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Annual Review of Sociology

Silence, Power, and Inequality: An Intersectional Approach to Sexual Violence

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Annu. Rev. Sociol. 2018. 44:99–122

First published as a Review in Advance on May 25, 2018

The *Annual Review of Sociology* is online at soc.annualreviews.org

https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041410

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Keywords

feminism, gender, intersectionality, race, sexual violence, social inequality

Abstract

Sexual violence reproduces inequalities of gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, ability status, citizenship status, and nationality. Yet its study has been relegated to the margins of our discipline, with consequences for knowledge about the reproduction of social inequality. We begin with an overview of key insights about sexual violence elaborated by feminists, critical race scholars, and activists. This research leads us to conceptualize sexual violence as a mechanism of inequality that is made more effective by the silencing of its usage. We trace legal and cultural contestations over the definition of sexual violence in the United States. We consider the challenges of narrating sexual violence and review how the narrow focus on gender by some anti–sexual violence activism fails women of color and other marginalized groups. We conclude by interrogating the sociological silence on sexual violence.

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INTRODUCTION

The core of sociology has been virtually silent on sexual violence. The *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review*, and the *Annual Review of Sociology* collectively published 13 articles between 1975 and 2017 directly related to sexual violence.[1] Only three articles investigated rape, two of which were published in the 1980s. By contrast, sexual violence is of interest to gender and race researchers, whose scholarship—published mostly in books or subfield journals—has powerful implications for the core of the discipline. Scholarship on sexual violence reveals it to be both a cause and a consequence of inequality, not only on the basis of gender, but also along lines of race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, ability status, citizenship status, and nationality. We build on the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1998, p. 919; 2017), who argues that violence "may serve as the conceptual glue that binds" systems of domination together. Sexual violence—of different forms, against different bodies, and across locations and time—maintains and creates power asymmetries. Those deploying sexual violence need not be consciously aware of its power for it to achieve these effects. Sociologists should integrate the study of sexual violence into the heart of the discipline because it is key to the reproduction of inequality.

We proceed as follows: The first section reviews key insights about sexual violence developed by generations of scholars and activists. These insights guide our synthesis of the literature. The next section summarizes social scientific knowledge on the use of sexual violence in creating and maintaining inequalities, with a focus on how the powerful have controlled legal and cultural definitions of it. We then explore experiences of sexual violence, and the failure of criminal and medical institutions to provide remedy. Feminist efforts to reform rape statutes, overhaul justice procedures, and improve social service provisions have generated important changes. Yet prioritizing gender prompted the anti–sexual violence movement to collaborate in the war on crime, which exacerbated racial inequality. Across these sections, we focus on how power inequalities enable sexual violence and its erasure, which in turn reproduces and solidifies inequalities. The final section shifts attention to sociology, analyzing the marginalization of the study of sexual violence and ways to integrate it into the discipline.

We focus on rape and sexual assault, defined as sexual acts committed against someone who does not or cannot consent. We include research on intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence (DV), and sexual harassment, in light of the considerable overlap between these issues and sexual assault. However, we recognize the specificity of these phenomena. Not all IPV or DV is sexual; DV includes violence against children, elders, or others in the household; and sexual violence in intimate and/or domestic relationships differs from that among acquaintances or strangers (Breiding et al. 2014, Ristock 2011, Sokoloff & Dupont 2005). Research on sexual harassment focuses on gender discrimination in employment (Leskinen et al. 2011, Welsh 1999). Finally, we focus on the US context, because space precludes our ability to review literature on non-US cases.

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Feminist, critical race, and intersectional theorists offer insights into the nature and operation of sexual violence. Collectively, this scholarship clarifies sexual violence's role in the reproduction of multiple, intersecting inequalities. We also identify mechanisms obscuring the evidence, experiences, production, and implications of sexual violence.

[1]We counted articles with the following terms in the title: intimate partner violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual violence, and rapist.

Insight 1: Power

Sexual violence is about domination—across race, nation, class, gender, and other dimensions of inequality. In the 1890s, Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1892) documented whites' use of mythical accusations of sexual violence against Black men as a justification for lynching. In "Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Rapist," Angela Davis (1983) traced the history of the myth of the Black rapist as a mechanism of racial domination. Smith (2015) argues that sexual violence against Native peoples is a tool of colonization. European invaders deployed rape as a means of subjugating nonwhite, non-European, non-male-identified bodies. This strategy is not isolated. Following mass rapes throughout the Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis, the United Nations (UN) recognized wartime rape as systematic, deliberate, widespread, and planned (Seifert 1996). Orchestrated rapes have been documented in armed conflicts in Belgium during World War I; China in 1937; Morocco, Germany, France, the Philippines, and Korea throughout World War II; and in Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Peru, Uganda, Kuwait, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Timor-Leste, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Syria (Galang 2017, Henry 2016, Seifert 1996). In 2016 alone, the UN reported conflict-related sexual violence in Colombia, Mali, Somalia, Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Côte d'Ivoire, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Yemen (Guterres 2017). Survivors of wartime sexual violence are not listed as combatants or casualties. Systemic sexual violence is erased from our collective imaginaries. This erasure further obscures that sexual violence does not only result from individual deviancy. Rather, it is structurally organized around political ends.

Radical feminists argued that gendered power relations produce sexual violence (Dworkin 1976, MacKinnon 1987). In *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, for example, Brownmiller (1975, p. 15) defined rape as "nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear." She saw sexual violence as a tool for creating and maintaining gender inequality. Though feminist sociologists still consider gender inequality to be central to sexual violence (see Pascoe & Hollander 2016, Schwalbe 2014, Uggen & Blackstone 2004), radical feminism has largely fallen out of favor for failing to recognize other axes of oppression (for a critique, see Crenshaw 1989). Additionally, its dichotomous and hierarchical view of gender could not account for men's victimhood and women's perpetration.

Insight 2: Intersectionality

Women of color have long identified the inability of mono-categorical policy and activism to recognize their realities (Collins 2015, Combahee River Collect. 1995, Walker 1981). The activism and writings of Black, Chicana, Latina, Asian-American, and Native women have revealed the need for intersectionality for years (Collins & Bilge 2016, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2016). Collins & Bilge (2016) highlight the writings of Frances M. Beal in 1969 and of the Combahee River Collective, calling for recognition that Black women's experiences differ from the experiences of Black men and white women.

