% 6	7.02% 4	2.53% 2	6.06% 4	2.86% 2	7.41% 2	5.13% 2	6.67% 2	0	4.17% 2	4.55% 4
(12) Better Safe than Sorry	18.38% 25	14.04% 8	21.52% 17	16.67% 11	20% 14	18.52% 5	15.38% 6	10% 3	27.5% 11	8.33% 4	23.86% 21

Table 3.2 (continued)

(13) Just Wrong/Already a Violation	25% 34	21.05% 12	27.85% 22	22.73% 15	27.14% 19	18.52% 5	25.64% 10	23.33% 7	30% 12	27.08% 13	23.86% 21
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vulnerable “*because he seems to ‘look her up and down’ like prey and it appears that he is in control of the situation which could potentially be bad for her.*” The language choice of “prey” is important because it brings up racialized imagery of a Black man as a *predator* with intent to harm an innocent White woman (Goff et al. 2008). In contrast, White men downplay the risk the White man posed in the same situation.

The rates at which the White target’s vulnerability are mentioned across the White man/White woman and Black man/White woman dyads are similar (Table 3.2, row 1, columns 7 and 9). However, when breaking down the trends by gender, I find that White men are more likely than White women to perceive White targets paired with Black aggressors as vulnerable (Table 3.3, row 1, columns 11 and 12). In contrast, White women are more likely than White men to perceive a White target paired with a White aggressor as more vulnerable (Table 3.2, row 1, columns 17 and 18). As such, it appears that White men have internalized the controlling image of Black men as Black Beast Rapists looking to assault innocent White women (Collins 1990; Davis 1981) but are less likely to acknowledge the risk of a sexual assault of a White woman in the same scenario when paired with a White man, with whom they may relate as a possible friend or peer. That White women are almost half as likely to label a White target paired with a Black aggressor as vulnerable compared to a White target paired with a White aggressor implies that White women may have taken heed of educational warnings emphasizing that campus sexual assaults are commonplace and are most often intraracial, involving White perpetrators and White victims who are often not strangers.

Open-ended responses indicate that the least vulnerable target is the Black woman facing a White aggressor (Table 3.2, row 1, column 8). For example, one woman who read this dyad says, “*She didn’t seem alarmed or like she couldn’t handle the situation...*” This scenario does

not fit either the controlling images context of vulnerable White women and predatory Black men, nor does it map onto the particular scenario of the vulnerable White woman and partying White fraternity man, emphasized in educational programming.

Rather, as indicated by the quote above, Black targets are more likely to be labeled as “in control” of the situation compared to White targets (Table 3.2, row 2). Interestingly, more people describe the Black target as in control of the situation in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad compared to the White aggressor/Black target dyad, despite the fact that the woman in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad is also more likely than the target in the White aggressor/Black target dyad to be viewed as vulnerable or scared. That is, the Black woman is viewed as being more scared of a Black man (Black man as dangerous) but also more in control in situations where the aggressor is Black (Black woman as strong). Thus, the controlling images of Black men and Black women in the scenario of Black aggressor/Black target are quite salient but also compete with one another.

White female and male respondents perceive a Black target as in control of the situation at similar rates (Table 3.3, row 2, columns 3 and 4). Both male and female respondents are less likely to perceive White targets as in control of the situation, but the difference is greater for men than women (Table 3.3, row 2, columns 5 and 6). Again, this is consistent with the idea that White men view themselves as protectors of White women’s sexuality. If White men view White women as capable of protecting themselves, their role would be obsolete. However, White men have not deemed themselves as protectors of Black women’s sexuality. Instead, consistent with the controlling images of the Strong Black Woman, White men are unlikely to perceive Black women as needing help, even in a potentially risky situation, because they are inherently capable of solving their problems by themselves.

Table 3.3: Qualitative Themes by Gender

	Total (n=136)		Black target (n=57)		White target (n=79)		Black aggressor (n=66)		White aggressor (n=70)		BA/BT (n=27)		BA/WT (n=39)		WA/BT (n=30)		WA/WT (n=40)	
	(1) Men (n=48)	(2) Women (n=88)	(3) Men (n=26)	(4) Women (n=31)	(5) Men (n=22)	(6) Women (n=57)	(7) Men (n=23)	(8) Women (n=43)	(9) Men (n=25)	(10) Women (n=45)	(11) Men (n=11)	(12) Women (n=16)	(13) Men (n=12)	(14) Women (n=27)	(15) Men (n=15)	(16) Women (n=15)	(17) Men (n=10)	(18) Women (n=30)
Descriptions of the Victim																		
(1) Vulnerable or Scared	20.83% 10	21.59% 19	11.54% 3	22.58% 7	31.82% 7	21.05% 12	30.43% 7	20.93% 9	12% 3	22.22% 10	18.18% 2	31.25% 5	41.67% 5	14.81% 4	6.67% 1	13.33% 2	20% 2	26.67% 8
(2) In Control of the Situation	16.67% 8	18.18% 16	26.92% 7	25.81% 8	4.55% 1	14.04% 8	34.78% 8	23.26% 10	12% 3	17.78% 8	36.36% 4	37.5% 6	8.33% 1	14.81% 4	20% 3	13.33% 2	0	13.33% 4
Descriptions of the Perpetrator																		
(3) Dangerous/Aggressive/Predatory/Forceful	47.92% 23	59.91% 52	38.46% 10	51.61% 16	59.09% 13	63.16% 36	60.87% 14	60.47% 26	36% 9	57.78% 26	54.54% 6	50% 8	66.67% 8	66.67% 18	26.67% 4	53.33% 8	50% 5	60% 18
(4) Aggressive	20.83% 10	29.55% 26	15.38% 4	25.81% 8	27.27% 6	31.58% 18	21.74% 5	30.23% 13	20% 5	28.89% 13	18.18% 2	18.75% 3	25% 3	37.04% 10	13.33% 2	33.33% 5	30% 3	26.67% 8
(5) Predator/Predatory	6.25% 3	5.68% 5	0	6.45% 2	13.64% 3	5.26% 3	13.04% 3	6.98% 3	0	4.44% 2	0	6.25% 1	41.67% 5	7.41% 2	0	6.67% 1	0	3.33% 1
(6) Drunk	25% 12	12.5% 11	30.77% 8	12.90% 4	18.18% 4	12.28% 7	13.04% 3	9.30% 4	36% 9	15.56% 7	18.18% 2	6.25% 1	8.33% 1	11.11% 3	40% 6	20% 3	30% 3	13.33% 4
Intentions to Intervene																		
(7) All Non-Race-Based Excuses	56.33% 27	52.27% 46	65.38% 17	67.74% 21	45.45% 10	43.86% 25	60.87% 14	58.14% 25	52% 13	46.67% 21	72.72% 8	75% 12	50% 6	48.15% 13	60% 9	60% 9	40% 4	40% 12

Table 3.3 (continued)

(8) Wait and See	41.67 % 20	37.5 % 33	46.15 % 12	48.39 % 15	36.36 % 8	31.58 % 18	52.17 % 12	37.21 % 16	32 % 8	37.78 % 17	54.54 % 6	50% 8	50% 6	29.63 % 8	40% 6	46.67 % 7	20 % 2	33.33 % 10
(9) Scared to Intervene	14.58 % 7	11.36 % 10	15.38 % 4	16.13 % 5	13.64 % 3	10.53 % 5	13.04 % 3	13.95 % 6	16 % 4	8.89% 4	18.18 % 2	18.75 % 3	8.33 % 1	11.11 % 3	13.33 % 2	13.33 % 2	20 % 2	6.67% 2
(10) Not too Serious	12.5% 6	7.95% 7	23.08 % 6	16.13 % 5	0	3.51% 2	8.70% 2	11.63 % 5	16 % 4	4.44% 2	18.18 % 2	18.75 % 3	0	7.41% 2	26.67 % 4	13.33 % 2	0	0
(11) Speculation of Relationship	4.17% 2	4.55% 4	7.69% 2	6.45% 2	0	3.51% 2	4.35% 1	6.98% 3	4% 1	2.22% 1	9.09% 1	6.25% 1	0	7.41% 2	6.67% 1	6.67% 1	0	0
(12) Better Safe than Sorry	8.33% 4	23.86 % 21	3.85% 1	22.58 % 7	13.64 % 3	24.56 % 14	8.70% 2	20.93 % 9	8% 2	26.67 % 12	9.09% 1	25% 4	8.33 % 1	18.52 % 5	0	20% 3	20 % 2	30% 9
(13) Just Wrong/Already a Violation	27.08 % 13	23.86 % 21	23.08 % 6	19.35 % 6	31.82 % 7	26.32 % 15	21.74 % 5	23.26 % 10	32 % 8	24.44 % 11	18.18 % 21	8.75% 3	25% 3	25.93 % 7	26.67 % 4	20% 3	40 % 4	26.67 % 8

Respondents who describe the Black target as in control of the situation and not requiring help are divided into two major themes. The first is that the target's response is not extreme enough to alert respondents that she needs assistance. For example, a woman who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad states, "*I view her as the victim in this situation but also as strong enough to stick up for herself.*" Similarly, a man presented with the White aggressor/Black target dyad writes "*I wouldn't say she seems the friendliest as it says she just ignores the guy and turns away. I do view her as a little bit powerful because she stands her ground and backs away from the guy even after he grabs her, showing she is strong.*" While the latter quote includes a slight censure of the woman's behavior, both quotes allude to the fact that the Black target is handling the man's advances without needing help from others. This is consistent with aversive racism theory and the Strong Black Woman stereotype, with respondents emphasizing explicitly the Black woman's strength and power but not her race.

The second major theme also aligns with imagery of the Strong Black Woman and focuses on respondents worrying that by intervening, they would be taking away the target's agency or power to help herself. For example, one man who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad states, "*Intervening at the time explained here is taking away any remaining power the woman has in this situation. It's saying 'I know you can't defend yourself' instead of giving her a chance to stand up for herself. If things escalate or she attempts to stop him again and fails, then would be the time to intervene.*" Similarly, a woman who read the same dyad says, "*The woman reacted to the situation defensively, so she knew there was potential danger. She didn't ask for help so it would almost be offensive to her to not let her at least try to fend for herself.*" Respondents suggest that they would offend the Black target if they intervened on her behalf because they believe it is likely unnecessary and she deserves the chance to "fend for

herself.” It is possible the respondents who mention being fearful of taking away the woman’s agency buy into the Angry Black Woman stereotype (Benz 2020) and are afraid of incurring an angry Black woman’s wrath for interrupting her. Alternatively, these respondents may view this woman as fiercely independent and self-sufficient, consistent with the Strong Black Woman stereotype, so it would be insulting to try to help her, when she clearly can handle anything and everything by herself (Smith 1999). Consistent with the theory of aversive racism, these respondents reported they would not help the Black woman. They did this in ways that were colorblind on the surface, but implied subconscious belief in the strong, independent Black woman who can take care of herself and does not want or need help in potentially risky situations.

The race of the victim also informs perceptions of the aggressor. Generally, more respondents report viewing the Black aggressor as more dangerous, aggressive, predatory, and/or forceful than the White aggressor (Table 3.2, row 3, columns 4 and 5); however, the difference in respondents’ perceptions of dangerousness is more pronounced when the target was a White woman rather than a Black woman (Table 3.2, row 3, columns 2 and 3). Specifically, aggressors paired with a White target are seen as more inherently aggressive than those paired with a Black target (Table 3.2, row 4, columns 2 and 3). While respondents are more likely to label aggressors paired with White targets as dangerous compared to those paired with Black targets, the difference was more pronounced among male respondents than female respondents (Table 3.3, row 3, columns 3 and 5).

White aggressors are more likely than Black aggressors to be viewed as drunk, and thus not in control of their actions by both men and women (Table 3.2, row 6, columns 4 and 5). Men are more likely than women to view Black and White aggressors as drunk, though this difference

is most pronounced when the aggressor is White (Table 3.3, row 6 column 9 and 10). That is, all respondents describe the White aggressor as drunk, but men did so to a much greater degree.

There is no mention in the scenario of the aggressor being intoxicated, but more than one-fifth of respondents whose vignettes presented a White aggressor mentioned that he was drunk. This suggests that respondents saw White men's aggression as requiring situational explanation; whereas Black men's sexual aggression is subconsciously considered more natural and not requiring explanation.

The Black aggressor/White target dyad is the dyad appears to make respondents most likely to label the man as dangerous, followed by the White aggressor/White target dyad and the Black aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 3.2, row 3). Respondents used heavily coded, racialized language to describe the dangerousness of the Black aggressor paired with a White target. Men who read this dyad say things like: *"I view the man as a potential sexual predator since he neglected [the woman's] coldness to him. And he forcefully touched her after she wasn't into it"* and *"He's a predator...She is hunted by the predator."* Similarly, a woman describes the Black aggressor as, *"A predator, [with] bad intentions"* because *"he was forceful with the girl even though she made it clear she was not interested."*

Additionally, although drunkenness is mentioned the least in this dyad, respondents seem to talk about drunkenness as making the Black aggressor *more* dangerous to the White target, rather than making the man more likely to "make a mistake." For example, one woman states, *"[He] seems like most drunk guys, angry and annoying."* Other women echo this sentiment, stating: *"I view him as an aggressive drunk man who does not understand or respect women's boundaries,"* and *"[He is a] drunk or intoxicated aggressor."*

The use of animalistic metaphors like “predator” and “aggressive” have strong racial implications for Black men. Animal metaphors have been continually used throughout history to target and belittle minority racial and ethnic groups (Collins 2004; Haslam, Loughnan, and Sun 2011; Wong, Horn, and Chen 2013; Zounlome et al. 2021). Previous research has found that the use of these metaphors encourages negative attitudes about racial and ethnic groups (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975; Haslam 2006; Rudman and Mescher 2012). In particular, Goff and colleagues (2008) examine how the metaphor of Black men as apes and other “predatory” and “aggressive” animals impacts people’s attitudes toward Black men. They report the activation of these metaphors leads to participants being more likely to justify violence against a Black man. In the current study, the terms “aggressive” and “predator” are consistently used to describe Black men more than White men (Table 3.2, rows 4 and 5, columns 4 and 5), with the race difference in the use of the term “predator” being particularly pronounced. These terms are used disproportionately in the Black aggressor/White target dyad, further showing how the animalistic metaphors of aggressive, Black Beast rapists preying on helpless White women remains salient among today’s White college students.

Respondents are least likely to label the man as dangerous and *most* likely to label him as drunk in the White aggressor/Black target dyad. These respondents excused, justified, or normalized the White aggressor’s behavior due to his supposed intoxication level. A unique aspect of these responses is the sexualization of the Black woman when paired with a White man. For example, a woman who read this dyad says, *“I think alcohol puts people's guards down. I also think it will make people sway and tend to be heavy handed and sometimes their intentions are not to be malicious but an attempt at regular flirting.”* Similarly, another woman responds, *“A lot of men are like this and let hormones cloud their judgment along with some*

other contributors such as alcohol or drugs.” Finally, one man reports, *“He is acting on base instincts. Also, he may be inebriated. Therefore, he may not be in full control of his faculties. In this sense, I don't think he is purposefully acting in a malicious manner.”* Even when respondents explicitly mentioned that the perpetrator in this dyad appears aggressive, it is excused or downplayed by his intoxication. For example, a woman says, *“I view the man as possibly being intoxicated, unable to control his actions, and aggressive.”* White students may perceive a Black woman in this situation as consenting to the attention of a White man, who is in a socially desirable position, consistent with the Jezebel controlling image (Christensen 2013; Collins 1990; Curington et al. 2021).

