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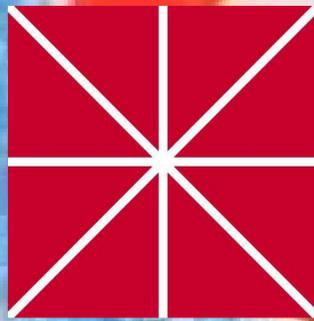
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“Can You Hear Me? Do You Care?”: The Police as Agents of Social Control against Black Women in the U.S.

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Introduction to Research

Intentions of Anti-Black Social Control

- White supremacy came from the desire for wealthy white men to manage and preserve their economic, political, and social power which prompted them to realize that in order to do so, they had to call upon an allegiance between all whites (Martinot 2003). The motive for power and control was exercised as the rationalization for and essential need to enforce whiteness through patrol violence against Black people as a class (Martinot 2003).

Colorblindness and the Legality of Anti-Black Racism

- The struggle for emancipation and civil rights in the 19th and 20th centuries were all defined on “white prerogatives” (Martinot 2003: 6). The fact that Jim Crow law was replaced with federal civil rights acts, for example, maintained the legal paradigm (Alexander 2010; Martinot 2003).
- The fact that race is an instituted social construction has continually been shrouded in an attempt to bury what racialization is really all about as well as its very real and potent consequences that are experienced today (Alexander 2010; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Martinot 2003). The denial of the existence of ascribed racial delineations and their historical ramifications, i.e. color-blind racism has only made racism more cogent because it is no longer retrospectively a question of ethics, but presently, an issue of legality (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Alexander 2010).

Police as the Contemporary Mechanism of Social Control against Black Americans

- The axiom of colorblindness and simultaneous anti-black racism that had aided legal procedure.
- The process of identifying a criminal based on race, or “profiling”, is prejudice but its acceptance by the dominant group once again obscures racism into a mere necessary police procedure (Alexander 2010; Martinot 2003).
- Joy James alludes to the fact that “the national icons for welfare cheat, rapist, thief, and murderer as black encourage the acceptance of state violence as state protection” despite the fact that “crime statistics from the FBI report that the majority of cocaine users are white, male suburbanites, while the majority of white assault and rape victims are attacked by other whites” (James 1996).

Hypersexuality, Black Womanhood, and Rape Culture

- Distorted and objectifying representations of the “hypersexuality” of blackness has affected Black women in a complex way that enforces both gender and race as oppressive mechanisms.
- The politics of the bodies of Black women have revolved around the white notions of the “Hottentot”, the “Jezebel”, “Aunt Jemima”, and a physical and emotional association of Black femininity to the traits of wild animals (Guy-Sheftall 2002; Collins 2000; Morgan 2004).
- Because Black womanhood is seen as “other” and caricatured, the dehumanizing objectification of Black female bodies has been the implicit moral justification for enacting sexual violence against them.

History of Physical Violence as a Form of Social Control against Black Women: Slavery, the Jim Crow era, and Police Brutality

- Social control has marked the history of Black Americans, and been reiterated in changing forms. The physical violence that Black men and women experience is a gendered form of social control.
- Angela Davis states that the “pattern of institutionalized sexual abuse” against Black women was “so powerful that it managed to survive the abolition of slavery” (1981: 175).
- Within the slave class, Black women were subject to institutionalized rape as a form of socially controlling both their economic status and the degradation of their physical bodies (Davis 1981; Collins 2000). The “hypersexuality” of Black women was used as justification for rape (McGruder 2010; McGuffey 2010; Guy-Sheftall 2002).
- For Black women, lynching was also a tool of social control with themes of hypersexuality and stereotypes to uphold the justification for the atrocities against them. The cases of Mary Turner and the Memphis Riot of 1865 are paramount examples of this social control (Armstrong 2008; Lerner 1972; Delongoria 2006).
- While Black women are subject to the same forms of police brutality that Black men are, the physical violence of Black women takes form via the contextual stereotypes of Black female bodies as being hypersexual, inherently criminal, and in need of regulation (Crenshaw 2013; Hicks 2010). Cheryl Hicks discussed how the police brutality of Black women during the early 20th century was rationalized by law enforcement as being justifiably fair on the “grounds that they must be prostitutes” (2010: 51). During the Civil Rights period, Southern white policemen would often arrest Black female activists and then rape them (Davis 1985).