Although scholars and activists have targeted intersectional inequalities in many domains of social life, a focus on excavating and eliminating (sexual) violence against women of color has been a source of powerful theoretical insights (see Collins 1998, 2017). In "On Violence, Intersectionality and Transversal Politics," Collins (2017) argues that analyzing violence in all forms is key to understanding political domination. She (2015) highlights how the systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, and age interlock and make possible the functioning of the other systems. Collins (1990) terms this system "the matrix of domination."

Attempts to remedy violence against women of color fail when they focus solely on womanhood or race/ethnicity and erase intersectional experiences of violence and discrimination. For example,

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Crenshaw's (1991) *Stanford Law Review* article, "Mapping the Margins," highlights the failures of both feminist and antiracist activism to address women of color's experiences with DV and rape. Collins (2017, p. 1469) describes the history of Black women's activism as typified by "flexible solidarity," in which Black women recognized both a need for solidarity within Black communities, but also a need to contest rigid gender hierarchies. Black Women's Blueprint (2016) highlights the way some contemporary feminist anti-rape activism marginalizes women of color.

Insight 3: Organizations and Institutions

Sociologists view gender and racial inequality as embedded within and reproduced by organizations and institutions (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Collins 1990, 1998, 2004; Henry 2016; Martin 2004; Risman 2004; Welsh 1999). Structures of domination are conceptualized as operating on individual, interactional, and organizational levels. This multi-level perspective has been used to explain the production and processing of sexual violence. For example, Armstrong et al. (2006) demonstrate the ways in which university arrangements—ranging from residence hall assignments to men's control of the party scene—produce campus sexual assault. Martin's (2005) book *Rape Work* examines how institutions designed to respond to sexual violence further its harms. Miller (2008) analyzes how the structural contexts of neighborhoods and schools facilitate violence against young Black women and girls.

Organizations often facilitate sexual violence, actively deny allegations, cover up misconduct, and/or punish victims for reporting. Sexual violence pervades male-dominated, hierarchical organizations. Buchanan et al. (2014) suggest that arrangements within these organizations create circumstances in which people come to perceive sexual harassment as to be expected and tolerated. Pervasive sexual violence and its erasure have been documented in universities (Krakauer 2015), prisons (Enloe 2016), churches (Smith & Freyd 2014), the military (Turchik & Wilson 2010), workplaces (Nyong'o 2017), and boarding schools (Khan 2011). Structural power asymmetries increase opportunities for abuse. Police, employers, and landlords leverage their positions to rape, harass, and assault (Alianza Nac. Campesinas 2017, Ritchie 2017, Tester 2008). Disabled individuals described their sexual victimization in residential schools to Hollomotz (2012). Institutional care providers leveraged stereotypes about disabled people (e.g., describing them as "challenging") to dismiss their accounts of unwanted sexual contact. The institutionalization of individuals labeled deviant (e.g., those incarcerated or mentally ill) leaves them vulnerable to (sexual) abuse (Buchanan 2007, Crossmaker 1991).

Insight 4: Culture

Beliefs about heterosexuality—based on essentialist assumptions about men's and women's sexual natures—undergird rape. MacKinnon (1987) argues that heterosexuality is inherently degrading and constitutive of gender inequality. Many contemporary feminists adopt less extreme, but similar, arguments. Gavey's (2005) *Just Sex?* traces the cultural "scaffolding" for rape to twentieth-century sexologists. They pioneered models of heterosexuality in which women's supposed coyness plays a foil to masculine aggression. Within this model, men pursue and women resist. Women are passive recipients of men's penetration. Women's sexual pleasure is not to be expected. In this framework, the line between normal heterosexual intercourse and rape is fine. These reductive beliefs about essential gender differences bolster rape myths. Rape myths are false beliefs about the prevalence and causes of rape. They often blame rape victims for their victimization (Hayes et al. 2016). Adherence to such beliefs is widespread among many groups, including college students (Hayes et al. 2016), police officers (Shaw et al. 2017), and jurors (Dinos et al. 2015).

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Influenced by MacKinnon, psychologist Mary Koss recognized that if both men and women view nonconsensual heterosexual sex as normative, asking individuals about experiences of rape would not document the prevalence of sexual violence (Koss et al. 1987). Koss developed a novel instrument using neutral language to query individuals about their experiences of sex without consent. She found that more than one in four undergraduate women experienced sexual assault in college. The study received extensive media coverage, both positive and negative. Gilbert (1991) and others rejected Koss's expansive definition of sexual violence. According to Gilbert (1991, p. 65), Koss "trivialize[d] ruthless cases of abuse and fe[d] off the suffering of real victims." Gilbert saw the messiness of heterosexual sex where Koss saw the normalization of sexual violence. The contemporary debate about campus sexual assault recycles these arguments (see Friedman et al. 2017, Kipnis 2017).

Insight 5: Discourse and Interaction

In contrast to sexologists who saw the variance in men and women's sexual behavior as biologically driven, sociologists have come to view gender as an interactional accomplishment (West & Zimmerman 1987). Goffman (1977) argues that interactional expectations encourage men's sexual advances while constraining women into polite rejection or acquiescence. Recent research shows how these expectations are further complicated by the interaction of race, age, class, and other systems. Jones (2010) describes how young Black women in inner-city Philadelphia navigate gendered cultural codes around violence. Femininity norms, which are particularly narrow for women of color (see Collins 2004), are at odds with "effectively managing potential threats of interpersonal violence" (Jones 2010, p. 9).

An interactionist framework not only highlights how expectations shape behavior but also enables more nuanced understandings of the ways in which sexual violence is gendered (see Sjoberg 2016). For example, in their study of sexual violence against transgender women incarcerated in a men's prison, Jenness & Fenstermaker (2016, p. 25) provide an example of sexual violence being used to mark "the feminine as weak, vulnerable, and deserving of being demeaned and overpowered." Transgender women in men's prisons experience high levels of victimization, as the "hypermasculinized culture makes them ever-available targets of sustained derogation" (Jenness & Fenstermaker 2016, p. 20). Alarmingly, some participants described feeling more feminine as a result of their vulnerability: The threat of sexual victimization and victimhood threw their womanhood into sharp relief.