Respondents who mention that the Black aggressor paired with the Black target is dangerous use qualifiers to make the situation seem less severe. Specifically, respondents who read this dyad labeled the man more as rude rather than dangerous/malicious, thereby downplaying the risk. For example, two women who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad offer such statements as: *“He is pushy and rude because he didn't take the rejection and instead got physical when she showed no interest. He is egotistical because he obviously couldn't handle rejection and that would injure his ego. I wouldn't say malicious because so far he hasn't physically harmed her or said anything malicious, but if he got more physical or said rude things, he would be considered malicious”*; and *“[He] may not have ill intent but definitely pushy - should keep hands to himself.”* Though the aggressor in this dyad is infrequently labeled as drunk, when he is, his behavior is downplayed as being out of his control. For example, a woman, who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad, notes that she views the man *“as drunk and about to make a poor decision.”*

The way respondents talk about the White aggressor/White target dyad is mixed. More than half of respondents who read this dyad label the perpetrator as dangerous/aggressive/etc. The male respondents who deem the aggressor in this situation as dangerous provide relatively straightforward answers that the aggressor is dangerous without much explanation as to why. For example, one man states, *“Just somebody who is trying to take advantage of this woman. Even when she decided she doesn't want any interaction he still went for it.”* Female respondents, in contrast, emphasize the aggressor's assumed sense of entitlement to the target's body and attention. For example, women say things like: *“Tapping someone's arm to get their attention isn't unheard of. Grabbing them, somewhat intimately, and forcing them to engage with you when they're clearly uncomfortable shows a level of assumed ownership and aggressive behavior that I perceive as possessive, rude, etc.”* and *“He's acting as though he's owed the woman's interest and time. This makes him unreasonable, and therefore dangerous.”*

Despite the majority of respondents labeling the aggressor in the White aggressor/White target dyad as dangerous, respondents who were presented with this dyad are the second-most-likely to label the aggressor as drunk. Respondents appear divided as to whether the aggressor being drunk makes him more or less dangerous. Female respondents are more likely to point out that his intoxication could make the aggressor more dangerous. For example, women state things like: *“Based on the forcefulness he was showing he was most likely intoxicated. This leads him to be more dangerous to the woman than if he was sober”* and *“I would intervene because I don't trust a man, especially a drunk one, with an obviously disinterested woman.”* The belief that drinking could make a White aggressor more dangerous to a White target can be understood through the lens of college fraternity parties. As discussed above, off-campus parties, typically at fraternity houses, may be understood as spaces in which White women need to be hyper aware of

their surroundings to reduce their risk of sexual assault. In these spaces, White college women may presume are looking for sex by whatever means necessary, so the risk of sexual violence is amplified.

The majority of the male respondents and one female respondent in the White aggressor/White target dyad seem unsure as to whether the White aggressor is actually in control of his actions or has truly malicious intentions. For example, one man says, “*Given the circumstances and his actions it seems most likely that he is comfortable acting this way or is highly intoxicated.*” A young woman more resoundly states, “*He sounds really rude and entitled. I would hope that he's just drunk and not thinking straight, but unfortunately, I wouldn't be surprised if he's just a dick.*” Finally, a White man notes that, “*I would intervene because his motives are clearly demonstrated by his actions. With that being said alcohol or other [substances] could be influencing his actions but that doesn't justify it.*” Though the man states that he would intervene, it is curious that he mentions a possible alcohol influence, as if he wants to provide another possible explanation -- though not justification -- for a White man to behave badly.

It is clear that the race of the aggressor and target in ambiguous scenarios of potential sexual violence on college campuses influence how White bystanding men and women view and describe the situation and the various actors in the situation. Given the interactional nature of the situation, it is important to focus not only on the race of the aggressor *or* the race of the target. Instead, consideration must be afforded to the intersectional nature of the race of the target and the aggressor when considering how onlookers view the situation, interaction, and actors in the situation

Intentions to Intervene based on Aggressor x Target Dyad

Table 3.4 presents information on how the race of the aggressor and target intersect to influence intentions to intervene. Respondents are significantly more likely to report intentions to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad compared to all other dyads, which is consistent with the Campus Specific Hypothesis. There are no other significant differences in the respondents' intentions to intervene across the remaining dyads. Respondents' perception of risk significantly influenced their intentions to intervene (Table 3.4, row 6). The more at risk of sexual violence the respondents' perceived the target to be, the more likely they are to report intentions to intervene.

When examining respondents' open-ended responses to *explain* their intervention intentions, certain excuses for not intervening come up more frequently for dyads that contain at least one Black actor compared to the White aggressor/White target dyad. Consistent with aversive racism theory, it appears that respondents use colorblind or non-race-based excuses for why they would be less likely to intervene in situations with a Black aggressor and/or target than they would be to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad (Gaertner and Dovidio 1977; Saucier et al. 2005).

The non-race-based excuses that respondents use to justify inaction are: the situation is not serious enough to warrant intervention; personal fear of intervening; uncertainty surrounding the nature of the relationship between actors; and intervention may be premature, but certainly requires a wait and see approach in case the situation escalates. Overall, respondents invoke these non-race-based excuses for nonintervention in more than half of all situations (Table 3.2, row 7). They use the excuses in two-thirds of the situations with a Black target in the dyad and over half of the situations with a Black aggressor in the dyad. Respondents also used these

Table 3.4: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Intervention Intentions by Dyad

	White Respondents (n=142)
Race of the actors (Dyad Variables)^a	
(1) Black Aggressor/Black Target	-1.409** (.483)
(2) Black Aggressor/White Target	-1.064* (.452)
(3) White Aggressor/Black Target	-1.314** (.480)
Control Variables	
(4) Perception of Dangerousness	.208 (.237)
(5) Perception of Vulnerability	.157 (.179)
(6) Perceived Risk	.512* (.253)
(7) Female Respondent	.193 (.363)
(8) Rape Myth Acceptance	-.119 (.281)
(9) School	-.657+ (.378)
(11) Mother's Education	-.369+ (.198)
(12) Father's Education	.139 (.178)
(15) Age	.085* (.038)

p<.1 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001; ^aReference category is White aggressor/White target

excuses in situations with a White target and a White aggressor, but at lower rates (40%). Female and male respondents used these non-race-based excuses at similar rates (Table 3.3, row 7).

By far the most common non-race-based excuse that respondents use is that the situation did not *yet* require intervention, but the respondent would wait and see what happened (Table 3.2, row 8). Respondents who used this excuse usually say they would intervene *only if* the situation escalated. Among the respondents who answered that they were likely to intervene (n=105), almost a third (32.38%) said they would wait and see before actually intervening. This highlights a potential inconsistency between the quantitative and qualitative results and suggests that future research might use more precise measures of intervention that ask respondents if they would intervene immediately or ask how they would intervene, for instance, in an active manner or a more passive manner focused on keeping an eye on the situation. The implied passivity in this response shows that these respondents do not see what has already happened as worthy of intervention (Scully and Rowe 2009). Respondents are more likely to report intentions to “wait and see” in situations with a Black target compared to a White target and in situations with a Black aggressor. Men are more likely than women to report they would wait and see when the aggressor is Black (Table 3.3, row 8, columns 7 and 8). Additionally, White men are more likely than women to report intentions to wait and see in the situation with a Black aggressor/White target (Table 3.3, row 8, columns 13 and 14). This finding is surprising given that men were more likely than women to report that a target paired with a Black aggressor is vulnerable. This discrepancy may be indicative of these men’s fear of intervening in a situation with a Black man. Despite the fact that they perceive a White woman paired with a Black man as extremely vulnerable, likely as a result of the deeply ingrained myth of the Black Beast Rapist, these White college men may report that they will wait and see if the situation escalates and it can no longer

be perceived as an ambiguous situation. Consistent with aversive racism theory, if the risk of *not* intervening becomes greater than any risk of harm to them by intervening, perhaps then they would be more forthcoming with their intervention.

Respondents are most likely to take a wait and see approach in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 3.2, row 8, column 6). Generally, respondents report looking for a clear sign that the situation has escalated beyond what the woman can handle. One woman who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad says, “*If she is not able to hold him off herself then I would intervene.*” Another woman states, “*I would intervene if the woman showed no signs of standing up for herself or inability to do so.*” And, a young man who read the same dyad notes, “*I would intervene if I believe the situation becomes dangerous for [the woman].*” Respondents perceive the Black woman as inherently capable of standing up to the man’s action and state they will intervene actively *only* in the event she showed a clear signal of not being able to defend herself. The need to provide a clear signal or request for help is not required of White targets to the same extent as to Black targets. This is consistent with the controlling images of Black women and the ideal victim status of White women. It seems the respondents view it as a Black woman’s responsibility to stop a man’s inappropriate advance and see her as able to handle potential threats herself unless otherwise clearly indicated.

The second most common non-race-based excuse respondents offer is that they are scared to intervene because they are afraid for their personal safety (Table 3.2, row 9), which may be because a masculinity challenge involving violence is likely to ensue in such situations (Messerschmidt 2000). This excuse was used most in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 3.2, row 9, column 6). A slightly greater proportion of men than women reported being afraid to intervene (Table 3.3, row 9). Men were nearly twice as likely than women to use

this excuse in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 3.3, row 9, columns 11 and 12) and about two-thirds more likely to use this excuse in the White aggressor/White target dyad (Table 3.3, row 9, columns 17 and 18).

Both male and female respondents express fear for themselves in getting involved, but in slightly different ways. Women express fear of being harmed by intervening and thus abdicated responsibility to men at the party, whom they perceived as physically strong enough to get involved. For example, women who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad report things such as: *“I would want to protect my own safety from the man, however I might let someone else who was strong enough know what was going on so they could physically intervene”* and *“As a woman, I am afraid that if I decide to intervene both [the woman] and I would become victims or he would hurt both or either one of us. I feel like a man would have more success because oftentimes men only listen to other men.”* In contrast, men who report they are afraid to intervene often referenced the fact that they themselves did not feel capable of physically getting involved in the situation. For example, one man who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad reports, *“I’m not a very big guy but depending on the situation I might say something so someone who could actually do something.”* Similarly, a man who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad, states, *“[I] can’t fight, and I’d wait to see how the situation moves.”* This young man invokes both his inability to fight and the wait and see approach in his succinct statement.

The third most common non-race-based excuse is that the situation “wasn’t too serious” (Table 3.2, Row 10). Two major themes emerge among respondents who use this excuse. First, some respondents emphasized the protective nature of the party environment. Specifically, because other people were around, most respondents feel as though it was unlikely anything seriously bad would happen to the woman. For example, a man who read the Black

aggressor/Black target dyad says, “Assuming we are in a party though he is not likely to assault her or kidnap her in the open, but I would pay attention.” Similarly, a woman who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad states, “Since it is in a crowded space, I would not feel like the situation is that dangerous. Also, since it seems like [the woman] is waiting on someone, there may be a friend or partner coming soon who could ‘rescue’ her from the aggressive man.”

The other major theme is the normalization of non-consensual touching at college parties. There is an expectation that men approach women with romantic or sexual interest, which may include touching, and women are responsible for rejecting their advances. For example, a White woman who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad remarks, “Being at [school], downtown and parties are much like this situation. Not really waiting outside of the bathroom, but on the dance floor. If you are dancing by yourself, a guy will most likely grab you by your waist to dance with you. If you are uncomfortable you turn around and say no or walk away.”

Additionally, a man who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad states, “In a party setting like that lots of people get annoyed at people, like so I believe they are easy to dismiss, but if it were to escalate anymore I would step in.” Here, respondents identify situational factors, other than the dyad, to reduce the perceived risk of the situation escalating to sexual violence.

The least commonly used non-race-based excuse is respondents speculating that the man and woman may know each other and thus intervention is likely unnecessary or even intrusive (Table 3.2, row 11). It is notable that this trend does not emerge at all in the White aggressor/White target dyad. One man who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad notes, “This guy is probably a little drunk and has an issue with the girl he wants to talk to her about. They probably have been in a relationship or are in one currently.” Similarly, a 19-year-old White woman, who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad, reports “I would definitely keep

an eye on them, but not intervene. I do not know their relationship or any context.” In speculating that the two actors might know one another, the respondents are deferring intervention to someone who knows the actors and the relationship between them. Uncertainty about the relationship between actors is another factor other studies have identified as a barrier to intervention (Koelsch, Brown, and Boisen 2012; Pugh et al. 2016).

Although some respondents use the same justifications for not intervening in the White aggressor/White target dyad scenario, they did so less often than for the other dyads. No respondents mentioned that the situation was not too serious or that the two actors may know each other in this dyad. Only six respondents (15%) who read the White aggressor/White target dyad reported they did not intend to intervene in this situation. This is less than the other dyads (as evidenced in the statistical models): 37.04% of the respondents who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad said they would not intervene; 23.08% of the respondents who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad said they would not intervene; and 20% of the respondents who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad said they would not intervene.

When focusing on the White aggressor/White target dyad scenario, respondents offer two prosocial accounts to explain why they would intervene. First, respondents said they would intervene because they would rather “be safe than sorry,” which offers a direct contrast to the “wait and see” justification used to explain why respondents would not intervene in scenarios with different racial compositions than the White/White dyad. Second, respondents said they would intervene in the White/White dyad scenario because the man’s actions are just wrong and already are a violation of the woman, which contrasts with the “not too serious” excuse not intervening in situations involving mixed-race dyads or the Black/Black dyad.

Over one-fourth of respondents who read the White aggressor/White target dyad note they would rather “be safe than sorry” when it comes to intervention (Table 3.2, row 12). Women were more likely than men to report this trend overall and in the White aggressor/White target dyad specifically (Table 3.3, row 12). Women who read the White aggressor/White target dyad state things like: *“I’d rather say/do something than let the man possibly do something to her,” “I would definitely intervene because even if this situation was not going to escalate to a worse situation, it is better to check in with the girl just to be safe rather than not check in with her and something bad happen,”* and *“I think any man who would touch a woman without her obvious consent is concerning. Especially in a party with lots of people around. If this is how he is acting in front of other people, what would he do with no one around?”* These quotes stand in contrast to the “wait and see” excuse. Even if the situation won’t escalate and even if the situation is occurring in a public place, it is still important that these (predominantly female) respondents intend to intervene to avoid any harm. All women were not given the benefit of this concern. Only 10% of respondents, all of whom are women, mentioned they would rather be safe than sorry in the White aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 3.3, row 12, columns 15 and 16). This compares to 27.5% of respondents who would intervene on behalf of White targets when the aggressor is White; 18.52% who would intervene on behalf of Black targets with a Black aggressor; and 15.38% who would intervene on behalf of Black targets with a White aggressor

Another prosocial intervention attitude common among respondents who read the White aggressor/White target dyad is finding the man’s actions in the situation as “just wrong” and “already a violation” to justify intentions to intervene (Table 3.2, row 13). Men are more likely than women to offer this explanation for intervention and especially in the White aggressor/White target dyad (Table 3.3, row 14). The male respondents state such things as: *“She*

clearly shows disinterest and is now being touched by a man. This is not acceptable so I would intervene to stop the man and help the woman” and *“It is everyone's responsibility to step in when something like this happens.”* A female respondent similarly remarks, *“Even if you do not know them personally no one needs to be thrown around like that because they are not interested in someone's sexual advances.”* Similar to those respondents preferring to be safe rather than sorry, these respondents identify the man's action as already causing harm. Again, Black targets are less likely than their White counterparts to be viewed as having been violated, particularly in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad. To White college students, an interaction at a college party between a Black woman and a Black man with non-consensual touching did not trigger the same automatic concern and moral outrage at a man's violation of a woman's bodily autonomy as the same interaction occurring between a White woman and a White man. That respondents are less likely to perceive a male aggressor as violating a target when she is Black compared to when she is White across varying dyads certainly aligns with the controlling images of Black women as being particularly strong and hypersexual and thereby not being innocent targets of problematic male aggression.

