RAPE CULTURE: POWER, PROFIT, PUNISHMENT

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of LEIGH GASKIN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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Abstract

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This dissertation project aims to shift ideas about rape and sexual assault from an individualized, narrative account of the issue to map out the methods and purpose of rape culture in America. The result of this project illuminates the various ways American society participates in rape culture and how it is entrenched in our existence, so that we can dismantle the culture of rape and live free from sexual violence. The justice system does not adequately address concerns about rape and sexual assault. Rape culture is a structure and an institution rooted in power, profit, and punishment and works to oppress the lives of certain groups. The conclusion is that rape culture is exposed as a foundational aspect of the United States and provides evidence that government, society, non-profits, and individuals condone and provoke its continuation.

Rape culture’s purpose is to control populations through social codes and enforcement, using forms of identity as markers for punishment. Sustaining a culture of rape comes from reaping profits derived from sexual assault related products and services, while promoting different forms of sexual assault and rape related enterprises and businesses. Enabled by the creation and implementation of prevention, procedure, and
advocacy under a capitalist system of economy and government, rape culture is merely stalled, creating a lasting space for profit. Lastly, the threat of rape and sexual assault within the context of American rape culture has double meaning, to create a façade of protection and order, while at the same time, allowing positions of terror and terrorism to justify the forms of violence inflicted upon specific marginalized groups and individuals.

This work uses an intersectional methodology to interrogate the resiliency and versatility of these individual and institutional systems that comprise rape culture, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. Power is a key aspect of rape culture, just as it is in acts of rape and sexual assault. The biggest difference between the act and a culture of rape is the overarching presence of permissiveness and acceptance in American society and the ability to overlook predominate structures that enable and celebrate sexual violence.
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my child. Your birth inspired me to be a better person and provoked a desire to make change in the world. Thank you for supporting my dream to become a more knowledgeable person. I hope these ideas serve you and others who desire to live in a more socially just and equitable world.

and

To the victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault, these words were intended to acknowledge your experiences, to validate the justice you deserve that is often denied, and to enable a world where we can all live free from sexual violence.
Chapter 1: Introduction to a Culture of Rape

As we enter a moment of heightened awareness about childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape, we must stay vigilant about how we let the stories of victims become the main way we understand and discuss the issue of gender and sexual violence in the United States. Historically, victims of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault have fought for spaces where they could speak, a place whereby they could be heard after being forced to be silent for far too long (Force: Upsetting Rape Culture, 2014, Freedman, 2013, Harding, 2015). Legally rape and sexual assault have been crimes that were rarely prosecuted, now as much as ever (Ridgway, 2014, Jackson, 2018, Know Your IX, 2016, Smith, 2004). Much of this is due to the method of victim blaming and slut shaming that is used to vilify the victim of sexual violence. Another reason is due to the social and cultural ways that America understands complex problems, most often through the stories of people who are affected by an issue. The stories the public hears about rape and sexual assault generally come from those in high profile cases of sexual violence or rape, from celebrities and senior government officials who are victims or perpetrators, and those who are activists. The biggest group of people who have been victimized from sexual violence are often those who never tell anyone it ever happened to them. When we focus on stories of sexual assault and rape, we think we are humanizing a tragic event.

We must look at how rape and sexual assault are portrayed in American society, through movies and film, as taught, as legislated, as judicialized, and as spoken. Critically thinking about the kinds of sexual violence portrayed in media, there is a certain attraction to these scenes, themes, and for some, the whole storyline. When extending film to include pornography, rape and sexual assault are not only featured scenes, but there are entire
genres devoted to viewers who engage sexual violence as seductive. Television viewers have an obsession with Law and Order: Special Victims Unit (SVU), a franchise of the show Law and Order, and the premise is, “In the criminal justice system, sexually based offenses are considered especially heinous. In New York City, the dedicated detectives who investigate these vicious felonies are members of an elite squad known as the Special Victims Unit. These are their stories” which is a show about the law enforcement officers, not victims’ stories (IDMb, 2019). The allure of the show could be that viewers empathize with the people portrayed in the episodes, that they could be looking for ways to prevent attacks, might see their own experiences on screen as a form of healing, or want to find ways to help people affected by sexual violence.