Insight 6: Masculinities

Sexual violence serves to shore up masculinity. Gansen (2017) and Pascoe (2012) show how boys learn about and produce gendered power in school. By joking about rape, boys cast masculinity as physically dominant and femininity as vulnerable (Pascoe 2012). Play and humor allow boys and men to excuse sexual harassment (Miller 2008). Furthermore, men denounce sexual violence to strengthen their claims to appropriate masculinity when caring about sexual violence is "cool" (Piccigallo et al. 2012), even while mobilizing threats of violence to establish their status among other men (Pascoe & Hollander 2016). Sexual violence constructs boundaries between men and women (Schrock & Schwalbe 2009, Schwalbe 2014) while producing hierarchies among men (Connell 2005, Kimmel 2015, Messerschmidt 2015).

Insight 7: Narrative

Scholars have begun to excavate survivor experiences, with particular attention to the voices of those multiply marginalized. González-López (2015) conducted interviews with people who had

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experienced incest and sexual violence in Mexico. Her book *Family Secrets: Stories of Incest and Sexual Violence in Mexico* carefully addresses narratives of sexuality and abuse among family members across a variety of socioeconomic positions. Her discussion of male-male sexual experiences is notable. Some men sexually exploit gender-nonconforming boy family members as a means of "testing" their sexuality (González-López 2015, p. 227). Citing Pascoe, González-López highlights that this gendered sexual process casts queer boys as abject within their families—foils to other men's heteromasculinity. Furthermore, age matters within a gendered and hierarchical family structure (see Whittier 2016b). Participants who identified as gay in González-López's (2015) study reflected on their childhood sexual experiences with their uncles. As children, they grappled with complex notions about voluntary participation in intergenerational sexuality; as adults, some expressed pain at the realization of having been exploited by loved ones. Survivor narratives unearth violence often silenced by social institutions (e.g., family) and illustrate the ways in which social location shapes experiences and interpretations of violence.

Our following discussion is informed by these insights. Sexual violence is a product of power differentials, and thereby a site of the reproduction of multiple inequalities. It manifests in institutions and is (re)inscribed in culture, discourse, and interaction. We turn now to a history of contestations over definitions of sexual violence.

HISTORY OF STRUGGLE OVER DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Legal and cultural definitions of sexual violence have long been contested in the United States (Collins 1998, 2004; Freedman 2013): Is sexual violence defined narrowly or broadly? Which nonconsensual sexual acts should be morally condemned or criminalized? How should consent be defined? Powerful groups maintain a privileged capacity to define (sexual) violence (Collins 1998). With this in mind it is perhaps unsurprising that even in modern cultural imaginaries, the paradigmatic "real rape" involves the violent vaginal penetration of a chaste, unmarried, wealthy, cisgender, heterosexual, white woman by a stranger, typically portrayed as a Black man (Davis 1983, Estrich 1987, Freedman 2013, Messinger 2017). Our legal system, service providers, media representations, and sometimes even loved ones still view only some survivors as legitimate victims (Brown & Groscup 2009; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Greeson et al. 2016; Guadalupe-Diaz & Jasinski 2016; Richie 2012; Weis & Borges 1973) and only some perpetrators as deserving of punishment (Davis 1983, Feimster 2011, Richie 2012).

Race, Gender, Citizenship, and the Right to Bodily Autonomy

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English statutes defined rape as the theft of a man's property (i.e., a wife) (Collins 2004, Freedman 2013). North American colonialists imported these laws. Property rights were granted exclusively to citizens. Noncitizens—Native Americans, enslaved people, women—did not have rights to bodily autonomy or to legal protection from sexual violence. For example, Castañeda (1993) documents systematic sexual violence during mid-nineteenth-century conquests into Alta California. Even if Native women filed complaints, California law held that their testimonies were legally insufficient to convict white perpetrators (Freedman 2013). The colonizers did not consider wartime sexual violence as rape, and legal statutes precluded Native women from seeking judicial recourse. The result was a pattern of victimization and impunity.

Colonial and early American statutes defined enslaved people and women as the property of white men (Block 2006, Collins 2004, Fox-Genovese 1988, Russell 1990). Under slavery, the sexual victimization of enslaved Black women and men by their white owners was legal (Collins 2004, Feinstein 2017, Foster 2011). McLaurin (1991) documents this brutal reality through an

account of an 1855 Missouri murder trial of a Black woman named Celia. After years of being raped by Robert Newsom, the man who enslaved her, the 19-year-old killed him. Missouri statutes at the time forbade men from "[taking] any woman. . .against her will and by force, menace or duress, compel[ling] her to be defiled" (McLaurin 1991, p. 107). The judge, however, found Celia guilty, holding that she did not qualify as "any woman," but rather as Newsom's property. Celia was hanged. Celia's circumstances were egregious in their own right, but they are also representative of nineteenth-century white men's sexual prerogatives. Scholars have traced the use of sexual violence as a tool of white racial domination from slavery (Block 2006) through emancipation (Rosen 2009) to early-twentieth-century northern migrations (Hine 1989), the civil rights movement (McGuire 2011), and into the twenty-first century (Ritchie 2017).

In the nineteenth century, through the institution of coverture, white women did not have a separate legal existence from their husbands. They could not vote or own property. Rights of sexual access belonged to their husbands or fathers. By this logic, raping a girl child was a theft of her father's property (i.e., his daughter's chastity). Rape of one's wife was nonsensical. Coverture laws reflected middle-class ideals of female chastity. Poor, working-class, and immigrant women fell outside this ideal, so they too were frequently denied legal redress (Freedman 2013). Early American rape statutes protected white children under the age of ten from men (besides their fathers) and wealthy white women from men (besides their husbands). By 1920, most states had raised the age of consent to 18 or 19 years (Freedman 2013). However, even under these regulations, and despite advocacy efforts, the judges often refused to prosecute molesting fathers (Freedman 2013). The first time a husband was convicted for raping his wife was in the late 1970s (Mahoney & Williams 1998).

De facto and de jure definitions of who should be considered a rapist also depended on a person's gender, race/ethnicity, class, or other social location. Mahan (2017) offers the introduction of US laws against wife beating as an example. Under slavery, as we have seen, white slave owners considered Black women their property. In theory, emancipation might have granted Black men rights to their wives as property. Soon after emancipation, however, Alabama passed the first anti–wife beating law (Mahan 2017). This law technically restricted all husbands' rights over the bodies of their wives. In practice, however, it was applied only against Black men. Mahan (2017) argues that white men passed these laws to prevent African American men from gaining the right to coverture. Mahan documents the simultaneous media proliferation of myths about Black male violence, which justified the patterned application of anti-DV legislation.