DISCUSSION

Among the most important resources for combating sexual violence on college campuses is college students who intervene in problematic situations that have the potential to lead to sexual violence. This research shows that White students who are presented with a problematic scenario often report that they would indeed intervene. However, intentions to intervene vary based on the race of the potential target and the aggressor. In particular, college students report that they would be more likely to intervene on behalf of a White target than a Black target in the same situation. This pattern is particularly strong among men, who were almost three times more

likely to perceive a White target as vulnerable as compared to a Black target. Explanations offered for intervention intentions indicate that respondents perceive White targets as needing assistance, while they perceive Black targets as strong enough to handle the problematic situation themselves. This is consistent with societal perceptions of White women as “true victims,” i.e., delicate, weak, and in need of protection (Crenshaw 1990; Daniels 2021; Frankenberg 1993) and with controlling images of the Strong Black Woman (Smith 1999). White men’s pronounced intentions to look out for White women in particular may further indicate that they perceive themselves as responsible for preserving the safety of only some women and that White is code for an innocent, vulnerable woman in need of protection; whereas Black is code for a hypersexual, strong woman, as identified in controlling images that serve to preserve racial oppression.

Consistent with the Strong Black Woman controlling image, more respondents perceived Black targets as “in control” of the situation and not needing help compared to White targets in the very same situation. Respondents perceived Black targets as already asserting their denial of the aggressor’s actions, absolving respondents of having to intervene on their behalf. The same explanations were not offered about White targets, even though White and Black women in the scenarios responded identically to their aggressors. Because respondents perceived Black targets as strong enough to handle everything on their own, they were unlikely to offer to say they would intervene on their behalf (Smith 1999). Additionally, some respondents report being afraid to offend Black targets by challenging their agency through intervening on their behalf. Respondents being afraid of challenging a Black woman’s agency, strength, and independence (even in a situation where intervention can prove necessary) can be understood by applying the Sapphire or Angry Black Woman controlling image (Benz 2020). If White people view Black

women as ready to anger at their attempts to intervene on their behalf, they may be afraid to get involved and simply tell themselves that Black women can handle dangerous situations themselves.

The race of the aggressor in problematic scenarios of sexual violence on college campus proved to be unimportant for whether or not respondents reported they would intervene in the scenario (inconsistent with the Danger to Target and Danger to Self hypotheses).

However, respondents discussed Black aggressors and White aggressors differently in their explanations for their intervention intentions. That is, respondents described Black aggressors as dangerous more often than they described White aggressors as such, a pattern that was particularly pronounced among men. This, of course, aligns with controlling images of Black men as dangerous and criminal and particularly with the image ingrained in the American imagination of the Black beast rapist who preys upon innocent, white women.

Another important component to consider is the shared identity White college men have with the White aggressors in the dyads, which may make them unlikely to label the men as dangerous because the label could reflect back upon themselves as dangerous also (Levine et al. 2002). They may envision themselves, friends, or family members in the position of the White man in the scenario and downplay the risk he poses to the woman by arguing that the White man's behaviors are harmless and/or can be explained by situational factors, such as being too drunk to know what he is doing. Consistent with George and Martínez (2002), White men show a desire to give an unknown White male perpetrator the "benefit of the doubt." Research shows White men feel unfairly targeted as perpetrators of sexual violence and deserving of sympathy for false allegations (Banet-Weiser 2021; Cabrera 2018; Coston and Kimmel 2013). Additionally, the media and criminal justice system treat White men as deserving of sympathy

for one “mistake,” while Black men are seen as committing malicious wrong-doings (Cacho 2012, 2014; Simson 2018). The “boys will be boys” narrative that benefits only young White men in the courts, media, and the imaginations of young White men themselves certainly can help make sense of why these men were unlikely or unwilling to label a White man as a potential rapist or danger in a problematic situation.

White college women’s discussions of danger appeared to be rooted more in the race of the target than of the aggressor. Women were more likely to label an aggressor as dangerous if the target of unwanted advances was White than if the target was Black. It is perhaps expected that men took the role of male aggressors in the scenario in their discussions of intervention, and women took the role of the female target in their discussions. A commonality in the findings for men and women is that controlling images shaped how they viewed the aggressors and targets, respectively. For men, the controlling image of dangerous Black men came into play. Women, alternatively, seemed to be guided instead by controlling images of Black women as strong and not requiring assistance from others, even in problematic situations.

Aversive racism theory posits in ambiguous situations where there is no clear course of action, individuals are able to behave in racist ways without detection and sometimes without their own knowledge (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004). One way this is accomplished is by using non-race-based excuses to justify racialized actions or inactions without speaking directly to race (Gaertner and Dovidio 1977; Saucier et al. 2005). The explanations young White men and women offer for choosing to intervene or remain bystanders in a problematic encounter between college students offer support for this theory. The non-race-based excuses for racialized intentions to intervene on behalf of targets of sexual aggressors include: the situation was not too

serious; fear for personal safety; the target and aggressor may know one another and it's not my business; and a wait and see approach was sufficient unless the situation escalated.

Respondents were most likely to use these excuses in dyads with a Black target and/or Black aggressor. Even though the race of the dyad significantly influenced intervention intentions, respondents provided colorblind explanations for their decisions to intervene or not intervene in situations that were identical and varied only the race of the target and aggressor. That is, explanations for nonintervention focused on lack of severity, fear of misinterpreting the situation, and/or fear of being harmed by intervening. These factors, however, did not vary across situations. Only the race of targets and aggressors varied, suggesting that race indeed shaped how the respondents were interpreting the scenarios. As the participants are more likely to intervene for a White target in the same ambiguous situation, it is clear that ambiguity is not the only explanation for their inaction. Instead, their failure to intervene may be explained by unconscious, internalized images of: Black women as being able to fend for themselves; White women as weak and in need of protection; White men as generally well-meaning, but out of control of their actions; and Black men as being too dangerous to confront. As such, it makes sense that respondents are more likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of the woman in the White man/White woman dyad (consistent with the Campus Specific Hypothesis). In this dyad, respondents are the *least* likely to offer non-race-based excuses. Support for the Campus Specific Hypothesis does not appear to be driven by the perception of White college men as fraternity rapists, or more dangerous than Black college men. Instead, it seems to be driven by the desires of White women to keep other White women safe and a general reluctance by both White women and men to intervene in situations with a Black actor.

Notably, this research shows that discussions of vulnerability and dangerousness are incomplete if one simply looks at the race of the potential victim and perpetrator separately. Other sexual violence research argues it is *critical* to examine the full dyad to understand how these actors' races impact people's perceptions differently (Spohn and Spears 1996).

The potential risk of the man in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad is consistently downplayed. More than a quarter of respondents label the target in this dyad as in control of the situation. Additionally, almost three-fourths of respondents who read this dyad use non-race-based excuses to justify inaction. Specifically, more than half of respondents who read this dyad said they would wait to see if the situation escalated beyond what the target could handle before intervening. Notably, many of these respondents reported in the close-ended response that they would be likely to intervene, though their intervention as described in their open-ended responses entails waiting to do anything active as a form of intervention. This finding could indicate that the quantitative findings underestimate the extent to which White students are willing to proactively intervene in situations of potential sexual violence that involve a Black target and Black perpetrator.

The perceived risk of the White aggressor/White target dyad appears to be the most heavily gender divided. Despite the fact that respondents are significantly more likely to report intentions to intervene in this dyad compared to the other dyads, men consistently downplay the dangerousness of the White aggressor by describing him as drunk and unable to control himself - though not to the same extent as in the White aggressor/Black target dyad. Women, in contrast, are much more likely to be concerned about the vulnerability of a White target and describe the aggressor paired with her as more dangerous regardless of the race of the aggressor. However, possibly because the respondents are more comfortable with the idea of getting involved with

two actors who shared their race, respondents (particularly women) are *least* likely to use excuses for inaction and *most* likely to describe two prosocial intervention attitudes in this dyad: a willingness to intervene even if they are not sure it is needed because they would rather be safe than sorry and the perception that the aggressor's behavior is wrong and already a violation of the target.

Despite finding that respondents are more likely to report intentions to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad compared to the Black aggressor/White target dyad, respondents still appear to perceive the Black aggressor/White target dyad as risky. While the overall rate of respondents labeling the target in this dyad as vulnerable does not appear to vary much in Table 3.2, Table 3.3 shows this trend is heavily driven by men. Men are twice as likely to label a White target as vulnerable when paired with a Black aggressor compared to a White aggressor. Additionally, the aggressor in the Black aggressor/White target dyad is most likely to be labeled as dangerous or aggressive by women and men. While research is mixed on how salient the Black Beast Rapist controlling image remains on college campuses (Curington et al. 2021; Foley et al. 1995; George and Martínez 2002; Varelas and Foley 1998), my research shows this concept is still part of college students' consciousness. Several respondents describe the Black aggressor as a "predator" and "aggressive," showing that the animalistic metaphor of Black men preying on White women remains salient among White college students. A Black aggressor is less likely than a White aggressor to be labeled as drunk, but in the cases in which he is described as drunk in the Black aggressor/White target dyad, respondents emphasized the dangerousness of the intoxicated, Black aggressor. That is, drunkenness is seen as to exacerbate the dangerousness of the Black man in the Black aggressor/White target dyad. This contrasts starkly with drunkenness being offered as a situational explanation to understand problematic

behaviors among White aggressors. Despite respondents describing the Black aggressor here as dangerous, quantitative scores did not reveal an increased likelihood of intervention in these scenarios. To better capture what respondents are saying about how they view situations and how they would respond to them, it seems clear that future quantitative research would benefit from differentiating various levels or types of intervention to better understand whether passive interventions, such as watching and waiting, are more common than proactive interventions, such as removing the woman from the situation, in situations involving varying racial dyads. The current quantitative measure simply captures any intention to intervene, ranging from watching and waiting to approaching the aggressor.

Out of all the dyads, the White aggressor/Black target dyad appears to be taken the *least* seriously by respondents. Only one-tenth of the respondents who read this dyad perceive the woman as vulnerable -- by far the least compared to the other dyads. This, of course, aligns with controlling images of the Strong Black woman. Notably, the Black target in the Black aggressor/Black target dyad is even less likely to be described as vulnerable or in danger than the Black target in the White aggressor/Black target. This suggests that there is more at play than the trope of the strong Black woman. Underscoring the need to consider dyads here, we see that controlling images of Black women coalesce with the “presumption of White innocence” of the man in the White aggressor/Black target dyad (Cacho 2014). The aggressor in this dyad is the least likely to be seen as dangerous. In fact, this is the only dyad where less than half of respondents label the aggressor as dangerous. Participants excuse the aggressor’s behavior by saying he is not malicious. Almost a third of respondents who read this dyad label the aggressor as drunk -- by far the most across dyads. Respondents perceive the White aggressor in this dyad making normal sexual or romantic overtures to the target, almost as if there is no other

explanation for why a White man would be interacting with a Black woman in this setting. The Black target is cast as a Jezebel and sexualized to the White male gaze (Flores 2020; West 2012). This is seen as a harmless sexual overture. Respondents use non-race-related excuses the second most commonly in this dyad. In particular, respondents use the “not too serious” and “wait and see” excuses because respondents who read this dyad do not perceive anything happening that is severe enough to warrant intervention.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge inconsistencies between my qualitative and quantitative data. Studying racial bias is complicated for many reasons, particularly because of respondents' desire to answer questions in socially desirable ways (Krysan 1998). One of the most glaring examples of this inconsistency is my finding that almost a third of respondents who said they would be *likely* to intervene in response to a Likert scale question, when prompted in open-ended questions to give more information about how or why they would intervene, said they would wait and see before actively intervening. The inconsistency between the close-ended and the open-ended responses in which respondents show a lack of forethought to how they would *actually* get involved leads me to argue that a mixed methods design has much to offer to bystander research. The present study suggests that future quantitative research should minimally take an approach that differentiates levels and types of intervention. Responses to questions asking about the likelihood of intervention mask important distinctions between, for instance, passive intervention constituting watching and waiting as compared to proactive intervention in approaching the aggressor or target.

This research also has implications for college bystander intervention programming. My research show that college bystander education programming, particularly at PWIs, should target implicit stereotypes of White and Black men and women in situations that could lead to campus

sexual assault. Specifically, education programs should target in-group biases for both White college men and women. White college men appear to feel obligated to get involved only in situations with a White target, compared to a Black target. Additionally, White college men need to address the fact that other White men can be perpetrators of sexual assault -- not just Black college men -- particularly when the target is not White. White college women, in contrast, appear to recognize that White men can be perpetrators of sexual violence, but only seem interested in intervening only when the target is also White. These women appear to be very protective of other White women, potentially at the expense of other targets. By incorporating a discussion of race in bystander education programming, White college students can become more confident in recognizing and intervening in cases of potential campus sexual assault with an aggressor and target of any race. Such programming might also be aimed at describing varying types of interventions with an emphasis on ensuring safety for the person engaging in intervention and on ensuring that the level of intervention is sufficient to ensure the safety of all persons involved.

CHAPTER 4: RACE, BYSTANDER INTERVENTION, AND UNAMBIGUOUS SITUATIONS OF UNFOLDING CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

Incapacitated campus sexual assault has received a great deal of scholarly and public policy attention over the past decades (Gilbert et al. 2019; Kilpatrick et al. 2007; Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski 1987). Indeed, research has established college students are more at risk for drug-related or incapacitated forced sexual assault compared to nonincapacitated forcible sexual assault (Lawyer et al. 2010). A heavily intoxicated and unresponsive woman being taken from a public setting by a man is a widely a recognizable sign of possible campus sexual assault (Bennett and Banyard 2016; Bennett et al. 2017). However, the extent to which the problematic nature of the situation is recognized may be informed by the race of the potential aggressor and target. Nevertheless, little research has examined how the race of the perpetrator and victim influences bystanders' intentions to intervene in situations of incapacitated sexual assault. One exception is a study by Katz and colleagues (2017), which reports that White women are less likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of intoxicated Black women at risk for sexual assault than they are to intervene on behalf of intoxicated White women in similar situations. Although informative, this study does not consider why White bystanders perceive Black victims as less worthy of help than White victims *and* does not consider the race of the perpetrator.

In this chapter, I use the theory of aversive racism coupled with controlling images of Black women and men, to evaluate how racialized perceptions of Black and White women and men influence White college students' intentions to intervene in a high risk situation (i.e., with a heavily intoxicated woman) that could lead to campus sexual assault.

Aversive racism theory posits that many people acknowledge past racial injustices, support principles of racial equality, and consider themselves to be non-racist while simultaneously harboring what are often unconscious negative feelings, ideologies, and images toward Black people and Black communities (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004:3; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986). However, this theory states in more severe and less ambiguous situations, these unconscious biases may be less salient in informing intervention intentions. Alternatively, bystanders may rely on these unconscious biases and use the inherent riskiness of the situation to justify behaving discriminatorily; that is, intervening on behalf of a White target, but not on behalf of a Black target (Saucier et al. 2005).