Equally as plausible for the reason we watch Law and Order: Special Victims Unit is due to the same reason we look at car crashes as we pass, we get pleasure from seeing the tragic, the unimaginable, the grotesque—all part of American life. If we apply that same logic to rape and sexual assault, when we demand to see the horrific nature of sex trafficking, childhood sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, we must ask if that is productive? If those who view SVU also spend equal or greater time advocating for victims of sexual violence or seek to understand why rape and sexual assault exits, then viewing these stories are helpful. Is this adoration merely a love for dramatic stories or is it a voyeuristic relationship between the public and the harsh realities of rape and sexual assault?

In the case of voyeurism, which is a form of sexual violence, why are we attracted to watching mostly children and women being brutalized? These ponderances pertain to a culture of rape that is intertwined in the creation of America, a legacy of sexual violence
enacted through the conquests of Empire and through the rule of colonial settlement. There are specific structural aspects that embody rape and sexual assault which create a rape culture. Further, rape culture is an institution, something that is often ignored when the public focuses on individual accounts of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault.

Promoting spaces of healing through telling the stories of rape and sexual assault are crucial for victims and survivors of sexual violence and provide closure to many who seek to speak their truths. There will always be a place for accounts of rape and sexual assault as told by the victim, a way to verbalize the atrocities only experienced during sexual violence. Those people’s emotions, thoughts, and experiences are valid and valued as they help some people understand they are not alone, that this does happen a lot, and it does profoundly shape one’s experiences after an attack. Survivors speaking their truths is a non-negotiable aspect of destroying rape culture in the United States. Should it be the only way to break down rape culture?

**The Problem of Rape Culture**

We should not rely on the professing of violent events that occurred to someone to make change in our society. It is not the duty of victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault to profess their truths, unless it empowers them, but at minimum they deserve to tell their stories in any way they see fit. At the same time, only using victim’s stories about rape and sexual assault creates a narrow view of what sexual violence is and what it does. It also publicly amplifies the false idea that sexual violence is individual, that it is occasional, and only its only effects are personal. While sexual violence does include those factors, the actuality of rape, sexual assault, and childhood sexual abuse encompasses much more.
On a structural and institutional level, childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault are part of a larger system rooted in power, thrives on profit, and serves to punish populations, and is known as rape culture. Rape culture is a global issue, that affects the lives of every living thing on the planet and is especially present in the lives of those who identify as girls and women. Rape culture is an integral part of the United States and has been a force in the historical, social, institutional, and cultural makings of the nation-state. There are specific characteristics of rape culture that are unique and make it an area ripe for discussion and analysis on a variety of levels. However, the pervasive nature of rape culture makes the study of it complicated.

On a basic level, rape culture is a setting where rape and sexual assault is pervasive and normalized due to societal attitudes about gender, sexuality, and power. (Brownmiller, 1975, White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014, Bianco, 2018, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 2015, Ferguson, 2016, Force: Upsetting Rape Culture, 2014, Friedman and Valenti, 2008, Know Your IX, 2016, Smith, M. 2004). Behaviors commonly associated with rape culture include: victim blaming, sexual objectification, trivializing rape, denial of widespread rape, refusing to acknowledge the harm caused by sexual violence, and rape myths, among others (Ridgway, 2014, Force: Upsetting Rape Culture, 2014, Harding, 2015). Rape culture is intricately entwined with racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, transphobia, religious intolerance, ableism, and most forms of oppression. Additionally, rape culture is a form of oppression. While there is no single origin of rape culture, it mimics the structures of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. Rape culture is systemic in that it affects every aspect of society and almost all patriarchal cultures have some form of sexual violence (Freedman, 2013). Rape culture is an institution that remains
mostly invisible and its purpose is to control, discipline, and punish those who are its primary targets: children and women.

The structural aspects of rape culture begin at birth and end only with death. As a structure, rape culture concerns the daily lives of individuals, the design of society, influences culture, and has profound affects on those who rape and are raped, as well as those who never are. Rape culture impacts our laws, government, military, education, media, religion, community, and economy. As a society, we primarily aim to curtail sexual violence through the legal system, the threat of incarceration and fines are intended to be a deterrent. However, the effectiveness of rape culture makes it so sexual assault and rape are only of the only crimes that victims are expected to prevent based on restricting one’s movements, disciplining their sexuality, and leading a life restricted by fear and threat of sexual violence.