Mahan extends prior research (see Collins 2004, Davis 1983, Feimster 2011, Hall 1983, Wells-Barnett 1892) on whites' use of accusations of sexual violence against African American men as an instrument to maintain political dominance. For more than 300 years, US law has denied citizenship rights to Black men convicted of sexual violence—depriving them of their ability to procreate through castration (1700s), of their lives through hanging (1700s–1900s), or of their liberty and right to vote through incarceration (1870s–present) (Freedman 2013, Mahan 2017). Outside of the law, the "specter of lynching" quelled dissent (Freedman 2013, p. 8). By contrast, white men had relative impunity to perpetrate sexual violence against disadvantaged women. In *Black Sexual Politics*, for example, Collins (2004, pp. 220–23) recounts heartbreaking stories of poor Black women in the antebellum South who endured systematic harassment, molestation, and rape by their white male employers. These assaults remained as painful secrets within Black families and civil society; racist stereotypes about Black female sexuality made seeking redress through the courts or juries of public opinion particularly difficult. Routinized violence was thus erased from state records and written out of our country's dominant historical narrative (Collins 1998).

Past sexual entitlements shape contemporary applications of the law. This is exemplified by the enduring state violence against women of color and the lack of legal protections for nonwhite,

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non-wealthy survivors. To this day, police officers—many of whom are white men—rape Black, Native, Latinx, and other nonwhite people without repercussion (Richie 2012, Ritchie 2017). The "militarized border rape" (Falcón 2016) of immigrants along the US-Mexico border by immigration officials echoes the historical process of establishing our national borders. Men who rape Black women are less likely to be charged and/or convicted compared to men who rape white women (Nash 2009). Black prisoners serving time for sexual assault are more likely to be innocent than their white counterparts (Gross et al. 2017). People of color too frequently fall through gaps in public attention and legal protections; men of color are too frequently criminalized for mythical violent, sexual deviancy; and wealthy white men too often maintain a level of impunity.

Rape Law Reform

Activists have sought to remove white men's sexual entitlements from state and federal statutes. Beginning in the 1970s, advocates lobbied legislators to rewrite state rape statutes, many of which denied protections for non-virginal, non-female-identified, and married victims. Feminists objected to the requirement that victims prove they "resisted to the utmost" (Estrich 1987, p. 30). They challenged the use of sexual history to determine "tendency to consent" (Brownmiller 1975, p. 385) and advocated for rape shield laws (Spohn & Horney 1992). Activists advocated for the law to be gender neutral and to define as illegal a wider variety of nonconsensual sexual acts, in addition to vaginal penetration (Spohn & Horney 1992). Feminists separately argued for the elimination of the spousal rape exemption (Russell 1990) and the criminalization of DV (Bumiller 2008). By the late 1980s, most states had reformed statutes, though they varied in nature and strength (McMahon-Howard 2011; see chapter 2 of Kruttschnitt et al. 2014 for an overview of state laws).

The federal government was slow to expand its definitions. From 1927 to 2013 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defined rape as "the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will" (US Dep. Justice 2014). This definition did not include sexual violations against men or boys, violations involving oral or anal penetration, or violations involving penetration with an object. When announcing the revised definition, the Department of Justice described the old definition as "outdated and narrow" and the new definition as a "victory for survivors and their advocates" (US Dep. Justice 2012). The FBI now defines rape as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (US Dep. Justice 2014). This change increased the number of crimes reported. In 2016, the FBI reported 95,730 rapes under the legacy definition and 130,603 under the revised definition (US Dep. Justice 2017).

Civil Rights Law

While some feminists focused on criminal statutes, others mobilized civil rights law—particularly Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Dobbin 2009). MacKinnon advised students in a lawsuit against Yale University; *Alexander v. Yale* (1980) was the first case to demand recourse for sexual harassment on college campuses under Title IX (Simon 2004). The students lost their case, but they succeeded in establishing sexual harassment in educational settings as a form of sex discrimination. In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986), the Supreme Court upheld that a comparable principle applied to workplaces (Edelman 2016). Sexual harassment thus became a civil rights issue.

Legal scholars disagree about the effectiveness of civil rights law for protecting individuals from discrimination. Bumiller (1988) argues that organizational adjudication procedures rarely provide recourse for discrimination, as they do not take into account structural power asymmetries. Victims

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of sexual harassment shoulder the burden of identifying, producing evidence of, and holding organizations accountable for civil rights violations. Many survivors decide against submitting complaints of discrimination for fear of retaliation (Bumiller 1988). These burdens contextualize Miller & Sarat's (1981) finding that only 8 out of every 1,000 workplace discrimination grievances trigger civil litigation. Edelman (2016) adds that organizations prioritize institutional interests over individual needs. Organizations respond to the possibility of being held responsible for discrimination by creating anti–sexual harassment policies, trainings, and adjudication processes. The courts have ruled that organizations are not liable for discrimination if employers have such practices in place—irrespective of whether they are effective. Edelman (2016, p. 3) argues that the United States has become a "symbolic civil rights society." This contextualizes the cascade of 2017 disclosures of workplace sexual harassment in prominent companies with the legally required policies and offices in place (e.g., complaints filed against Roger Ailes of Fox News).

In the years since *Yale v. Alexander*, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the agency responsible for enforcing Title IX, has offered guidance on how the law applies to campus sexual assault. Under the Obama Administration, the OCR offered more guidance in the form of a 2011 Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) and ramped up enforcement (Suran 2014). This coincided with a surge of student organizing against campus sexual violence (see Clark & Pino 2016). The Trump administration's OCR has rescinded most of the Obama era guidance. As of this writing, it is unclear how the OCR will enforce Title IX under Trump.

EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Despite efforts to broaden legal and cultural definitions, stereotypes about real rape, legitimate victims, and likely perpetrators persist. This section begins by reviewing patterns in victimization and perpetration. We then consider strategies used by survivors and their communities to narrate experiences of sexual violence in light of cultural myths.

Patterns of Victimization and Perpetration

Few sexual assaults resemble the archetypal rape. Most victims know their attackers (Laumann et al. 1994, Koss et al. 1987, Planty et al. 2013); many victims do not physically resist (Graham et al. 2016); most perpetrators do not deploy physical force or a weapon (Lonsway 2010); most survivors do not report (Donovan & Williams 2002, Fisher et al. 2003); and many people do not even label as rape or sexual harassment experiences that meet the legal definitions of such crimes (Bumiller 1988, Cleere & Lynn 2013, Koss et al. 1987, Nielson 2000).