While aversive racism theory serves as a useful starting point, it considers only how the race of a victim matters. Aversive theory does *not* take into account how the race of the perpetrator coupled with the race of the victim may differentially impact how White individuals behave as bystanders. Additionally, most research examining aversive racism has come from quantitative experimental data (see Saucier et al. 2005). Thus, qualitative research evaluating the justifications and mechanisms of differential helping responses remain unknown. In this paper, I will be expanding on the theory of aversive racism by taking into account the race of the perpetrator as well as the race of the victim. Additionally, with the use of open-ended survey responses, I will be able to evaluate justifications that White bystanders provide for getting involved or failing to intervene.

AVERSIVE RACISM

Bystander research consistently documents that White bystanders are more likely to help White victims than they are to assist Black victims in non-sexual assault situations (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000; Gaertner and Dovidio 1977; Hodson et al. 2002; Kunstman and Plant 2008;

Saucier et al. 2005). Aversive racism theory can be used to understand *why* White college students may perceive in-group members differently than out-group members. Specifically, *why* White college students may behave differently when faced with a White or Black victim and/or perpetrator. Aversive racism theory posits that many individuals can perceive themselves to be non-racist, while simultaneously holding and acting upon unconscious biases or negative feelings towards Black people and communities (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986).

Aversive racists are both averse to Black Americans and averse to the idea of being considered prejudiced (Gaertner and Dovidio 2005; Pearson et al. 2009; Saucier et al. 2010). According to the theory of aversive racism, aversive racists often go out of their way to appear non-racist in situations where the norms of non-racism are clearly defined and deviation from the norms would lead them to be perceived as racist. If it is suggested that their actions might reflect unconscious racial biases, the aversive racist offers explanations that are not rooted in race (Gaertner and Dovidio 2005; Saucier et al. 2010, 2005). For instance, when faced with a Black victim, an aversive racist may argue they could be harmed by intervening, the two actors may know each other and nothing bad is going to happen, and/or they wouldn't know how to get involved.

This paper assesses bystander intentions to intervene in a situation with highly agreed upon signals of severity: an intoxicated and unresponsive target and an aggressor who moves the target from a public to a private location (Burn 2009). The function of severity appears conflicting in aversive racism theory, which posits that there are fewer non-race-based excuses for bystanders to use in high-risk situations to justify their inaction because the danger to the target is so great. Consistent with this, Gamberini and colleagues (2015) find bystanders' helping

responses do not vary by race in a severe situation where the victim is at high risk of injury or death by fire. Other research indicates, however, that bystanders are actually more likely to behave discriminatorily in emergency situations because it is easy to justify inaction on the basis that the cost of helping from the bystander is too great (Kunstman and Plant 2008; Saucier et al. 2010, 2005). Research that focuses specifically on sexual assault consistently finds that people are more likely to intervene in situations that are particularly severe or unambiguously problematic because these situations are relatively easy to notice as risky, and the cost for not helping is high (Bennett et al. 2017, 2014). These studies, however, have not considered how the race of the potential victim and/or perpetrator influences bystanders' decisions to intervene.

What appears to matter is the perception bystanders have of victims that are driven by the unconscious racial stereotypes inherent in aversive racism. The theory of aversive racism takes into consideration how stereotypes of Black people lead White bystanders to perceive situations as inherently more or less severe. Based on the cost-reward model of helping behavior (Dovidio et al. 1991, 2017), when the cost of helping is high, bystanders are less likely to help, regardless of how high the costs of not helping are. But inherently, the perception of cost-versus-reward is impacted by aversive racism (Murrell 2021). Murrell (2021:65) states, "One could argue that aversive racism may produce racially biased process ambiguity, thus increasing the bystander effect when the victim is a person of color." White bystanders may perceive emergency situations as less severe when there is a Black victim compared to a White victim in order to justify their inaction without appearing to be prejudiced (Kunstman and Plant 2008). Additionally, helping someone in a high emergency situation requires prolonged help and interracial contact, which would disincentivize helping by White bystanders under aversive racism theory (Dovidio et al. 2017; Kunstman and Plant 2008). Alternatively, aversive racists

who are strongly opposed to being considered racist (while still holding unconscious prejudiced feelings) may overcompensate and go out of their way not to behave any differently based on the race of the aggressor or target. To understand what influences perceptions of Black and White men and women, this study considers the internalized stereotypes about each of these groups.

CONTROLLING IMAGES

Controlling images are racist and sexist stereotypes that have become hegemonic ideologies developed to justify the oppression and mistreatment of Black people (Collins 1990:69). These images can be used to understand the content of the unconscious negative biases that may inform how serious an aversive racist judges a situation to be, depending on the race of the actors.

Controlling images associated with Black men are the “Black Beast Rapist” and “criminalblackman.” These myths have been used over time to justify the mistreatment of Black men because they suggest Black men are violent, dangerous, and criminal unless properly controlled (Amos and Parmar 1984; Collins 1990; Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). The myth of the Black Beast Rapist preying on White women is ultimately just that -- a myth disproved by the facts showing that most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler et al. 2005) and that most Black men do not rape women. As a result, White college students may perceive a Black man to be so dangerous that either intervention is necessary because the cost to the potential victim is so great *or* that intervention is too risky because the cost to themselves is too great. However, in recent years, particularly since the killing of George Floyd by then-Officer Derek Chauvin, systemic racism and stereotypes of the “criminalblackman” have received more attention and scrutiny by White Americans (Onwuachi-Willig 2020). With growing awareness of the problems associated with these types of images through social media, information campaigns, and college

classrooms, the aversive racist may bend over backwards to demonstrate they do not buy into these stereotypes when the socially acceptable behaviors in a situation are clearly defined. In less clear cut situations, the aversive racist may unintentionally fall back and act upon these images.

Salient controlling images of Black women are the Jezebel and the Strong Black Woman. These controlling images stereotype Black women as hypersexual and unnaturally strong and angry that inform everyday lives and uphold hierarchical race and gender systems. The Jezebel myth is a representation of deviant Black female sexuality that was created as a means to control Black female sexuality (Collins 1990:81) and to justify atrocities committed by White men against Black women in the form of sexual violence (Donovan and Williams 2002; Omi and Winant 2014; West 2012). The Jezebel myth portrays Black women as sexually promiscuous and constantly desiring sex, which makes it impossible for them to experience sexual assault (West 2012; Wilson 1993; Wyatt 1992). The Strong Black Woman schema (also called the Matriarch, Black Superwoman and Black Amazon) creates the perception that Black women are fiercely independent and don't need to rely on others for help, regardless of what situation they are in (Smith 1999). Onlookers are unlikely to offer assistance or sympathy when a Black woman is struggling or experiencing victimization because the myth of the Strong Black Woman creates the perception that she can manage on her own.

It is also critical to understand how bystanders may perceive White men and women in situations that could lead to sexual assault. The ways in which White men are perceived as actors in cases of sexual violence are highly variable. Historically, White men have been viewed as the protectors of innocent, but weak, White women (Daniels 2021; Frankenberg 1993). In general, White men are not stereotypically considered rapists in the same ways Black men are (Davis 1981; Russell-Brown 2009). In most cases, White men enjoy a presumption of innocence that

Black men do not. A White perpetrator is often viewed as “an inherently good person who made a tragic mistake” (Cacho 2014:1086). However, White *college* men may be perceived as fraternity rapists. Studies have established that campus sexual violence commonly occurs during or after fraternity parties/events (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007), and fraternity members are more likely to be sexually aggressive than college men who are not members of fraternities (Loh et al. 2005; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). White, affluent men are more likely to be members of fraternities than other race and class groups (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; DeSantis 2007). Fraternity sexual assault -- specifically incapacitated sexual assault -- has received significant academic and public attention. College students thus may be more likely to envision a White college (fraternity) man as a perpetrator of sexual violence, especially in a college party setting.

It may be that White college men are more likely to see other White college men as helpers or protectors, rather than as potential rapists. This would make them less likely to perceive a White aggressor as a risk to the target. In fact, Lisak (2004) argues most college men perceive perpetrators of sexual violence as a stranger rapist wearing a ski mask and carrying a weapon. As such, “good guys” like themselves (other White college men) are unlikely to be labeled as rapists. In contrast, White college women may be more likely to have been exposed to stories from the media and/or other women about women being raped by White fraternity men. White college women thus may be more likely to perceive White college men as potential rapists.

White women have long been considered “ideal victims” of sexual violence, though all victims of sexual violence face some level of victim blaming and skepticism (Christie 1986; Crenshaw 1990; Parrott and Parrott 2015). White women are seen as innocent, virginal, and in

need of protection, particularly from Black men (Davis 1981; Frankenberg 1993). Indeed, violence against White women is treated as more serious and problematic than violence against Black women (Davis 1981; Richie 2012; Wolfgang and Riedel 1973). Nonetheless, it is critical to understand that even the most ideal victims are sometimes not believed, shamed, and blamed for their assault by the public, the media, and the criminal justice system (Randall 2010).

COLLEGE CAMPUS AS CONTEXT

Research on campus sexual assault has established that college women are more likely to be victims of penetrative sexual assault as a result of incapacitation by drugs and/or alcohol than by use of physical force against a nonincapacitated woman (Cantor et al. 2015, 2019; Lawyer et al. 2010; Tyler et al. 1998). In fact, studies estimate that between 45-95% of all sexual assault incidents among undergraduate involve incapacitation (Abbey 2002; Abbey et al. 2014; Campbell et al. 2021; Krebs et al. 2009; Zinzow and Thompson 2015). Lawyer and colleagues (2010) have established that most incapacitated sexual assaults happen at house parties, including fraternity parties. Because scholars have established the increased risk of sexual victimization as a result of drug and/or alcohol use, campus sexual assault prevention programming has started paying increased attention to consent and conditions under which consent is unable to be given, such as in the event of intoxication (Beres 2020).

Aversive racism theory is particularly salient in the context of an incapacitated sexual assault. While in general, situations with the potential for sexual violence are highly ambiguous in a college environment, increased efforts to prevent incapacitated sexual assault are likely to make college students more able to recognize signs of someone at risk and, as a result, more likely to report intentions to intervene. The theory of aversive racism predicts that because the social norms of behavior in this situation are more clearly defined and deviating from could lead

to the bystander being labeled as racist, they are likely to help Black and White targets at the same rate.

However, alcohol and/or drug use could also lead bystanders to blame victims for their assaults. Bystander research has established that people are more likely to intervene when they perceive the potential victim as “worthy” of their help (Burn 2009). Women who drink heavily are seen as violating norms of appropriate feminine behavior (Harrison et al. 2008) and thus are more likely to be blamed for putting themselves at risk of sexual victimization (Peralta 2010). Dupuis and Clay (2013) find victim blaming is the worst for Black victims of sexual violence when they are described as “party girls” compared to White victims.

Regarding the perpetration of sexual assault, research finds participation in fraternities is associated with an increased likelihood for perpetrating incapacitated sexual assault (Franklin 2010). Even male students who are not yet fraternity members, but *intend* to join a fraternity are more likely to report proclivity to perpetrate a sexual assault using incapacitation (Palmer et al. 2021). Consistent with the fact that most fraternity men are White, Palmer and colleagues (2021) find White college men are more likely to report a proclivity to perpetrate an incapacitated sexual assault compared to Black or Latino college men.

Due to the significant attention paid to incapacitated sexual assault in a college party setting, many college students, particularly women, as they are most likely to be victimized, have come to see fraternities as dangerous spaces rife with the risk of sexual violence (Grossbard et al. 2007; McMahon 2010; Murnen and Kohlman 2007). Because White, affluent fraternity members are the group most likely to perpetrate incapacitated sexual assault on campus (Franklin 2010; Palmer et al. 2021) and most rapes are intraracial (Koch 1995; Wheeler et al. 2005), in a college context, a White college man preying on a White college woman may be particularly salient.

Indeed, some research finds female students of color view college sexual violence prevention programming as focusing exclusively on White-on-White assault dyads (Karunaratne and Harris 2022; Worthen and Wallace 2017). Other research argues that college sexual violence prevention programming takes a colorblind approach, -- that is, not speaking about race at all. but this approach still prioritizes White victims and ignores the way that race shapes sexual violence (Iverson 2017; Korman et al. 2017). A context-specific threat of sexual violence that focuses on White-on-White violence may be more salient than the otherwise constant threat of the Black Beast Rapist preying on a helpless White woman when examining campus sexual assault. While some research on college campuses shows that the myth of the Black Beast Rapist remains salient in this setting (Curington et al. 2021; Varelas and Foley 1998), other researchers argue that the myth is no longer part of college students' consciousness (Foley et al. 1995; George and Martínez 2002).

HYPOTHESES

The situation described in this paper is purposefully severe: an aggressor taking an intoxicated and unresponsive target from a public to a private space after looking over his shoulder at the rest of the party. The effect severity will have under aversive racism is unclear: either (1) bystanders will help targets of different races equally because they perceive intervention as so obviously necessary and they do not want to appear racist by helping discriminatorily; *or* (2) bystanders will behave discriminatorily because it is easier to justify inaction in that the cost of helping from the bystander is *too* great. Given the perception of White women as helpless, ideal victims of sexual assault (Christie 1986; Crenshaw 1990; Parrott and Parrott 2015), if they behave discriminatorily, White bystanders would be more likely to help White potential victims. As such, I posit contradictory hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a (Discriminatory Helping Response): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a White potential victim compared to a Black potential victim in severe situations of potential sexual violence.

Hypothesis 1b (Equal Helping Response): Given the severity of the situation, White bystanders will report intentions to intervene on behalf of White and Black potential victims at the same rate in severe situations of potential sexual violence..

Research examining how the race of the perpetrator in campus sexual assault situations influences bystanding is extremely limited. The theory of aversive racism does not explicitly take into account how the race of the perpetrator may influence bystander helping behavior. However, research about aversive racism's effect on racial disparities in legal decisions can inform predictions about how the race of the perpetrator may function in this context.

Researchers have established that jurors are more likely to judge Black defendants as guilty and sentence them more harshly than White defendants when they are given apparent colorblind or "non-race-based" excuses they can use to justify their discriminatory behavior (Johnson et al. 1995; Knight et al. 2001). Connecting this research with the explicit stereotype of the Black men as rapists, it is likely that White bystanders would perceive the Black perpetrator as more dangerous to the potential victim than a White perpetrator. Additionally, White bystanders are more likely to see members of their in-group positively and give White perpetrators the benefit of the doubt. Thus, White bystanders may see a strong need to get involved and help the victim when the aggressor is Black, but not see the situation as particularly risky when the aggressor is White. Expanding upon these findings of aversive racism's function in the legal system, I state the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a (Danger to Target): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a Black aggressor compared to a White aggressor in severe situations of potential sexual violence.

However, the race of the aggressor may influence intentions to intervene in a different way. Research on bystander intervention consistently shows that people are more likely to intervene if they feel safe doing so (Bennett and Banyard 2016). Given Black men are stereotyped as dangerous and criminal, White bystanders may be less likely to intervene in situations with Black aggressors because they fear for their personal safety. Aversive racism theory suggests that bystanders are likely to explain their lack of intention to intervene using non-race-based excuses, emphasizing the risk without acknowledging that their perception of risk is shaped by the fact that the aggressor is a Black man (Saucier et al. 2005). In addition, bystanders may accept the stereotype of the White fraternity rapist and thus may be more likely to want to intervene when there is a White aggressor. As such, I posit a conflicting hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b (Danger to Self): White bystanders will be more likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a White aggressor compared to a Black aggressor in severe situations of potential sexual violence.