Results

- In the United States, 62,034 forcible rapes were reported in 2013 to the police in an estimated population of 299,269,511 (USDOJ 2013). The percent of rape and sexual assault victimization reported to the police in 2012 was only 28% (Truman et al. 2013).
- If a woman lived in an urban location especially if she was between the ages of 12 and 17, and who earned a household income of less than \$25,000 were more likely to be victims of rape and sexual assault (Planty et al. 2013).
- In 2012, Black/ African-American victims had a rate of 34.2 of violent victimization which includes rape; the third highest rate behind American Indian/ Alaska Native and those categorized under two or more races (Truman et al. 2013). Between 2005 and 2010, it was reported that Black women had the highest rate of being victims of rape and sexual assault right behind American Indian/ Alaska Natives and those who were categorized as two or more races (Planty et al. 2013).
- Between 2006 and 2010, over 3.4 million violent crimes including rape and sexual violence were unreported to police (Berzofsky et al. 2012). The reason for not reporting the crime was for fear of reprisal and also the belief that police would do nothing (Planty et al. 2013).
- 2010 Annual Report by the CATO Institute showed that sexual misconduct constituted the second highest form of police misconduct after excessive force.

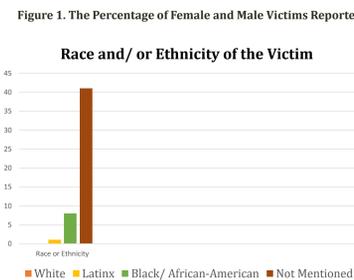
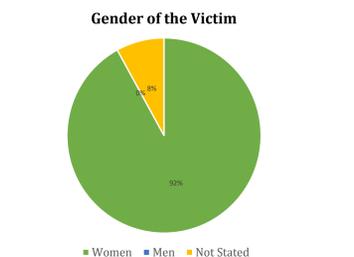


Figure 2. The Number of Victims Categorized by Race and/or Ethnicity as Reported

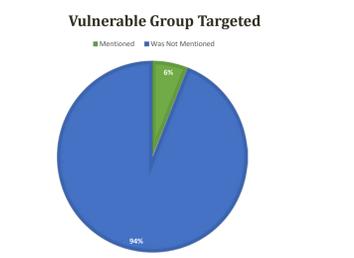


Figure 3. The Percentage of the Vulnerable Victims Targeted by the Perpetrator as Reported

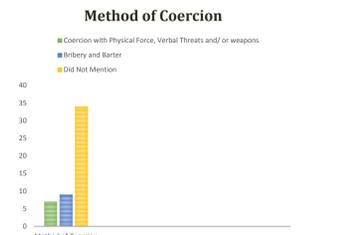


Figure 4. The Percentage of Physical/ Verbal Coercion, & Bribery and Barter Used by the Perpetrator as Reported

Table 1. Metadata of the Patterns Persistent in News Articles (2010-2014)

PATTERN	DEFINED
Physical Characteristics	
Gender	Victim was stated to be a woman.
Race and/ or Ethnicity	Victim's race and/ or ethnicity was disclosed.
Vulnerable Group Targeted	The perpetrator explicitly chose their victim because they were a vulnerable group.
Method of Crime	
Coercion with Physical Force, Verbal Threats and/ or weapons	Victim was accosted with physical force like being held down or being punched, or with verbal threats like the fear of going to jail. Or the victim was accosted with a weapon like a gun.
Bribery and Barter	The perpetrator offered that if the victim performed sexual acts, in exchange the victim would not be charged with a crime or an infraction. Or the perpetrator offered the
Reason for Encounter	
Unlawful Charge or Detention	The article explicitly stated that the victim was stopped by the officer with a fallacious charge or an unlawful detention in order to accost the victim.
Victim Called 911	The victim called 911 for crime that was committed, and the officer was dispatched to their address or location where the officer, then, sexually assaulted the victim.
Aftermath of the Crime	
Did not Believe the Victim	The article explicitly stated that officers did not believe the victim, and/ or the article framed the sexual violence as “alleged” despite the conviction of the perpetrator.
Condoned or Excused Behavior	The perpetrator was maintained on paid/ unpaid leave, paid suspension or offered the opportunity to resign.
Fear of Reporting	The victim feared reprisal, jail, slander, being framed, or another form of punishment for coming forward and reporting the perpetrator.