Moreover, victims of sexual violence often do not conform to stereotypes. Black women are disproportionately vulnerable to many forms of sexual violence (Richie 2012, Ritchie 2017). Native women are also consistently found to be at elevated risk for IPV and sexual assault (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000, Wahab & Olson 2004). Many victims are not wealthy (Edin & Shaefer 2015, Tester 2008): Sexual violence is more prevalent among women who earn less than $25,000 per year, are unable to work, live in rural areas, and did not attend college (Axinn et al. 2017, Barber et al. 2015, Planty et al. 2013). Late adolescent boys and girls are at elevated risk (Finkelhor et al. 2014). Past victimization is a risk factor in future victimization (Mellins et al. 2018, Walker et al. 2017, Western 2015). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals endure higher rates of IPV and sexual violence (Badenes-Ribera et al. 2014, Mellins et al. 2018, Messinger 2017, Peterson et al. 2011).

Most perpetrators are men, irrespective of the gender or sexual orientation of the victim (Mellins et al. 2018). Many male perpetrators associate with others who commit and/or talk

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about sexual violence (Kaczkowski et al. 2017, Swartout 2013). Male perpetrators often deny that they have raped, even as they admit to nonconsensual sex (Koss et al. 1987, Scully & Marolla 1984). Even some convicted rapists argue that their victims' refusal to comply was coy, gendered behavior (Scully & Marolla 1984). Others minimize violent assaults or sexual harassment as "minor wrongdoings" (Scully & Marolla 1984, p. 537). Psychologists have identified a myriad of risk factors for perpetration, such as a history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; parental criminal behavior/substance use; sports participation; early sexual initiation; arousal by aggressive stimuli; general adjustment difficulties; conduct disorders; low self-esteem; victim-blaming attitudes; and empathic deficits (Tharp et al. 2012).

Harms

Psychological, sociological, historical, and public health research reveals the mental, physical, social, and economic harms associated with sexual violence (J.C. Campbell 2002, Dworkin et al. 2017, Peterson et al. 2011). Survivors often experience anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug dependencies, post-traumatic stress (Coker et al. 2010), elevated risk of chronic health conditions (e.g., asthma) (Santaularia et al. 2014), self-blame (Koss et al. 2002), and difficulty forming long-term relationships or experiencing sexual pleasure (Cherlin et al. 2004, Edin 2000, Laumann et al. 1994). Racialized, sexual verbal violence can create a "climate of fear" among African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans, and Asian Americans (Collins 1998, p. 924; Madriz 1997). In economic terms, workplace sexual harassment precipitates job change and reduces career advancement (McLaughlin et al. 2017). Filing civil restraining orders in response to workplace harassment negatively affects women's earnings (Hughes & Brush 2015) and exacerbates the gender wage gap. "Battered" women are disproportionately vulnerable to housing eviction (Desmond & Valdez 2012, p. 118), which contributes to socioeconomic inequalities. Sexual violence initiates a "prolonged crisis," disrupting the lives of survivors beyond the immediate aftermath of violence (Williams & Holmes 1981, p. 97).

Yet legal, medical, and social service provisions are not set up to handle prolonged crises or patterned victimization (Herman 1997, Mulla 2014). These arrangements produce many "second assaults" (Williams & Holmes 1981; see Martin 2005). Police officers decide whether to investigate or ignore reports (Spohn & Tellis 2014). When cases involve victims who prosecutors see as undesirable clients (e.g., those deemed to have credibility issues), they can refuse action (Corrigan 2013, Martin 2005). Police officers, juries, and prosecutors cite indicators of survivors' age, race/ethnicity, sexuality, mental health, or class as evidence for or against their credibility (Corrigan 2013, Greeson et al. 2016, Powell et al. 2017, Small 2015). Defense attorneys cross-examine survivors aggressively in an effort to discredit them (Konradi 2007). Judges make victim-blaming comments during public trials (Williams & Holmes 1981). Survivors who seek medical treatment receive different services and resources based on characteristics of the hospital (e.g., religious affiliation), the victim (e.g., race and gender), or the assault (e.g., anal versus vaginal penetration) (Campbell & Bybee 1997). Staff at IPV victim agencies perceive same-gender IPV as less serious than heterosexual IPV (Brown & Groscup 2009). These negative responses can discourage survivors from seeking further support (Ahrens 2006). Social disadvantage heightens not only vulnerability to sexual violence but also the likelihood of being retraumatized.

Narrating Violent Experiences

Sexual violence is traumatic, and trauma has an impact on memory (Wilson et al. 2016). Some survivors of childhood sexual trauma remember nothing about the abuse as adults (Williams 1994). Many survivors who do recall parts of the event offer disorganized, inconsistent, or incomplete

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accounts (Lonsway 2010). Despite the difficulties in articulating experiences of sexual violence, false allegations are rare. Lisak et al. (2010) found that the rate of false reporting of rape is comparable to that of other violent crimes (2–10%).

In addition to psychological barriers, survivors often grapple with the ways in which their experiences differ from dominant cultural representations. Research identifies at least three sense-making strategies. First, some survivors normalize and/or minimize violence. Ninety percent of the women Phillips (2000) interviewed reported at least one violent or coercive sexual incident. Participants did not consider themselves victims or their experiences to be rape. Hlavka (2014) found that girls perceived it to be easier to acquiesce rather than to resist routine assaults, and women and sexual minority men in Menning & Holtzman's (2014, p. 1087) study described acquiescence to unwanted sexual activity as being "easier" than resisting. Study participants accept dominant scripts that define their experiences as not "real rape," and they do emotional work to minimize their feelings of harm and violation. Gilbert & Gordon (2017) link this minimization of aggression to survivors' forgiveness of abusive intimate partners and their likelihood of returning to violent relationships.

A second category of accounts includes the management of a status violation. The sexual assault of men is an example. Dominant masculinity presumes heterosexual desire (Connell 2005) and impenetrability (Small 2015); sexual victimhood is culturally defined as feminine (Ferrales et al. 2016, Hollander 2001). Male-male sexual violence challenges norms of both masculinity and heterosexuality (Fahlberg & Pepper 2016, Rumney 2009). Male survivors' desire to reclaim masculinity may explain men's reluctance to report or label sexual violence and their tendency to minimize it (Owen 1995). Male survivors' family members also struggle to make sense of status violations. McGuffey (2005) finds that mothers blame themselves for the extrafamilial sexual abuse of young boys, whereas fathers express concern that same-sex assaults may cause homosexuality.