Most bystander research that focuses on race and bystander behavior solely focus on the race of *either* the victim *or* offender. However, it is critical to consider the interaction of both the victim's and offender's race in how bystanders make intervention decisions because they are perceiving both simultaneously (Spohn and Spears 1996). To fully understand the function of race in these situations, we must consider how racial stereotypes of both actors in a dyadic interaction combine to inform bystanders' perceptions of the situation and, by extension, their intentions to intervene.

The sole emphasis on a Black aggressor *or* a White target oversimplifies the imagery of the Black Beast rapist who poses a danger to White women, in particular. The race of the victim and perpetrator in this imagery are not coincidental, but very purposefully identifying the simultaneous race of the offender *and* victim. The Black Beast rapist trope was developed to instill fear in the White public that Black men were going to target and victimize innocent White women (Davis 1981). Images of a Black man preying upon a Black woman do not serve the same function as those of a Black man preying upon a White woman or of a White man preying upon a woman of any race. The latter images fail to convey targeted messages that simultaneously uphold intersectional misogyny and racism. Thus, the imagery most likely to elicit strong responses from bystanders is of a Black aggressor and a White target. As such, I posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3a (General): White bystanders will be most likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a Black aggressor and a White target.

However, increased attention to incapacitated campus sexual assault in the past decades offers a different racial composition of the most common and problematic dyad on college campuses, particularly in predominantly White institutions (PWIs). The imagery is of a White fraternity man targeting a vulnerable, often intoxicated, White woman. Indeed, many PWIs' sexual prevention programming focuses on White intraracial assault dyads or use a colorblind approach that still prioritizes the experiences of White victims (Iverson 2017; Karunaratne and Harris 2022; Korman et al. 2017; Worthen and Wallace 2017). As such, White college students' intentions to intervene in a situation with a Black man targeting a White woman may be tempered by the college-context association of a White sexual aggressor and a White victim. With this specific context in mind, I state a contradictory hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3b (Campus Specific): White bystanders will be most likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a White aggressor and a White target.

Open-ended responses to questions asking why respondents would or would not intend to intervene will illuminate the process by which White college students make intervention decisions. The theory of aversive racism suggests students will use colorblind or non-race-based excuses to justify not intervening in situations with a Black target and/or aggressor compared to situations with a White target and/or aggressor even if they sometimes invoke coded language that aligns with controlling images. Open-ended responses will be used to analyze the extent to which white respondents prioritize the dangerousness of perpetrators, vulnerability of victims, and personal safety differentially in scenarios in which the race of the actors vary.

METHODS

There are a number of ethical and practical difficulties with conducting real-world experiments on the decisions onlookers make in cases of sexual violence, which makes vignettes particularly useful for studying such decisions. Following prior research on bystanding (Bennett and Banyard 2016; Bennett et al. 2014; Nicksa 2014), I test my hypotheses using an experimental vignette that varies the race of perpetrators and targets in a relatively unambiguous, more severe scenario that could lead to sexual violence. There are four variations of the vignette, each with a distinct combination of aggressor and target race (Black aggressor/Black target, Black aggressor/White target, White aggressor/Black target, White aggressor/White target) using distinctly racial names, consistent with other bystander research signaling target and aggressor race (Katz et al. 2017; Lewis et al. 2019). Each participant was randomly assigned to view one race variant of a relatively severe situation, with a barely conscious woman being moved to a private place

The vignette read: “At a house party, you walk past a hallway and notice a woman, [Tanisha/Emily], who looks like she has had a lot to drink, waiting near the bathroom. She is leaning on the wall with her eyes closed and a drink loosely held in her hand. [Jamal/Greg], a man, is walking down the hallway and notices [Tanisha/Emily]. He stops abruptly in front of her and leans down to whisper something in her ear, but [Tanisha/Emily] does not respond or appear to have heard what he said. [Jamal/Greg] looks over his shoulder, not seeing you or anyone else, then he puts an arm around [Tanisha/Emily], supporting most of her weight and leads her down the hallway out of sight.”

Respondents were asked to answer a series of close-ended questions capturing demographics and social psychological constructs, as well as questions specific to the scenario that capture how vulnerable they perceive the woman to be in the scenario, how dangerous they perceive the man to be, and whether or not they would intervene in the scenario. The close-ended questions about the scenario were followed by open-ended questions asking respondents to explain their responses.

Sample

I collected data from undergraduate students enrolled in two southeastern universities in the fall of 2021. The enrollment at each of the universities is around 25,000 with approximately 65% of enrolled students identifying as White, qualifying the universities as predominantly White institutions (PWIs). I emailed 6,000 randomly selected students (3,000 at each university) and kept the survey open for two months, during which I sent follow-up emails on a weekly basis to non-respondents. A total of 311 students completed the survey (190 at University 1; 121 at University 2).

The response rate of 5.18%, falls short of the average response rate for on-line surveys. Fosnacht et al.'s (2017) examination of response rates reported that a response rate of 5-10% produces reliable estimates with a sample size of 500. The combined response rate (5%) and sample size (N=311) here falls short, likely because the survey was launched during a global pandemic during which college students experienced screen fatigue from taking courses and conducting much of their lives on-line.

Given that aversive racism theory focuses specifically on White Americans racial attitudes and White Americans racial attitudes and beliefs towards other racial and ethnic groups (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004), I focus the analyses on White students' responses to the scenarios. The total analytic sample for the analyses is 142. The small sample size does not meet the required size (N=200) recommended as the minimum for conducting SEM (Boomsma and Hoogland 2001; Kline 2005). On account of the response rate and sample size ratio, I focus much of my analysis on the qualitative responses to questions about the scenarios. One hundred and thirty one (94.24%) of the respondents provided answers to the open-ended questions. For sample demographic information, see Appendix A, columns 3 and 4.

Measures

The substantive variables include: race of aggressor, race of target, the aggressor/target dyad, perceived severity/risk-level of the situation, perceived dangerousness of the aggressor, and perceived vulnerability of the target. Control variables capturing demographics and rape myth acceptance are also included in the regression models. Finally, the dependent variable captures the likelihood that respondents would intervene in the scenario with which they were presented. The precise measures used to operationalize the variables are presented in Appendix B.

Analytic Strategy

I estimate logistic regression models to predict the ordinal outcome variable, likelihood of intervention. Responses to open-ended questions in the survey instrument were coded using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). I blindly coded emergent themes without knowing the dyad of aggressor/target, and then ran queries to find the most commonly occurring themes across dyads as well as by gender across dyads. Naturally, three overall categories of responses emerged: responses that directly spoke to their reasoning for intervening or failing to intervene, descriptions of the man in the situation, and descriptions of the woman in the situation (see Table 4.3 for themes and Table 4.4 for themes broken down by respondents' gender).

RESULTS

Consistent with the Danger to Self hypothesis, White college students are significantly less likely to report intentions to stop a Black aggressor than a White aggressor (Table 4.1, row 2), suggesting that respondents either feel safer stopping a White aggressor than a Black aggressor, *or* they have see White men as more likely to perpetrate an incapacitated sexual assault on a college campus. Consistent with the Equal Helping Response hypothesis, the race of the target does not significantly impact respondents' intentions to intervene. That is, respondents are equally likely to intervene on behalf of Black or White potential victims in an incapacitated sexual assault scenario, suggesting that cultural images of vulnerable White women and overly sexual Black women are not affecting intervention intentions. Additionally, respondents who perceive the aggressor as more dangerous are significantly more likely to report intentions to intervene, and this effect is significant above and beyond the effect of the race of the aggressor.

Table 4.1: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Intervention Intentions

	White College Respondents (n=139)
Race of the actors (Binary Variables)	
(1) Black Target ^a	-.385 (.364)
(2) Black Aggressor ^b	-.747* (.355)
Control Variables	
(3) Perception of Dangerousness	1.057*** (.307)
(4) Perception of Vulnerability	.264 (.281)
(5) Perceived Risk	.455 (.347)
(6) Female Respondent	.194 (.407)
(7) Rape Myth Acceptance	-.378 (.312)
(8) School	-.250 (.422)
(9) Mother's Education	-.157 (.211)
(10) Father's Education	.003 (.204)
(11) Age	.079 (.049)

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001; ^aReference category is White target; ^b Reference category is White aggressor.

The results in Table 4.2 focus on the racial composition of the various dyads in the scenarios. White college students are significantly more likely to report intentions to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad than all other dyads, consistent with the Campus Specific

Table 4.2: Logistic Regression Predicting the Likelihood of Intervention Intentions by Dyad

	White Respondents (n=142)
Race of the actors (Dyad Variables)^a	
(1) Black Aggressor/Black Target	-1.141* (.562)
(2) Black Aggressor/White Target	-1.557** (.514)
(3) White Aggressor/Black Target	-1.304* (.551)
Control Variables	
(4) Perception of Dangerousness	1.123*** (.313)
(5) Perception of Vulnerability	.445 (.294)
(6) Perceived Risk	.399 (.356)
(7) Female Respondent	.129 (.411)
(8) Rape Myth Acceptance	-.284 (.318)
(9) School	-.174 (.430)
(11) Mother's Education	-.190 (.214)
(12) Father's Education	.027 (.206)
(15) Age	.076 (.051)

^ap<.1 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001; ^aReference category is White aggressor/White target

Hypothesis. This finding is significant because when looking at the race of the aggressor and target separately, the race of the target does not have a significant impact on respondents' intentions to intervene. However, when considering the full dyad the race of the target *does* matter depending on the race of the aggressor. While respondents are not more likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a White woman than on behalf of a Black woman overall, they are more likely to report intentions to intervene on behalf of a White woman paired with a White man than they are for all other dyads. This highlights the importance of considering the full dyad of aggressor/target when examining intervention intentions based on race. There are no significant differences in the respondents' intentions to intervene between the remaining dyads. Additionally, the more dangerous respondents perceive the aggressor to be, the more likely they are to report intentions to intervene.

One possible explanation for White students reporting greater intentions to intervene in this situation with a White aggressor compared to a Black aggressor is that the common picture of a college party rapist is a White fraternity member. However, no respondents mentioned fraternities in this situation. It is possible that despite not explicitly mentioning fraternities, White college students imagine college party rape as taking place between a White man and White woman. Another possible explanation for this difference is that respondents perceive intervening in situations with Black men as inherently more dangerous.

The scenario in this study conjures images of incapacitated college party rape for most respondents. The majority of respondents identify the aggressor as having bad intentions toward the target (Table 4.3, row 1). This finding speaks to how college students are trained to recognize the risks associated with a situation that could lead to incapacitated sexual assault. It might also

Table 4.3: Qualitative Themes

	(1) Total (n=131)	(2) Black target (n=53)	(3) White target (n=78)	(4) Black aggressor (n=63)	(5) White aggressor (n=68)	(6) BA/ BT (n=24)	(7) BA/ WT (n=39)	(8) WA/ BT (n=29)	(9) WA/WT (n=39)	(10) Men (n=44)	(11) Women (n=87)
Descriptions of the Aggressor											
(1) Bad intentions	71.76% 94	67.92% 36	74.36% 58	76.19% 48	67.65% 46	75% 18	76.92% 30	62.07% 18	71.79% 28	56.82% 25	80.46% 70
(2) Taking advantage	45.04% 59	33.96% 18	52.56% 41	38.10% 27	47.06% 32	29.17% 7	51.28% 20	37.93% 11	53.85% 21	34.09% 15	50.57% 44
(3) Body language	19.08% 25	16.98% 9	20.51% 16	17.46% 11	20.59% 14	20.83% 5	15.38% 6	13.79% 4	25.64% 10	13.64% 6	21.84% 19
(4) Move to a private location	17.56% 23	13.21% 7	20.51% 16	19.05% 12	16.18% 11	16.67% 4	20.51% 8	10.34% 3	20.51% 8	11.36% 5	20.69% 18
(5) Unclear intentions (help or harm)	23.66% 31	26.42% 14	21.79% 17	23.10% 15	23.53% 16	25% 6	23.07% 9	27.59% 8	20.51% 8	31.82% 14	19.54% 17
(6) Relationship Speculation	12.98% 17	11.32% 6	14.10% 11	12.70% 8	13.24% 9	8.33% 2	15.38% 6	13.79% 4	12.82% 5	15.91% 7	11.49% 10
(7) Unclear intentions overlapping with Better Safe than Sorry	6.87% 9	7.55% 4	6.41% 5	4.76% 3	8.82% 6	8.33% 2	2.56% 1	6.90% 2	10.26% 4	11.36% 5	4.60% 4
Descriptions of the Target											
(8) Clearly at risk of rape	29.77% 39	33.96% 18	26.92% 21	30.16% 19	29.41% 20	29.17% 7	30.77% 12	37.93% 11	23.08% 9	25% 11	28.74% 28
(9) Unable to take care of/defend herself or make decisions	30.53% 40	26.42% 14	33.33% 26	38.10% 24	23.53% 16	33.33% 8	41.03% 16	20.69% 6	25.64% 10	18.18% 8	36.78% 32

Table 4.3 (continued)

(10) Unable to consent	21.37% 28	13.21% 7	26.92% 21	31.75% 20	11.76% 8	29.17% 7	33.33% 13	0	20.51% 8	18.18% 8	22.99% 20
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be that the desire to avoid being seen as racist may make respondents more likely to report intentions to stop a White aggressor than a Black aggressor. They may not want to behave in ways that could be perceived as racist, so they may be overcompensating with their decision-making.

Women are more likely than men to label the aggressor as having bad intentions (Table 4.4, row 1). This finding, while not present in the quantitative model, is consistent with bystander research that suggests college women are more likely than their male peers to notice and then intervene in campus sexual assault situations (Banyard 2008; Banyard et al. 2007; Burn 2009). When prompted to describe the aggressor, respondents are more likely to label a Black aggressor as having bad intentions compared to a White aggressor (Table 4.3, row 1, columns 4 and 5). While women label Black and White aggressors as having bad intentions at similar rates (Table 4.4, row 1, columns 6 and 8), men are much more likely to label a Black aggressor as having bad intentions compared to a White aggressor (Table 4.4, row 1, columns 7 and 9). In fact, women are almost twice as likely as men to label a White aggressor as having bad intentions (Table 4.4, row 1, columns 9 and 10).

Respondents identified many signs that the aggressor in the scenario has bad intentions. The major themes that emerge as indicators of bad intentions include: the perception that the aggressor is taking advantage of the target's intoxicated state, the aggressor looks over his shoulder to see if his behavior is being monitored, and the aggressor moves the woman from a public to a private location.