Rape culture further influences the legal system assembling the accuser as the suspect of the investigation and works to abdicate the accused. Fact finding about an event of rape or sexual assault begins and ends with the victim’s activities and character, which is known as victim blaming (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 2015, Know Your IX, 2016, Harding, 2015, Ferguson, 2016). The perpetrators of a crimes of sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, or rape, all classified as forms of sexual violence, are rarely prosecuted, no matter what forms of evidence exist to incriminate that person. If one is tried, frequently there is little to no punishment even if proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. The perpetrators of rape and sexual assault are over 97.2% likely to be men, no matter the gender of the victim (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018). According to the National Alliance to End Sexual Abuse (2018), “96% of people who sexually abuse children are male,
and 76.8% of people who sexually abuse children are adults,” these statistics present a larger picture of who does what within a rape culture. As a society rape prevention efforts focus on those who are mostly likely to be victimized—women.

Rape and sexual assault are the only crimes where those most likely to be victimized are encouraged to engage in prevention and suggested deterrence methods significantly alter the freedoms and abilities of those who are the victim majority (Smith, 2004, Know Your IX, 2016, Valenti, 2009). Until the late 1990’s little prevention programming explicitly taught boys and men they should not rape others. In current programming, there are few options that focus on the majority offending group, men, and this is a significant reason why prevention efforts on college campuses fail to make lasting change (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Suggesting that someone hide valuables from view and to lock the doors is the extent of car theft prevention, whereas rape prevention provides an extensive guideline of where to go, what to do, what to wear, what time to be outside, how to behave, how to be perceived, and how much sexual expression is appropriate. These prevention techniques are used to, again, blame the victim for the crime against them. In this sense, prevention is not about averting sexual violence, but preventing women from being attacked, by creating a perfect victim. A perfect victim is centered on whiteness, on appropriately conforming to gender norms, and adherence to restrictions.

American society fails to widely educate children and young people about touching, consent, and healthy relationships. As a result, we have a profound epidemic of children under 12 who are sexually abused, estimated to be 400,000 children born in a given year. The issue is ignored by government, who funds few studies about childhood sexual abuse, the last major study was conducted in 2002 (Children's Bureau, 2019). There is a lack of
governmental data to draw conclusions about the phenomena of the sexual exploitation of minors and the United States has no national law against raping or sexually assaulting children (Children’s Bureau, 2019). The existing law, The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, mandates state reporting, a data clearinghouse, and provides a definition of what counts as childhood sexual abuse; most of all, it is a law that funds prevention through grants, for law enforcement and victim defense, a crime victim’s fund, but is not explicitly avowed to fight childhood sexual abuse (Children’s Bureau, 2019).

According to the U.S. government, childhood sexual abuse is only part of child abuse and is not classified as sexual violence (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Effects of childhood sexual abuse are implicated in a large number of illnesses and forms of disease in America (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, 2009). All Federal Bureau of Investigation (2018) statistics about sexual assault and rape do not include victims under 12 years old. Consequently, one of the largest contributing factors of rape culture includes childhood sexual abuse and the inability of government to assess the actual amount of victims, instead of relying only on reported cases (Children’s Bureau, 2019 and CDC, 2019). Most child sexual predators escape punishment due to a culture of silence and shame.

In the United States about 23 million women and 1.7 million men have been victims of rape or attempted rape, both forms of sexual violence (Center for Disease Control, 2018). Those are estimated numbers, not the actual count, as many people who are victims of sexual violence never speak publicly about the event or mention their experiences at all. The FBI reports that roughly 20% of attempted and completed rape and sexual assaults are reported (Jackson, 2018). More importantly, within the estimates, the Center for Disease Control (2018) states, “Before the age of eighteen, 8.5 million women first experienced
rape” which is nothing short of appalling. These numbers prove how wide spread rape culture is, affecting between 1 and 3 to 5 people, depending on estimates in their lives, between birth and death (CDC, 2019, FBI, 2018, Harding, 2015, Know Your IX, 2016, Morgan and Kena, 2017, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, 2009, Peterson, DeGue, Florence, and Lokey, 2017, Zweig, Newmark, Denver, and Raja, 2014, Ferguson, 2016, Friedman and Valenti, 2008). The sexual assault and rape of aging populations has increased as people are living longer, making the abuse of elders a central issue in dismantling rape culture (Disability Justice, 2016).