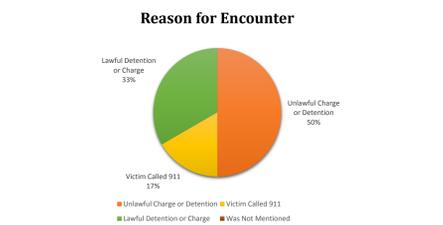


Figure 5. The Percentage of the Different Ways in Which the Victim was Encountered

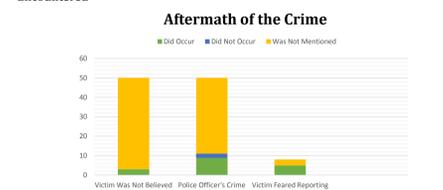


Figure 6. The Number of Victims Not Believed, of Officer's Condoned, and Victim Fear

Methods

- Statistical data about the prevalence of rape and the sociodemographic attributes of victims, as well as data on police sexual misconduct.
- Content analysis was conducted on a total of twenty-one news articles which reported on fifty rape or sexual assault cases published in the last four years (2010-2014).

Conclusion

Gender and Race

- As both the statistical and content analysis demonstrated, women in particular are more often the victims of sexual violence than their male counterparts.
- In general, Black women are victims of sexual violence at a greater disproportionality than women of other races (albeit Alaskan or Native Indian women) which reflects the mechanisms of misogynoir rape culture such as the stereotypes of Black womanhood and their social disenfranchisement, among others (Truman et al. 2013; Planty et al. 2013; Wriggins 1983; Fausto-Sterling 2002; Collins 2000; Morgan 2004).

Police as Perpetrators of Sexual Violence against Black Women

- In relation to police violence, as past scholars like Angela Davis (1985), Gerda Lerner (1972), and many others have articulated through cases in the past, law enforcement continues to exercise their power against Black women through sexual violence. The gendered dimension of the claim has been upheld by both the CATO Institute (2010), and the study done by Samuel Walker and Dawn Irlbeck (2002) which have effectively demonstrated that police sexual misconduct has been recorded and above all, specifically targets women.
- When these realities are synthesized upon the likelihood of the victim, the racial and gendered reality of the victimization caused by police through sexual violence is significantly skewed towards Black women. As Figure 2 shows, eight out of the nine victims whose racial identity was disclosed were Black women. Fear of reporting crimes committed against them by police, thus, is a repeated byproduct akin to past mechanisms of social control which worked to silence Black female accusers. The perceived legitimacy of a Black woman's accusation of rape against a police officer would have to go against the white conceptions of her hypersexuality (that is, they wanted to engage in sexual activity with the officer) which have been justifications for their rape during slavery and the Jim Crow era (Collins 2000; Wriggins 1983; Fausto-Sterling 2002; Morgan 2004). Because of these factors, sexual offenders go unreported or free through judicial means when their victim is a Black woman (Irving 2004).

Synthesized Realities

- Upon analysis, the sexual violence against women, in general, as well as Black women, in particular, which was typically perpetrated through fear and coercion, and was arguably seen as excusable in some way through the media framing and resilient departmental binds with the criminal, illustrates that the control that police have in society is real to the degree that their roles as “protectors” are no longer applicable. If the “peculiar” institution of continued brutality against Black women can be seen as evident through this content analysis, it is clear that social control is not new but transformed and substituted via police sexual violence.

Purpose of Study

This study sought to provide greater awareness of the violent and particular oppression of Black women through the sanctioned force of social control in this country: law enforcement.