The most commonly cited indicator of an aggressor's bad intentions is that he was taking advantage of the target's intoxicated state (Table 4.3, row 2). Over half (62.77%) of respondents who say the aggressor has bad intentions mention this theme. While not all of these respondents

Table 4.4: Qualitative Themes by Gender

	Total (n=131)		Black target (n=53)		White target (n=78)		Black aggressor (n=63)		White aggressor (n=68)		BA/ BT (n=24)		BA/ WT (n=39)		WA/ BT (n=29)		WA/WT (n=39)	
	(1) Men (n=44)	(2) Women (n=87)	(3) Men (n=23)	(4) Women (n=30)	(5) Men (n=21)	(6) Women (n=57)	(7) Men (n=21)	(8) Women (n=42)	(9) Men (n=23)	(10) Women (n=45)	(11) Men (n=9)	(12) Women (n=15)	(13) Men (n=12)	(14) Women (n=27)	(15) Men (n=14)	(16) Women (n=15)	(17) Men (n=9)	(18) Women (n=30)
Descriptions of the Aggressor																		
(1) Bad intentions	56.82 % 25	80.46 % 70	56.52 % 13	76.67 % 23	57.14 % 12	80.70 % 46	71.43 % 15	78.57 % 33	43.38 % 10	80% 36	77.78 % 7	73.33 % 11	66.67 % 8	81.48 % 22	42.86 % 6	80% 12	44.44 % 4	80% 24
(2) Taking advantage	34.09 % 15	50.57 % 44	30.43 % 7	36.67 % 11	38.10 % 8	57.89 % 33	33.33 % 7	47.62 % 20	34.78 % 8	53.33 % 24	22.22 % 2	33.33 % 5	41.67 % 5	55.56 % 15	35.71 % 5	40% 6	33.33 % 3	60% 18
(3) Body language	13.64 % 6	21.84 % 19	21.74 % 5	13.33 % 4	4.76 % 1	26.32 % 15	14.29 % 3	19.05 % 8	13.04 % 3	24.44 % 11	33.33 % 3	13.33 % 2	0 %	22.22 % 6	14.29 % 2	13.33 % 2	11.11 % 1	30% 9
(4) Move to a private location	11.36 % 5	20.69 % 18	8.70 % 2	16.67 % 5	14.29 % 3	22.81 % 13	14.29 % 3	21.43 % 9	8.70 % 2	20% 9	11.11 % 1	20% 3	16.67 % 2	22.22 % 6	7.14 % 1	13.33 % 2	11.11 % 1	23.33 % 7
(5) Unclear intentions (help or harm)	31.82 % 14	19.54 % 17	34.78 % 8	20% 6	28.57 % 6	19.30 % 11	23.81 % 5	23.81 % 10	39.13 % 9	15.56 % 7	22.22 % 2	26.67 % 4	25% 3	22.22 % 6	42.86 % 6	13.33 % 2	33.33 % 3	16.67 % 5
(6) Relationship Speculation	15.91 % 7	11.49 % 10	13.04 % 3	10% 3	19.05 % 4	12.28 % 7	9.52 % 2	14.29 % 6	21.74 % 5	8.89 % 4	0 %	13.33 % 2	16.67 % 2	14.81 % 4	21.43 % 3	6.67 % 1	22.22 % 2	10% 3

Table 4.4 (continued)

(7) Unclear intentions overlapping with Better Safe than Sorry	11.36 % 5	4.60 % 4	13.04 % 3	3.33 % 1	9.52 % 2	5.26 % 3	9.52 % 2	2.38 % 1	13.04 % 3	6.67 % 3	11.11 % 1	6.67 % 1	8.33 % 1	0	14.29 % 2	0	11.11 % 1	10% 3
Descriptions of the Victim																		
(8) Clearly at risk of rape	25% 11	28.74 % 28	30.43 % 7	36.67 % 11	19.05 % 4	29.82 % 17	19.05 % 4	35.71 % 15	30.43 % 7	28.89 % 13	22.22 % 2	33.33 % 5	16.67 % 2	37.04 % 10	35.71 % 5	40% 6	22.22 % 2	23.33 % 7
(9) Unable to take care of/defend herself or make decisions	18.18 % 8	36.78 % 32	17.39 % 4	33.33 % 10	19.05 % 4	38.60 % 22	23.81 % 5	45.24 % 19	13.04 % 3	28.89 % 13	22.22 % 2	40% 6	25% 3	48.15 % 13	14.29 % 2	26.67 % 4	11.11 % 1	30% 9
(10) Unable to consent	18.18 % 8	22.99 % 20	13.04 % 3	13.33 % 4	23.81 % 5	28.07 % 16	23.81 % 5	35.71 % 15	13.04 % 3	11.11 % 5	33.33 % 3	26.67 % 4	16.67 % 2	40.74 % 11	0	0	33.33 % 3	16.67 % 5

mention consent explicitly, there is a clear consensus that the target's intoxicated state makes her an easy target for the aggressor. The fact that a man would approach a woman who is so intoxicated is a sign that he has malicious intentions. This theme is particularly apparent in the situation where the female target is White (Table 4.3, row 2, column 3). Women are more likely than men to indicate the aggressor is taking advantage of a White target (Table 4.4, rows 5 and 6). A little more than half of respondents who read the Black aggressor/White target and White aggressor/White target dyads indicate the man has bad intentions because of the woman's intoxicated state (Table 4.3, row 2, columns 7 and 9). In fact, women are almost twice as likely as men to report a White target paired with a White aggressor is being taken advantage of due to her intoxicated state (Table 4.4, row 2, columns 17 and 18). A man who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad says, "*He knows that [the woman] is likely very inhibited and is taking advantage of her current state of mind.*" Similarly, college women who read the White aggressor/White target dyad say things like: "*[The man] is cunning and saw the perfect opportunity to get laid without allowing [the woman] the right to consent*" and "*He knows she is unable to communicate and therefore unable to give consent and she is also unable to make decisions, he is forcing this on her.*" A man approaching a woman in a severely intoxicated state is an indicator to many participants that he has bad intentions to sexually assault her.

The second most common indicator of the aggressor's bad intentions is him looking over his shoulder after whispering in the target's ear. In the vignette, it is not explicitly stated that he is making sure no one else is watching him interact with the target, but almost one-fifth of respondents mention this as a sign of malicious intent (Table 4.3, row 3). This theme emerges most in the White aggressor/White target dyad, where it is mentioned by a quarter of respondents. For example, women who read the White aggressor/White target report: "*The fact*

he noticeably looked around and only led her off after not seeing anybody implies ill intent, in my view. Her condition doesn't lend itself to friendly conversation, either, so his potential actions are a shorter list"; *"If a girl is unable to respond and this man takes it upon himself to look and make sure no one is around then take her away, that is very dangerous and can lead to very bad things;"* and *"He looked around before leaving with the woman, signaling that he has a guilty conscience, or that he knows he is doing something wrong, something he could get in trouble for."* The consensus among respondents who mention this theme is that if he does not have ill intentions, the aggressor would not look over his shoulder to see if anyone has noticed him talking to a heavily intoxicated woman.

The final most common indicator of ill intent that emerges from respondents is the aggressor moving the target from a public to a private location in this situation. One-tenth of respondents perceive the risk of sexual assault in a private location, away from other party-goers' eyes, is much greater (Table 4.3, row 4). Respondents who mention this as an indicator of ill intent do not perceive another possible reason why the aggressor might take the target to a private location if not to sexually assault her. This theme emerges most in dyads with a White target; one-fifth of respondents in the Black aggressor/White target and White aggressor/White target dyads report this is an indication of ill intent. A woman who read the White aggressor/White target dyad states, *"Whenever a woman semi-unconscious or fully unconscious is taken away by a man, there is a strong probability (especially if this man is a stranger) that the women will be raped."* Another woman who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad reports, *"The fact that [the woman] did not show any form of response to what he said to her means there was absolutely no chance of consent to whatever he is taking her to do. Even if he was just being a nice guy, he shouldn't have forced her to go anywhere without her consent,*

instead he could've found her friends for her." Finally, a woman who read the White aggressor/White target dyad says, *"For lack of a better term I would describe him as an asshole. He should never take a woman away when they are that drunk. He should have gotten her some water or something and tried to find her friends."* That a man, regardless of his relationship with a woman, would take her to a private place rather than keeping her in a public place or finding her friends to assist her, is a clear sign to many that he is going to harm, not help, the woman.

Almost a quarter of respondents do not identify the man as clearly having bad intentions, arguing it is unclear if the aggressor in the situation is helping or harming the target. Respondents label the Black and White aggressors as having unclear intentions at similar rates (Table 4.3, row 5, columns 4 and 5). However, men are more likely to identify a White aggressor as having unclear intentions than a Black aggressor (Table 4.4, row 5, columns 7 and 9). This finding is consistent with George and Martínez's (2002) finding that White men desire to give other White men, *but not Black men*, the benefit of the doubt in situations involving sexual violence. In contrast, women are more likely to label the Black aggressor as having unclear intentions (Table 4.4, row 5, columns 8 and 10). Men are the most likely to report White aggressors paired with Black targets as having unclear intentions (Table 4.4, row 5, column 15), consistent with the finding that men are least likely to perceive the aggressor in this dyad as having bad intentions (Table 4.4, row 1, column 15).

Most respondents identify the aggressor's intentions as unclear because his actions can be interpreted either as helping or taking advantage of the target in her intoxicated state. Over half of the respondents (54.84%) who identify the man as having unclear intentions say this is because they do not know the relationship between the man and woman, so they are unable to accurately interpret his intentions. If the aggressor knows the target, his actions are likely

helpful, but if the aggressor is a stranger, his actions are likely harmful. For example, one woman who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad says, *“He looks over his shoulder and perceives that no one is watching his interaction with [the woman]. But he also puts his arm around her and leads her away, and whispers in her ear, none of which are inherently dangerous or threatening behaviors. Perhaps he is a friend or boyfriend trying to get her to a more comfortable place.”* Similarly, a man who read the White aggressor/White target dyad says, *“Depending he could be drunk or have malicious intent, however, without knowing the relationship between the two it could be hard to gauge the situation.”* Finally, one man who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad reports, *“He could have very bad intentions or he honestly could be a friend of a friend sent to get the girl and take her back to her friends. It's really hard to say.”* These respondents may be worried about losing face in a party setting by misinterpreting a friendly, helpful encounter as one of rape.

To these respondents, the aggressor's actions are not inherently malicious and would be interpreted differently depending on the relationship between the two actors. The assumption that a target is safe with her male friend or acquaintance, of course, belies the risk of acquaintance rape, which occurs at a higher rate than stranger rape (Fisher et al. 2000; Kilpatrick et al. 2007; Koss 1998). The implication of this finding is that some college students still incorrectly believe that the most common form of sexual assault is stranger rape, calling for additional training on this topic.

In contrast to the respondents above, who are paralyzed by indecision based on their relationship speculation, over a quarter of respondents (29.03%) who report the aggressor has unclear intentions also report that they would err on the side of caution and intervene regardless of their uncertainty (Table 4.3, row 7). For example, a college man who read the White

aggressor/Black target dyad states, “*He could be helping her, but [it’s] better to check.*”

Similarly, a college woman who read the White aggressor/White target dyad says, “*I would be very worried for [the woman’s] safety. It seems like she’s not in a state where she can defend herself verbally or physically if [the man] tries to take advantage of her. Even though it’s possible that [the man] is her friend and just wants to help her get home safely, I’d rather make sure she’s in good hands.*” Finally, a man who read the White aggressor/White target dyad says, “*In this scenario I can only see two likely possibilities: 1. The man is taking her somewhere safe and likely knows her, maybe making sure she gets back home safely, or 2. he is planning to rape or sexually assault her. The risk is not worth taking so I would intervene.*” These respondents recognize the aggressor’s intentions are unclear and he could be helping or harming the target. However, they are unwilling to take the chance of a woman being sexually assaulted as a result of their inaction. They may also recognize that a man who has no ill-intent may well appreciate that someone is looking out for his friend/partner.

Vulnerability of Target

Close to one-third of respondents label the target as clearly at risk of incapacitated sexual assault. One woman who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad says, “*I feel like if I were not to intervene, this woman could be raped.*” Similarly, a man who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad says, “*This woman is unresponsive and will most likely be sexually assaulted in this situation.*” Finally, a woman who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad says, “*She is obviously being taken advantage of when she is not in the right state of mind.*”

Inconsistent with depictions of White women as ideal victims, a greater proportion of respondents label a Black target as at risk of rape in this situation compared to a White target (Table 4.3, row 8). This could be an indication of aversive racists’ opposition to being labeled as

racist. As this situation is quite familiar to them as a high-risk situation with clearly defined norms of non-racism, these respondents may be overcompensating and responding to questions in ways they have learned are non-racist. Alternatively, respondents may be overstating the danger and risk associated with situations that involve a Black target to justify a discriminatory helping response. Because the findings suggest support for the Equal Helping Response Hypothesis, the former is more likely.

Both college men and women are more likely to report a Black target is at risk of rape, though the difference is greater for men than women (Table 4.4, row 8, columns 3-6). A target is labeled as at risk at similar rates across the race of the aggressor (Table 4.3, row 8, columns 4 and 5). However, men are more likely to label a target at risk of rape when paired with a White aggressor (Table 4.4, row 8, columns 7 and 9). In contrast, women are more likely to label a target at risk when she is paired with a Black aggressor (Table 4.4, row 8, columns 8 and 10). Considering the full dyad: White college students are most likely to identify the target in the White aggressor/Black target dyad as clearly at risk for rape in the situation, followed by the Black aggressor/White target dyad. The gender disparity is largest for the Black aggressor/White target dyad. Women consider the target at *highest* risk of being raped in this dyad, while men view this target at the *lowest* risk of being raped in this dyad.

However, while men report a target is more likely to be at risk of rape when paired with a White aggressor, the degree of autonomy they assign to the target is greater when they are paired with White aggressors. Specifically, college men *and* women are more likely to report the target is unable to take care of/defend herself *and* consent due to her intoxication when paired with a Black aggressor (Table 4.4, rows 9 and 10, columns 7 and 9). This finding is consistent with the controlling image of the Black Beast Rapist who will prey on helpless targets and is so

dangerous that no amount of autonomy could reduce the risk of sexual violence to the target. Additionally, this finding is consistent with the stereotype many White individuals hold of White men as generally well-meaning and even if the target is heavily intoxicated, he is not so dangerous that they could not avoid sexual victimization if they make their desires known.

The theme that the target is unable to take care of/defend herself or make decisions due to her intoxication is most prominent in the Black aggressor/White target dyad and least prominent in the White Aggressor/Black target dyad (Table 4.3, row 9). In the Black aggressor/White target dyad, respondents reference the target's inability to handle the situation herself as a sign that they should intervene. For example, college women who read this dyad say things like: "*[The woman] does not seem capable of protecting herself against the potential harm because she is drunk...making me more likely to take action*"; "*She has no power to defend herself and needs external intervention*"; and "*She is in an extremely vulnerable position where she cannot consent to anything nor defend herself in any given situation.*" This theme is mentioned more for respondents who have situations with White targets and Black aggressors, though the gap is greater between White and Black aggressors than White and Black targets. Targets paired with White aggressors, especially Black targets, are perceived to maintain some level of agency or ability to defend themselves, despite their obvious and visible intoxication.