Social marginalization also influences survivors' accounts (Angelou 1969, Chayil 2010, Erdrich 2012, Erian 2005). Before disclosing, some survivors consider how others perceive them within existing social hierarchies (McGuffey 2013). The African American women in McGuffey's (2013, p. 118) study "uniformly discussed their sexual assault in conjunction with their gender and racially subordinated positions in the social order." Survivors who were poor referenced class in their accounts. McGuffey (2013, p. 111) terms this a "stratification account." Racial minorities also contend with controlling racist myths of violent sexuality (Collins 1990, 2004; McGuffey 2013; Neville et al. 2004). Richie (2012, p. 35) explains that some African American survivors subordinate their needs "to buffer their families from the impact of racism in the public sphere," such as the myth of the Black rapist (Davis 1983). African American women also encounter notions that they are "Black superwomen" (McGuffey 2013, p. 121), able to withstand maltreatment (see Donovan & Williams 2002), and that they should accept the prioritization of African American men (Richie 2012). African American women navigate the related traps of loyalty and silence (Richie 1985, 2012).

Not only must individuals contend with these hierarchies, but racially and economically marginalized communities also encounter pathologizing tropes. Chancer (1987) analyzed the responses to the 1983 brutal gang rape of a young Portuguese mother in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Media reports cited tropes about the violent sexuality of racial minorities; nearly every media outlet on the East Coast reported on "Portuguese rapists" (Chancer 1987, p. 246). Though many in the community supported the survivor, others expressed antagonism—not only for her role in spurring negative public attention, but also for "[letting] herself" be raped (Chancer 1987, p. 253). Chancer argues that the invidious legacy of structural and sexualized racism motivated the community's protectiveness. Racism, sexism, and classism inform accounts of sexual violence.

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LIMITATIONS OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM

Below we trace the history of feminist anti–sexual violence activism, showing how a mono-categorical emphasis on gender led the movement to align itself with the war on crime of the 1980s and 1990s. We then explore the consequences of the criminalization and medicalization of sexual violence.

The Co-Optation of Anti–Sexual Violence Activism

Mobilization against sexual violence in the United States can be traced back as far as the 1860s and 1870s, when Black women testified before Congress about the horrors of daily sexual violence in the South (McGuire 2004). The civil rights movement, second-wave feminism, and New Left social movements generated further antiviolence activism (Corrigan 2013, Matthews 1994, McGuire 2004). In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, women engaged in grassroots consciousness-raising that exposed the prevalence of sexual and intimate partner violence (Corrigan 2013, Richie 2012). In 1972, the first rape crisis centers (RCCs) and DV shelters opened. Anti-rape activism centered on gender, but its grassroots approach allowed local organizations to target other axes of disadvantage (Richie 2012).

Rape law reform was controversial among anti-rape groups during the mid-1970s (Corrigan 2013). Though the National Organization for Women (NOW) founded a rape task force to target lawmaking as early as 1971, the task force's director expressed skepticism toward law-and-order approaches (Bumiller 2008). Feminists debated whether RCCs should collaborate with law enforcement to serve their clients, given the racially biased nature of policing (Corrigan 2013). Exasperated by law enforcement's dismissive treatment of rape victims, anti-rape groups began to argue for criminal legal reforms (Richie 2012).

By 1974, activists in Michigan had launched one of the early state campaigns for rape law reform, building bipartisan support for women's safety (Corrigan 2013). State and federal law enforcement began to fund RCCs (Matthews 1994). As RCCs became dependent on this funding, they were forced to change. In 1976, a director of a Louisiana RCC was fired by a district attorney for continuing services to non-reporting victims and those whose cases were closed (Corrigan 2013). Funding from the federal Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was intended to help prosecution. After the Louisiana RCC director was fired, her center's staff resigned and were replaced by criminal justice officers (Corrigan 2013).

The Reagan era drove further wedges between white feminists and feminists of color (Corrigan 2013, Richie 2012). National backlash against feminism forced anti-rape groups to cater to potential law-and-order allies (Corrigan 2013). High-profile rape cases further promoted punitive measures against sexual offenders, feeding into the public fear of crime (Bumiller 2008). White feminists and the Democratic Party were pulled towards a carceral feminist approach, in which the state's power to punish was seen as a tool for women's liberation (Bernstein 2012). Despite the influence of a coalition of organizations advocating for women of color, disabled women, transgender people, and other underserved constituencies, Congress understood the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 primarily as a gendered crime bill (Whittier 2016a). VAWA generated funding for victim services, but it also created stricter penalties for sexual offenders and mandatory arrest policies for IPV (Crenshaw 2012, Richie 2012). Although many celebrated these policies, women of color and racial justice advocates were wary of VAWA's criminal justice approach (Crenshaw 2012).

RCCs maintained funding and legitimacy by providing services to survivors and turning away from challenging systemic inequality (Corrigan 2013, Matthews 1994). Legal reforms intended to protect women, in turn, were interpreted in an era of tough-on-crime sentiment, which saw

sexual violence as individual deviance rather than an outcome of structural inequalities (Bumiller 2008). Corrigan (2013) argues that the political weakness of the antiviolence movement hindered its ability to control reforms. In contrast, Richie (2012) indicts the antiviolence movement—dominated by a mono-categorical, white feminist agenda—for participation in the creation of what she calls "the prison nation." Crenshaw (2012) maintains that had antiviolence advocates taken an intersectional approach, they might have hesitated to rely on the law. She described the failure of both antiracist activists and feminists to address violence against nonwhite women as an "intersectional failure" (Crenshaw 2016). Women of color and LGBTQ anti–sexual violence activists critical of law enforcement have instead focused on community-based organizing (Baker & Bevacqua 2018).

Limited Progress

Sexual violence may be decreasing in the United States. Wheeler (2015) finds a precipitous drop in the sexual violence rates recorded by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) from 1973 to 1995.[2] Also using NCVS data, Planty et al. (2013) found that the rate of sexual violence against female US residents over age twelve declined again between 1995 and 2010. Feminist activism may have had some effect, along with factors that have lowered the rates of other serious crimes (Roeder et al. 2015). Although a decline in documented incidents of sexual violence is positive, many unresolved issues remain.