Despite the vignette explicitly stating the target has had a lot to drink and is unresponsive, only one-fifth of respondents explicitly mention the target is unable to consent to sexual activity (Table 4.3, row 10). White targets are more likely to be labeled as unable to consent than Black targets. A third of the respondents who read the Black aggressor/White target dyad mention the inability to consent, followed by the Black aggressor/Black target dyad. For example, two women who read the Black aggressor/White target say: "*The fact that [the woman] did not show*

any form of response to what he said to her means there was absolutely no chance of consent to whatever he is taking her to do” and “Since she is very drunk, I would gather that she has limited awareness of her surroundings and limited ability to resist any advances or give her consent in the situation.” Additionally, a woman who read the Black aggressor/Black target dyad states, *“If she can’t register him talking to her then she is extremely incapacitated and unable to give consent.”* To these respondents, the target’s unresponsiveness and intoxication are clear signs that she is unable to give consent for any sexual activity. Importantly, no respondents who read the White aggressor/Black target dyad mentioned the target is not able to consent in this situation. Perhaps this is an indication that these respondents embrace the Jezebel controlling image that a Black woman’s consent is constant, particularly when paired with a White man.

DISCUSSION

This study assesses the extent to which the race of the target and aggressor influence White college students’ intentions to intervene in a situation that could lead to incapacitated sexual assault. Findings from the study reveal that the race of the aggressor appears to influence intervention intentions. The race of the target alone does not significantly impact intentions to intervene, consistent with the Equal Helping Response hypothesis. The theory of aversive racism maintains that in a situations in which there is consensus among respondents that the risk of sexual violence is high, people are less likely to behave discriminatorily towards the victim than a more ambiguous situation. The norms of behavior in this situation are well-established through sexual violence prevention education programming, and deviation from norms calling for intervention may result in the behaviors of passive bystanders being labeled racist -- something an aversive racist is determined to avoid, given their aversion to appearing racist. Additionally, White college students may not behave discriminatorily because the Black target is intoxicated to

the point of being unresponsive, making it difficult to ascribe controlling images of Black women as strong, invulnerable, and hypersexual to her. In fact, research suggests White bystanders are more likely to help Black victims in situations where the victim appears submissive or subordinate compared to those who appear more assertive (Katz, Cohen, and Glass 1975). The fact that the Black target is unresponsive and not reactive to the aggressor may overrule any subconsciously or consciously held controlling images of Black women as too strong or sexual to be victims of sexual violence.

The aggressor's race significantly informs intentions to intervene. Consistent with the Danger to Self hypothesis, respondents are more likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a White aggressor than when the aggressor is Black. In discussions of their intentions to intervene, respondents are more likely to label the Black aggressor as having bad intentions than they are to label White aggressors as having bad intentions. This poses a bit of a paradox when juxtaposed with the finding that they would intervene more readily in a situation with a White aggressor. The theory of aversive racism might suggest that this underscores the fact that White college students often go to great lengths to demonstrate they are not racist through their actions (or intended actions) even if they unconsciously harbor beliefs about, in this instance, negative intentions that are linked to race that ultimately inform interactions. Alternatively, it may be the case that, in fact, unconscious fears of Black men as violent renders the onlooker too fearful to intervene when there is a Black aggressor.

Interestingly, White men are much more likely than White women to label the Black aggressor as having bad intentions than the White aggressor. Perhaps White women are better able to empathize with the female target and see her as at risk, regardless of the aggressor's race. It may also be that the training women receive regarding the need to protect themselves from the

very real threat of campus sexual assault has ingrained in their psyches an image of White college men as sexual predators and that this image carries weight in the college setting, perhaps more so or to the same extent as fabricated images of criminal Black men preying upon unsuspecting White women in situations of stranger rape.

In contrast, White men appear to be much more reluctant to label the White aggressor as having bad intentions. In fact, they are more likely to label the White aggressor as having unclear intentions, in which he could actually be helping the target. This is consistent with George and Martínez's (2002) finding that White men show a desire to give an unknown White male perpetrator the "benefit of the doubt." Women are more likely to perceive a Black aggressor as having unclear intentions toward the target than a White aggressor. These women may have come to see college party rape as taking place between a White man and White woman, particularly at a PWI. While participants do not explicitly reference fraternity parties, this situation clearly invokes a common narrative of incapacitated party rape. Thus, White college women may be primed to envision a White male aggressor in this scenario.

These findings highlight a gendered answer to the question of who is responsible for sexual assault prevention. Women are socialized throughout their lives to understand it is their responsibility to prevent being sexually assaulted *and* are trained to identify risky situations in order to help their friends avoid sexual assault. Men in contemporary society often are socialized to not commit sexual violence against women with phrases like "no means no" holding a central place in this socialization; however, the messaging around sexual violence typically does less by way of training young men to identify risky situations in order to prevent sexual violence against women by other men.

The “It’s On Us” nonprofit organization is an exception, stressing the need to train all college students, particularly young men, to be part of the solution to sexual violence in the university setting. Their research suggests college men are generally not aware of the extent of campus sexual violence or how they can be part of the movement to end it (Zenteno et al. 2022). As such, college men may have difficulty believing that college women look at them and perceive them as capable of perpetrating sexual assault, being as they are “nice guys.” Perpetrators of sexual assault, to men, are psychotic strangers in ski masks (Lisak 2004) or, possibly, a sexually aggressive Black man. While the vast majority of college men have and will not perpetrate sexual assault (Foubert, Clark-Taylor, and Wall 2020), White men must learn to understand and recognize risky behaviors in their White male peers. Gender socialization must be expanded to focus on men’s responsibility to help prevent sexual violence, not only on an individual level, but also at a societal level.

“It’s On Us” emphasizes the importance of men building relationships with non-male-identifying students in order to see a connection between campus sexual assault and their own lives (Zenteno et al. 2022). However, we must expand beyond the idea that men can be advocates only for women if it personally affects them (Katz 1995); because of the racially homophilic nature of most relationships (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001), this may only encourage White men to serve as prosocial bystanders in situations with a White female target. In any case, it appears that men are empathizing here with the White man and may be conjuring images of perpetrators of sexual assault as morally flawed strangers or possibly sexually aggressive Black men.

More White college students, particularly men, label the Black target as clearly at risk of rape compared to the White target. However, respondents who provide more detail about the

target, beyond stating she is at risk, are more likely to label the White target as lacking autonomy -- either that she is unable to defend herself, that she is unable to consent to sexual activity, or both.. Though this appears contradictory, Katz and colleagues (2017) find White college women are less likely to report intentions to intervene or feel personally responsible for a Black victim of incapacitated sexual assault compared to a White victim *but* do not perceive a difference in the risk of incapacitated sexual assault both victims face. They argue, “By separating personal responsibility to intervene from perception of risk, the current findings suggest that White female bystanders were not less certain of risk or less likely to identify risk in a pre-assault situation when a Black woman was in need; rather, they perceived their own role in the situation as different” (Katz et al. 2017:280). Despite respondents in the present study saying a Black target is more at risk of rape, the idea remains that a Black target may be stronger than a White target, and able to defend herself despite being visibly intoxicated, consistent with the Strong Black Woman schema; *or* some respondents still consider the Black target as able to consent to sexual activity, despite being unresponsive, consistent with the Jezebel controlling image.

However, the discussion of vulnerability and dangerousness is incomplete if one simply looks at the race of the potential victim and perpetrator separately. Other sexual violence research argues it is *critical* to examine the full dyad to understand how the race of the aggressor and the target intersect to influence perceptions of the situation and people in the situation (Spohn and Spears 1996).

Respondents are most likely to report intentions to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad compared to all other dyads, consistent with the Campus Specific hypothesis. This finding is particularly interesting because, without taking into account the full dyad, the race of the target does not appear to influence bystanders’ intentions to intervene.

However, in taking into consideration the full dyad, a White woman paired with a White man is more likely to garner an intervention response compared to all other dyads. Respondents in this dyad are the most likely to identify signs of bad intentions, i.e. note that the aggressor is taking advantage of the target, the aggressor's body language is a sign of malice, and that moving from a public to a private location is a sign of increased risk (though this theme is tied with Black aggressor/Black target). Respondents appear to be identifying specific signs of bad intentions most in this dyad, perhaps because White-on-White party rape is so common that there are specific indicators they know to look for. Additionally, although the difference between the White aggressor/White target and the Black aggressor/White target dyad is small, respondents are the least likely to report the aggressor in the White aggressor/White target dyad had unclear intentions. White college students appear to be the most comfortable interpreting situations with other White college students compared to situations with Black actors.

At first glance, this research suggests that in severe situations of potential sexual violence with an intoxicated and unresponsive target, the race of the aggressor has a greater impact on respondents' intentions to intervene to thwart sexual violence than the race of the target. Oversimplifying bystander research to exclusively focus on either the aggressor or target tells only half the story. For example, Katz and colleagues' (2017) study compares White women's intervention intentions for a Black target and a White target in a situation that could lead to an incapacitated sexual assault. They find that White women are more likely to intervene on behalf of a White target compared to a Black target; *however*, they do not control for the aggressors' race. Ninety percent of study participants report they perceive the perpetrator to be White regardless of the victim's race. As a result, Katz et al. (2017) establish that, in a situation of potential incapacitated sexual assault, White women are more likely to intervene on behalf of a

White woman at risk of sexual violence by a White man than they are to intervene on behalf a Black woman at risk of sexual violence by a White man. Their work does not speak to the full dyad to consider responses to situations in which a Black or White woman is at risk of sexual violence by a Black man. Thus, their work falls short of identifying nuance in how the perpetrator's race matters for intervention intentions.

The current study shows that the intersection of the race of the aggressor *combines* with the race of the target to have a unique impact on bystanders' intervention intentions. Respondents are more likely to report intentions to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad than they are in any of the dyads that involve a Black aggressor or Black target. These findings suggest there is more to unpack than simply considering the race of the target. Thus, future research needs to focus more attention on the race of the perpetrator, as well as the combined race of the perpetrators and targets, when studying bystander responses to incapacitated sexual assault.

The findings from this research have implications for college bystander intervention programming. Most notable is that these programs cannot take a race neutral stance and should focus on raising awareness of how implicit biases can inform how bystanders view situations ripe for sexual violence. That is, college bystander education programming, particularly at PWIs, should target implicit stereotypes that inform how bystanders view White and Black men and women in situations that could lead to campus sexual assault. In doing so, education programs should target in-group biases among White college men and women. White college men, despite being more likely to report intentions to intervene in situations with a White aggressor, appear to be more unwilling to label a White aggressor as having bad intentions compared to a Black

aggressor. Acknowledging that their White peers can be perpetrators of sexual assault can enable young men to become better allies in the fight against sexual violence on campus.

White college men need to address the fact that other White college men can be perpetrators of sexual assault -- not just Black college men. White college women, in contrast, appear to recognize that White college men can be perpetrators of sexual violence. However, based on their open-ended responses, White women appear to be particularly concerned with the Black aggressor/White target dyad, consistent with findings that when White women fear rape, they fear it at the hands of a Black man (De Welde 2003). Also, the White women in this study are less clear about the intention of the aggressor in situations where the aggressor and target are both Black, suggesting they view potential problematic interactions between Black college peers as difficult to understand and somehow different from similar interactions between White college peers or interactions that involve at least one White person. This uncertainty is used ultimately to explain lack of intervention intentions. By incorporating a discussion of race in bystander education programming, White college students can become more confident in recognizing and intervening in cases of potential campus sexual assault with an aggressor and target of any race.

Surprisingly, the majority of respondents in this study do not express victim blaming attitudes that have been found in previous research on incapacitated sexual assault. Exposure to these situations from existing sexual violence prevention education programming may have reduced the stigma typically associated with victims of this type of assault. However, education programming must continue to emphasize the fact that acquaintance rape is more common than stranger rape. Some respondents in this study perceive less risk of sexual violence if the two actors know one another. Educators should help students understand that acquaintances, friends, and significant others are also capable of being perpetrators of a sexual assault.

Finally, it is important to note the benefit of using a mixed-methods approach in evaluating how the race of the target and aggressor influences White college students' intentions to intervene. In addition to being able to examine differences in intervention rates overall with quantitative data, the open-ended responses allow for consideration of the process involved in White college students' decisions to intervene in situations with aggressors and targets of different races. As I highlighted above, while there is not a quantitative difference between intervention intentions on behalf of Black and White targets overall, there appear to be race differences in the extent to which targets are perceived as maintaining agency. That is, the open-ended responses suggest that the Strong Black Woman stereotype is affecting White college students' perceptions of situations an intoxicated Black target. Additionally, the open-ended responses provide insight on the gendered use of non-race-based excuses in severe situations: men downplay the severity of the situation when there is a Black aggressor to excuse not intervening, while women highlight the danger of the Black aggressor to justify their lack of intervention. This finding can help explain some of the inconsistencies in aversive racism's treatment of situational severity.

Despite the knowledge gained from this study, it is not without limitations. First, the study focuses solely on the intervention intentions of White college students in an attempt to offer an in-depth analysis of how aversive racism and controlling images operate to influence decisions to intervene on behalf of Black or White targets of potential intoxicated sexual violence at the hands of Black or White aggressors. As such, the study is able to provide relevant information on how gender shapes White students' responses to situations with the potential for sexual violence. However, future research is needed to consider how race and gender intersect to influence interpretations and intentions to respond in these situations. The strength of controlling

images is so powerful and pervasive that these images also inform Black students' views of situations and may do so differently than for White students, either in attempts to rein in those whom they view as bolstering the images or in attempts to counter controlling images through conscious thought processes and actions. It is for certain that the differing lived experiences of college students at varying intersections of race and gender inform their views of and reactions to situations such as those covered in this study. As such, it is important that future studies expand upon this research by considering a diverse racial and ethnic pool of college students.

Additionally, the vignettes in the study depict a heterosexual dyad, with a man as the aggressor and a woman as the target. Future studies should expand upon this research to consider how the sexuality and gender identity of aggressors and targets intersect to inform how college students make decisions to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Aversive racism theory posits that White people can consider themselves to be non-racist and support principles of racial equality, while also holding deeply rooted, often unconscious prejudiced attitudes towards Black people. This theory has not been applied to understanding sexual violence on college campuses. Further, neither aversive racism theory nor bystander research on campus sexual assault has paid sufficient attention to how the race of sexual violence perpetrators intersects with the race of targets to inform how relevant bystanders' unconscious biases may be in their perceptions of situations or interactions that appear ripe for campus sexual assault.

This project weds a variety of perspectives on race, racism, and controlling images with bystander research to formulate a framework to better understand how race shapes the likelihood of White college student bystanders intervening in risky sexual violence scenarios in which the race of the aggressor and target vary. This project fills a major gap by assessing how race of the target and aggressor influence perceptions of situations and intentions to intervene in situations both independently *and* in tandem. In particular, by using a mixed-method design, this study increases our understanding of the explanations students offer for why they would or would not intervene and the extent to which students rely on race-coded language and controlling images of Black men and women.

COMPARISON OF STUDY FINDINGS

The dissertation consists of two studies that focus on bystanders' racialized views of problematic situations, intentions to intervene, and explanations for their intervention intentions. The first study focuses on a situation that is more ambiguously problematic than the second study in which the situation aligns with the type of situation often presented as quite clearly

problematic and ripe for sexual violence. Consistent with aversive racism theory's original conceptualization of the effect of severity, respondents are more likely to report intentions to help a White target than a Black target in the first study that presents an ambiguous situation. However, respondents report intentions to help White and Black targets at the same rate in the second study where the situation is more severe. In the ambiguous situation, respondents, particularly White college men, justify their intended inaction to help a Black target by using rhetoric consistent with Strong Black Woman, Jezebel, and Sapphire controlling images. In the severe situation, respondents still seem to rely on the Strong Black Woman and Jezebel controlling images to inform their understanding of the situation. However, these controlling images do not appear to significantly influence bystanders' helping behavior, as they are no less likely to intervene on behalf of the Black woman than they are on behalf of a White woman. The situation appears to be too obviously severe to behave discriminatorily based on their unconscious biases against Black women.

While the overall findings concerning how target race influences intentions to intervene are consistent with aversive racism theory, findings regarding how an aggressor's race influences bystanders' intentions to intervene depart from predictions derived from aversive racism theory. In the ambiguous situation, the race of the perpetrator alone does not significantly impact respondents' intentions to intervene. This appears to be because the bystanders' perceptions of the target, particularly in a scenario where she is fully conscious and is not visibly intoxicated, are more salient than their perceptions of the aggressor in their decision making. Bystander research suggests that onlookers rely on signals from the potential victim when determining if intervention is needed (Bennett et al. 2017; Burn 2009). However, in the severe situation, respondents are more likely to report intentions to intervene when the aggressor is White than

when the aggressor is Black. White college women appear to drive this trend, likely because they have learned from violence prevention programs that privileged, White men in a college context are the common perpetrators of incapacitated sexual assault. In the college context, the image of a White man perpetrating an incapacitated sexual assault (particularly against a White woman) may be more salient than the threat of the Black Beast Rapist preying on a helpless White woman in non-campus spaces. In both the ambiguous and severe situations, White college men downplay the risk White aggressors pose to targets in their explanations for their intentions to not intervene. Their explanations emphasize that the White man is drunk and thus not in control of his actions or that the man is helping, not harming the target. Notably, Black aggressors are not afforded the same leeway or justifications in either the ambiguous or the serious situation and are much more likely to be labeled by White men as dangerous.

Respondents are most likely to intervene in the White aggressor/White target dyad across both studies. This finding suggests that sexual violence prevention education, whether it explicitly prioritizes Whiteness or takes a “colorblind” perspective, has trained college students to be the most comfortable interpreting and getting involved in situations with two White actors. Bonilla-Silva and Peoples (2022) argue that historically White colleges and universities (HWCUs) reproduce Whiteness and White supremacy through such colorblind or “race-neutral” practices. Whiteness in these spaces is considered to be the norm (Lewis 2004) and thus is not critically considered as a factor that might influence college students’ decisions to intervene in cases of campus sexual violence. However, due to the inherently racialized nature of HWCUs, White college students perceive other White college students as belonging and students of color as being “other” (Moore 2008). Believing that everyone does not belong in college spaces, including college parties, White college students are likely to behave discriminatorily towards

Black actors. This plays out in the current studies with White students reading more ambiguity into situations, regardless of severity, involving Black aggressors and targets and in their consequential decision-making about intervening to interrupt campus sexual assault. Ultimately, White students are most primed for intervention in situations involving dyads with people they perceive to belong in college spaces -- White students.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This project advances aversive racism theory by considering the effect of race in an interpersonal situation. Previous applications of aversive racism theory have focused primarily on helping in medical emergencies (Gaertner et al. 1982; Garcia et al. 2022; York Cornwell and Currit 2016) or making punishment decisions (Johnson et al. 1995; Knight et al. 2001). These studies thereby shed light on how people make decisions about help or punishment focusing solely on the race of the recipient of help or punishment. Studying sexual violence adds an important component to understanding how aversive racism operates in decisions to help people in need. Sexual violence includes, at minimum, two people: an aggressor and a target. Research on sexual violence and race, then, must consider how the race of *both* aggressors and targets influence bystanders' helping behaviors. Rather than strictly focusing on the race of the potential recipient of help, this project considers how the race of those who have put a target at risk *and* the race of the target intersect to inform how White college students make decisions about whether or not to intervene. Thus, this project examines how bystander intervention intentions vary in both *inter-* and *intra*racial contexts. Aversive racism research has established that White people are more likely to help White victims than Black victims (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000; Gaertner and Dovidio 1977; Hodson et al. 2002; Kunstman and Plant 2008; Saucier et al. 2005). My project expands these findings to argue that White people are most likely to report intentions

to help or intervene in situations with a White potential victim *and* a White potential perpetrator in situations of campus sexual violence. This is the case in both serious situations and in more ambiguous situations.

The findings of this project suggest that we *must* consider the dyadic interaction of the race of targets and aggressors. For example, in the ambiguous situation, there is a significant difference between the likelihood of bystander intervention for a White and Black target. However, if you look at the dyad-level, White bystanders are more likely to intervene on behalf of a White target paired with a White aggressor beyond all other dyads, including a White target paired with a Black aggressor. Respondents are not significantly more likely to intervene on behalf of a White target paired with a Black aggressor compared to a Black target paired with either a Black or White aggressor. By simply looking only at the race of the target, we lose nuance in the findings. Aversive racism theory can be expanded to explain additional forms of interpersonal helping situations – including bullying situations, harassment situations, and sexual violence in additional contexts – to better understand how the complexities of race and considerations of the race of aggressors *and* targets operate independently and in tandem to influence bystander intentions, perceptions, and behaviors. Such research would benefit also by introducing consideration of the race of the potential intervener to see how the races of targets, aggressors, and interveners operate in varying contexts and situations to influence targets' differential access to helping behaviors. My research demonstrates that further consideration of the interaction of the race of various actors in these situations is indeed warranted, if not necessary.

An additional contribution of this project is in its study design. Most research examining aversive racism has come from quantitative experimental data (see Saucier et al. 2005). By using

a mixed-methods approach, this project provides insight into the racialized narratives White college students provide to justify their decision to intervene or remain passive bystanders. Aversive racism theory holds that unconscious racists are extremely averse to being considered racist, which makes it difficult to gauge the process by which White individuals report intentions to intervene and justify those intentions. However, by coupling quantitative and qualitative findings, I am able to examine how respondents' intended actions match with or deviate from their justifications of their actions and descriptions of the actors. For example, as discussed above, while not significant in the quantitative model, gender appears to play a significant role in how respondents interpret situations. White college women, particularly in the ambiguous situation, are drawn to protect other White women, while White college men show a strong desire to excuse other White men's behavior. This appears to be contradictory when examining that White college men are also more likely to report intentions to intervene in the White/White dyad across the two situations. However, based on their open-ended responses, it appears that White men may perceive a situation with a Black man as too dangerous to intervene. Thus, we have to understand that White college men still appear to prioritize the reputations of other White men; that is, they do not want to label other White men as more likely to perpetrate a sexual assault than Black men. Having the open-ended responses from respondents keeps us from making the incorrect assumption that White men are indeed more worried about a White woman being sexually assaulted by a White man than by a Black man.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The most important practical implication of this project is the need to incorporate race into sexual violence prevention education programming. The fact that there is a significant difference in how the respondents in this study intend to intervene across two situations of

varying severity suggests that White college students are not as comfortable interpreting and understanding the risk of sexual violence when both actors are not White. It appears existing education programming has done well at training White college students to see a context-specific risk of a White man making non-consensual sexual overtures at a White woman, specifically if the woman is incapacitated. If these programs expand their models to dismantle controlling images of Black women and men, particularly as they are related to sexual victimization, it seems probable that college students could become equally comfortable reporting intentions to intervene across situations with actors of any race. Not only that, but programs also need to consider how perpetrator and target race function differently across situations of varying severity.

It is not enough to simply add a discussion of Blackness into prevention education programming. These programs must also cast a critical lens on the lack of discussion around Whiteness and White supremacy. Not only must White students increase their awareness of their racial identity; they must also examine how their Whiteness coalesces with the institutional power structures of many higher education spaces (Sue 2017; Yee 2016). If White college students at HWCUs grow to better understand that college spaces are “saturated with Whiteness” (Bonilla-Silva and Peoples 2022:1497) and begin the work of deconstructing how the racialized nature of the college space informs their conscious and unconscious biases about students of color; this has great potential for addressing discrimination in their helping behaviors.

One possible means of including race into the conversation of bystander training in campus sexual violence scenarios is to merge these trainings with existing training programming designed to identify and disrupt racism. Race scholars have long argued for increasing dialogue and openness around race as a means of reducing racism (Helms 1995; Sue 2016;

Tatum 1997). These programs, like bystander intervention programs surrounding sexual violence, call for prosocial White bystanders to gain the knowledge and skills to give them confidence to get involved and combat racism (Scully and Rowe 2009; Sue 2017). Training White bystanders to be allies will lead them to expand the group they are willing to help beyond those who share their gender and/or racial identities (Scully 2009). Studies around White bystanders find most bystanders do not see themselves as having a racial identity due to the invisibility of Whiteness (Helms 1995; Sue et al. 2022). This lack of understanding of race makes it difficult to identify racial discrimination, particularly in the form of microaggressions. With this ignorance, it is easier for White bystanders to use non-race-based excuses to justify inaction (Dovidio et al. 2002). Sue and colleagues (2019) identify four main techniques bystander trainings can emphasize to train White individuals to get involved in the form of “microinterventions;” these four techniques are: 1) make the invisible visible, 2) disarm the microaggression, 3) educate the perpetrator, and 4) seek external reinforcement and support. These techniques can also be used to educate bystanders how to intervene in situations that can lead to sexual violence. As such, educational programs should consider merging these two forms of bystander intervention training for sexual violence and racial harassment. These programs do not need to be two separate trainings, nor should they be considered additive. Instead, by intersecting these two forms of training, college education programs would go a long way in enlisting the White college community to create a more inclusive and safe climate for all students.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the knowledge gained in this study, there are limitations. First, the study focuses solely on the intervention intentions of White college students in an attempt to offer an in-depth

analysis of how aversive racism and controlling images operate to influence decisions to intervene on behalf of Black or White targets of potential sexual violence at the hands of Black or White aggressors. As such, the study shows how Whiteness and gender shape how White students interpret and intend to respond to situations with the potential for sexual violence. However, future research is needed to consider how race and gender intersect to influence interpretations and intentions to respond in these situations. The strength of controlling images is so powerful and pervasive that these images also inform Black students' views of situations and may do so differently than for White students. For example, Black students may either attempt to rein in those whom they view as bolstering the images or try to counter the images through conscious thought processes and actions. It is certain that the differing lived experiences of college students at varying intersections of race and gender inform their views of and reactions to situations such as those covered in this study. As such, it is important that future studies expand upon this research by considering a diverse racial and ethnic pool of college students.

Additionally, the vignettes in the present study depict a heterosexual dyad, with a man as the aggressor and a woman as the target. Bystanders' might use different racialized images and justifications to act or not act in scenarios with a female aggressor/male target, same gender couples, or dyads involving nonbinary aggressors or targets. Given the heightened risk of sexual violence faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community (Lombardi et al. 2002; Messinger and Koon-Magnin 2019), future studies should expand upon this research to consider how race, sexuality, and gender identity intersect to inform how college students make decisions to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence.

Finally, the response rate of this study falls short of the average response rate for online surveys. Conducting a research program during a global pandemic during which college students

experienced screen fatigue from taking courses and conducting much of their lives online likely had a detrimental impact on the response rate. Nevertheless, the qualitative data alone from this study offers important insights about the multifaceted way in which race operates in interpretations of the need for help in problematic situations ripe for sexual violence. The study shows that White students rely on controlling images of Black men and Black women and on offering passes to White men and sympathy for White women in ways that are gendered and that ultimately prove discriminatory but in ways that sometimes diverge across situations of varying severity. These findings are informative and pave the way for additional research on a variety of forms of interpersonal violence in various settings that further considers how varying identities intersect to inform access to help and support.

CONCLUSION

This project demonstrates that the race of targets and perpetrators influences White college students' intentions to intervene in situations that could lead to sexual violence. It is critical for education programs to target and deconstruct controlling images of Black women and men, while simultaneously challenging the notion that Whiteness is invisible and does not influence bystander decision making. A promising avenue for accomplishing this is by merging bystander programs for sexual violence and racial harassment prevention. Aversive racism theory is a valuable tool to understand how discriminatory helping varies depending on the perceived severity of a situation. However, this theory is expanded in my project with a dyad-level treatment of race, rather than strictly focusing on the race of the target.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Demographics

	(1) CH 3 Quantitative Sample Population (n=142)	(2) CH 3 Qualitative Sample Population (n=136)	(3) CH 4 Quantitative Sample Population (n=139)	(4) CH 4 Qualitative Sample Population (n=131)
Race Variation				
Black Aggressor/Black Target	22.54% 32	19.85% 27	20.86% 29	18.32% 24
Black Aggressor/White Target	28.17% 40	28.68% 39	28.78% 40	29.77% 39
White Aggressor/Black Target	21.83% 31	22.06% 30	22.30% 31	22.14% 29
White Aggressor/White Target	27.46% 39	29.41% 40	28.06% 39	29.77% 39
Gender				
Female	64.79% 92	64.71% 88	65.47% 91	66.41% 87
Male	35.21% 50	35.29% 48	34.53% 48	33.59% 44
Race				
White	100% 142	100% 136	100% 139	100% 131
Age				
18-22	83.80% 119	83.82% 114	83.45% 116	83.21% 109
23+	16.20% 23	16.18% 22	16.55% 23	16.79% 22

Appendix B: Measures

Dependent Variable

Likelihood of Intervention Respondents' self-reported likelihood of intervention (coded 1=Unlikely to Intervene; 2=Somewhat Likely to Intervene; 3=Likely to Intervene; 4=Extremely Likely to Intervene).

Independent Variables

Race of the aggressor and target Indicated by survey variation the respondent received (Variations include a binary treatment: race of the target in the scenario (0=White; 1=Black) and race of the aggressor in the scenario (0=White; 1=Black); and a categorical variable of race dyads: (1=Black Aggressor/Black Target; 2=Black Aggressor/White Target; 3=White Aggressor/Black Target; 4=White Aggressor/White Target).

Severity/Perceived Risk of Situation Respondents' self-reported assessment of the level of risk of sexual victimization to the woman in the scenario (coded as 1=Low Risk; 2=Somewhat High Risk; 3=High risk; 4=Very High Risk).

Dangerousness of aggressor Respondents' self-reported perception of the dangerousness of the man in the scenario (coded 1=Not Dangerous; 2=Somewhat Dangerous; 3=Dangerous; 4=Very Dangerous).

Vulnerability of target Respondents' self-reported perception of the vulnerability of the woman in the scenario (coded 1=Not Vulnerable; 2=Somewhat Vulnerable; 3=Vulnerable; 4=Very Vulnerable).

Rape Myth Acceptance ($\alpha=0.82$) Summary scale of respondents' self-reported agreement with the following: 1) Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them; 2) If a man spends money on a date, his date should have sex with him in return; 3) Women who tease men deserve anything that might happen to them; 4) If a woman is sexually assaulted while she is drunk, she is to blame for letting things get out of control; 5) Sexual assault charges are often used as a way of getting back at men; 6) Many women lead a guy on and then they claim rape; 7) When women are sexually assaulted, it's often because the way they said "no" was unclear (coded 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Mildly Disagree; 4=Mildly Agree; 5=Agree; 6=Strongly Agree).

Individual/Controls:

Gender Respondents' self-reported gender identity (coded as a dummy variable, 0=Man, 1=Woman).

Mother and Father's Education	Respondents' reports of the highest level of formal education completed by their mothers and fathers (coded 1=Some high school; 2=High school degree; 3=Some college; 4=Four Year (Bachelor's) college degree; 5=Graduate degree (MA, JD, MD, PhD)).
School	A binary variable of the University the respondents attended (coded 0=University 1, 1=University 2).
Age	An interval variable of the respondents' reported age at the time of completing the survey.