Criminal legal processes. The criminal legal system is the only recourse for most victims (Bumiller 2008, Richie 2012). Justice is still rare, and even privileged victims continue to experience second assaults (Krakauer 2015). Part of this is endemic to the US criminal legal system, which is intentionally adversarial and biased in favor of the accused (Herman 1997). These circumstances make it difficult to eliminate revictimization—even when the system works.

Criminal evidentiary standards present barriers for survivors seeking recourse through the law. This is partly because victims are both the scene of and witness to the crime. If they want to pursue a case, many must go through a medical examination after a traumatic violation (Mulla 2014). Some medical professionals do not consider rape to be an emergency, which leads victims to wait hours in emergency rooms (Martin 2005). Medical professionals often ask invasive questions (Mulla 2014). Evidence collection requires the victims to undress, have their wounds photographed, and have hair pulled from their heads and pubic areas (Mulla 2014). The quality of care and evidence collection has improved, as Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) programs now provide nurses with specialized training (Corrigan 2013). Even when the protocols are administered with sensitivity, they are unpleasant. Additionally, these protocols, designed for adolescent and adult female-assigned-at-birth bodies, often fail children, men, and transgender survivors (Corrigan 2013). Completing a rape kit is no assurance that it will be tested. Tens of thousands of untested rape kits remain in police evidence rooms (Campbell et al. 2015).

Relying on the criminal legal system is even less viable for people of color and gender and sexual minorities. Ritchie (2017) highlights the systematic police sexual violence against gender-nonconforming, sexual minority, Native, Black, and Latinx people. Brunson & Miller (2006) found that young African American women were wary of the police, as many knew individuals who had

[2]A National Academy of Sciences report criticized the methodology of the NCVS, estimating that it captured approximately 10% of crimes committed (Kruttschnitt et al. 2014). Because the methodology has been consistent over time, the trend may be accurate even if the absolute levels are not. Nonetheless, these numbers should be interpreted with caution.

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been sexually assaulted by public officials. Officers sometimes kill women of color involved in domestic disturbance disputes and/or mental health crises, as in the cases of Rebecca Miller in 1994, Venus Renee Baird in 1997, Rekia Boyd in 2012, Kayla Moore in 2013, Aura Rosser in 2014, and Tanisha Anderson in 2014 (Ritchie 2017). These officers seldom face legal or professional sanctions for their actions. Undocumented women may not report sexual violence due to fear of immigration authorities (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2016). When the criminal legal system is the only remedy, recourse is available to few.

Alternatives to the criminal legal system exist (Kim et al. 2015). Richie (2012) argues that approaches grounded in Black feminism can prioritize the integrity of families and communities. Restorative justice privileges a victim's well-being and resolutions that repair relationships (Hudson 1998). Though some argue that restorative justice minimizes sexual violence and ignores structural inequalities between victims and perpetrators, its advocates argue that this approach can be empowering and sensitive to victims' needs (Collins 2016).

Medicalization. The medicalization of sexual and intimate partner violence has developed alongside its criminalization. Sweet (2015, p. 82) suggests that "while the criminal justice model 'deals' with perpetrators of abuse, increasingly the medical model 'deals' with victims of abuse." The medical system now routinely screens women and children for signs of IPV and sexual abuse (Bumiller 2008). Services for victims are more extensive and sensitive to trauma than in the past (Martin 2005). Within the medical model, however, DV victimization is treated as a chronic disease—pervasive, not curable, but manageable (Bumiller 2008, Sweet 2015). In medical records of sexual assault, victimization experiences are reduced to linear narratives of an isolated, brutal event (Mulla 2014). As Mulla (2014) argues, however, the victims themselves see their vulnerabilities as shaped by their family circumstances, economic disadvantage, and social marginalization. The medicalization of sexual violence directs attention away from the power inequalities and social structures that produce violence.

SOCIOLOGICAL SILENCES

The marginalization of sexual violence in sociology follows from related exclusions. Sociology has been slow to integrate gender and sexuality into the core of the discipline (Stacey & Thorne 1985, Stein & Plummer 1994). Magubane (2016) adds that sociology has not engaged with its colonialist and imperialist past, avoiding confronting the proslavery ideologies of the field's founding fathers. As sexual violence sits at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity, its marginal status within sociology was perhaps overdetermined. The status of sexual violence within sociology is a function of epistemological exclusion—that is, the marginalization of knowledge production falling outside of an established intellectual field (Fricker 1999). This exclusion is inextricably linked with the marginalization of feminists of color in sociology. Below we offer examples of exclusion and suggestions for incorporating sexual violence into sociological analyses of inequality.

Dynamics of Exclusion

Exclusion takes a variety of forms. Some sociologists have produced methodologically indefensible research. More frequently, researchers have treated sexual violence narrowly as a medical or criminal issue, or they have analyzed the separate operation of race or gender as systems of power. Other researchers have avoided the topic altogether. Some have encountered it in their fieldwork but have excluded the material from their analyses. Still others have neglected to add relevant questions to demographic surveys.

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Kanin's (1994) study of false rape allegations provides an example of methodologically flawed sociological research. He concluded that 41% of the forcible rape cases handled by an unidentified police force over a nine-year period were false, and he argued that complainants made false reports for three reasons: "providing an alibi, seeking revenge, and obtaining sympathy and attention" (Kanin 1994, p. 81). Lisak et al. (2010) identified a host of problems with Kanin's research, including his failure to question the police classification of cases, despite the fact that this police department used methods viewed by the federal government as intimidating of victims. Even though the study has been debunked, it continues to be a touchstone for those claiming that women frequently lie about rape.

White feminist work on sexual violence often brackets race. Corrigan (2013), Estrich (1987), and Martin (2005) each acknowledge the centrality of race to sexual violence, offering various reasons for their decision to set aside an analysis of its intersections with sexual violence. Mardorossian (2002, p. 743) argues that "rape has become academia's undertheorized and apparently untheorizable issue," while she largely ignores the theorizing of feminists of color. Even some sociologists who analyze both race and gender, like LaFree (1989), treat the categories as independent systems of power. Crenshaw (1991) demonstrates that LaFree reduces racism to violence against Black men and sexism to violence against white women. LaFree does not see Black women's abuse as racism, nor does he see Black women's maltreatment by Black men as gender discrimination. LaFree erased Black women's experiences of rape.

Sexual violence is ubiquitous, and for that reason it shows up in fieldwork dedicated to other topics. Sometimes the prevalence of sexual violence forces researchers to reframe their questions (see Armstrong et al. 2006). Often, however, this material is treated as "residual data" because it does "not seem directly relevant to research topics" (Hanson & Richards 2017, p. 16). Edin & Shaefer's (2015) *$2.00 A Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America* offers a fascinating example. The authors deliver an account of the extreme poverty created by the failures of the government safety net and low-wage labor market. They show that poverty exacerbates vulnerability to sexual abuse—as in the chilling account of a poor mother whose daughter was molested by an uncle with whom they were forced to live. They note that "the trauma from this abuse is sometimes a precipitating factor in a family's fall into $2-a-day poverty" (Edin & Shaefer 2015, p. 73). Yet, despite the pervasive sexual abuse they uncover, neither gender nor sexual violence is central to their analysis. They do not mention policies to counter pervasive sexual abuse in their recommendations.

Exclusion can occur despite the researchers' best intentions. Some researchers are concerned about pathologizing vulnerable communities (see González-López 2015, chapter 5). Other researchers are uncomfortable pushing participants to share details of traumatic incidents (see Henriksen 2017). Researchers who are survivors themselves may find the subject emotionally difficult. Rebecca Campbell (2002) details the emotional labor, and even secondary trauma, involved in researching rape. These concerns are legitimate. Yet their cumulative effect contributes to a dearth of sociological knowledge about sexual violence. González-López (2015) offers methodological insights on collecting and analyzing narratives that include sexual violence.

Few large representative surveys collect information on sexual violence. The General Social Survey (GSS) provides source material for over 27,000 journal articles, books, and PhD dissertations. Few of these papers are on sexual violence, given that the closest item asked by the GSS concerns workplace sexual harassment. The National Survey of Family Growth, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, and the National Health and Social Life Study ask a few questions about experiences with forced sex (Axinn et al. 2017, Laumann et al. 1994).

Sociologists seem to avoid sexual violence more than scholars in related social science fields (see Baxi 2014). Levine (2017) constructed a data set of social science articles published between

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1975 and 2015 on rape, sexual assault, or sexual violence. Of 1,313 publications, only 69 (5%) were published in sociological journals, broadly defined. In comparison, the discipline of psychology contributed 333 (25%) of the articles.

When sociologists have studied sexual violence, they have often focused on the experiences of college-educated, young, white, cisgender women. More research is needed on sexual violence against low-income women and women of color (Richie 2012). More research is needed on sexual violence against people with disabilities. Preliminary data from the US Department of Justice suggests particularly high prevalence among this community (Shapiro 2018). Furthermore, nearly half of all respondents to the 2015 US Transgender Survey reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lifetime (James et al. 2016).

Rectifying Epistemic Exclusion

Collins (1998) argues that understanding the operation of violence is crucial to understanding political domination. Sociologists should incorporate the study of sexual violence, as well as violence writ large, into the heart of the discipline because of its central role in the (re)production of social inequality. Sexual violence is a brutal form of what Schwalbe et al. (2000, p. 423) refer to as "oppressive othering." Rape is used as a tactic of war precisely because of its capacity to subjugate (Henry 2016). It harms not only individual victims, but also "the culture and collective identity of the whole group, ethnicity, or nation under attack" (Seifert 1996, p. 35). Wartime sexual violence simultaneously builds solidarity within groups (Cohen 2013). Sanday (2007) finds that all-male social groups attack women to renew their bonds with one another and affirm masculine agency and power, while diminishing that of their victims. Similarly, whites' othering of the supposed sexual deviancy of people of color bolsters white racial dominance (Kimmel 2015).

Rectifying epistemic exclusion will require changes in our practices. Continuing to diversify our graduate programs and departments to remedy the historical exclusion of marginalized voices is a first step. It is also critical to acknowledge that academia is defined by the power relations we critique; universities and field sites expose students, faculty, and staff to sexual coercion (Williams et al. 2014). Hanson & Richards (2017) argue that ethnographic standards valuing solitary fieldwork put scholars, particularly women, at risk of sexual harassment. Survivors of fieldwork sexual harassment often fear that disclosure of their experiences will discredit their research. Hanson & Richards (2017, p. 12) argue that "the white androcentric perspective in academia" maintains these arrangements.

Scholars engaged in quantitative analysis rely on the existence of data on sexual violence. We suggest that researchers add more questions about sexual violence to existing surveys. The payoff can be substantial. For example, Barber and Kusunoki's Relationship Dynamics and Social Life study collected detailed information on IPV from a representative sample of young women residing in a racially and socioeconomically diverse county in Michigan (Barber et al. 2017). They found that IPV is not only common but is also strongly associated with unintended pregnancy, challenging existing explanations of unintended pregnancy.

The Internet and social media enable new forms of (sexual) violence, and consequently new sites for research (Collins 2017, Henry & Powell 2015). Sexual harassment can be analyzed through Twitter posts, websites, and forums. Wu (2017) showcases misogyny in economics through text mining of the Economics Job Market Rumors forum. Sexual violence originating offline may leave traces online, such as through the posting of videos of sexual assaults or "revenge porn" (Franklin 2014).

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CONCLUSION

Sexual violence contributes to social inequalities across a broad range of cases and contexts. Its power lies in both its ubiquity as a tool of domination and the ease with which it is rendered invisible. Central to this process is the power to define which actions constitute violence. The battle over definitions occurs at all levels—as individuals struggle to make sense of their experiences and as groups and nations contest both facts and interpretations. Antiracist and feminist scholars and activists have played a pivotal role in challenging narrow legal and cultural definitions servicing the matrix of domination. Although sociologists have contributed in critical ways to social scientific knowledge in this domain, this conversation has happened largely outside of the core of the field. A fuller integration of the study of sexual violence into sociology will yield deeper explanations of social processes. Failure to do so renders sociology complicit in the silencing of sexual violence.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Shira Albagli, Nicole Bedera, NiCole Buchanan, Jamie Budnick, Erin Cech, Paula England, Jared Eno, Fatma Müge Göçek, Lara K. Kovacheff-Badke, Ethan C. Levine, Sandra R. Levitsky, Margo Mahan, Karin Martin, Karina McDonald-Lopez, Sanyu Mojola, Alexandra Murphy, Angela K. Perone, Kamaria Porter, Mira Vale, and the participants of the Gender & Sexuality Workshop at the University of Michigan for comments on this article.

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