Overview of Rape Culture: Power, Profit, Punishment

The limited examples above describe the institution of rape culture and explain some of the ways that there is a structural component to sexual assault, rape, and childhood sexual abuse, all of which are forms of sexual violence. Sexual violence includes stalking, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, street harassment, childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2019). Children and women are the primary victims of sexual violence and men are the predominate offenders, as noted, and mirrors the oppression/privilege paradigm. With this in mind, not all men are being blamed for sexual violence, the individuals who committed these atrocities deserve to be recognized for their acts of violence against others. What is being said, is that men and boys have an obligation to speak out against people in their gender designation, to tell them sexual violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Then, these same men and boys who are not offenders must recognize the inherent worth of women and girls, to profess their respect for them, and to make sure girls and women have equal access to all parts of society. The calls for action to end sexual assault and rape starts
with those who are male-identified, it should be their movement to stop gender-based violence and sexual violence (Johnson, 2005, Kimmel, 2008, Harding, 2015).

This dissertation project aims to shift ideas about rape and sexual assault from an individualized, narrative account of the issue to mapping out the methods and purpose of rape culture in America. This dissertation is a structural analysis of rape culture that is intended to push the conversation about sexual violence further. The desired result of this project is to illuminate the various ways American society participates in rape culture and how it is entrenched in our existence, so that we can dismantle the culture of rape and live free from sexual violence. The United States must face the reality that the justice system does not adequately address concerns about rape and sexual assault. A legal-based solution for sexual violence is designed to fail and the law does not acknowledge the structural issues of rape culture, for we all know that the legal system is an institution itself, biased and flawed.

Rape culture is an epidemic in America and world-wide should be known as a pandemic. There is a significant issue with sexual violence in our world stemming from patriarchy and imperial conquest (Bergoffen, 2013). The project of rape culture is facilitated by colonization and over development and reinforced through capitalism, government, and law. Rape culture is enabled by breaking trust, demanding secrecy, and invoking shame in those who are victimized. As these people speak up to tell their stories and to demand justice, they are met with revictimization through media, society, and the legal system, all of which work to break down those who have experienced sexual violence. Whether it be through choice of language describing a victim or attack or the backlash from society towards accusers, there is little justice for victims. We must look deeper to
understand why sexual violence occurs, who profits from sexual assault and rape, and what purpose rape culture serves.

**Summary of Chapter 2: Power: The Foundation of American Rape Culture**

When one thinks about American values, about dominate ideologies that encompasses the essence of Americanness, and the tenants of American life, rape culture is glossed over. At the core of making America and the meanings associated with it, is rape and sexual assault. The issues of rape and sexual assault, among other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violences are and have been shaped by historical, social, and political contexts. Sexual violence is an epidemic that primarily effects girls and women, most often women living with disabilities and women of color, and sometimes men and boys. Understanding a culture of rape and how it structures American society involves studying the large, complex system of social and cultural institutions of patriarchy and gender, white supremacy and race, capitalism and class (Collins, 2005, Roberts 1997, Smith, 2005).

The foundation of American rape culture can be traced back to major institutions: patriarchy, socioeconomic class and capitalism, white supremacy, and religion. Class based issues dealing with wealth and servitude were the central concern of Eurasian societies, people wanted the ability to be self-sufficient and to control the means of their labor (Marx, 1849 and Foucault, 2008). Due to the power of the Catholic church, government, and monarchy, average people who were not favored by any institution, had harsh lives. They worked for the benefit of those in power, the Vatican and the crown. As economic conditions changed, the power dynamic shifted from class-based issues to include those rooted in patriarchy. Patriarchy was instilled by society and culture whereby many were
male dominated and affiliated (Freedman, 2007). Men held the power over women and girls, who as property, had little say over their lives (Freedman, 2007). Thus, power is a key aspect of rape culture, just as it is in rape and sexual assault. The biggest difference between the act and a culture of rape is the overarching presence of permissiveness and acceptance in American society and the ability to overlook predominate structures that enable and celebrate sexual violence.

Chapter 2: Power: The Foundation of American Rape Culture concerns the basis of rape culture in the United States, how it is proliferated in American society, and what institutions of power enable it. Broadly, the roots of rape culture incorporate fixtures of American society, such as patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism, and white supremacy. Those institutions contributed to the colonization of North America by Europeans and the genocide that would be inflicted upon Native and Indigenous people in the areas (Smith, A. 2005). The kidnapping and enslavement of African-origin peoples is central to understanding rape culture. The rape of Africans within the system of chattel slavery significantly contributed to the culture of rape that exists in the United States (Roberts, 1998). There is a relationship between rape and enslavement that is rarely told in the public narrative of enslavement and emancipation, yet is critical to analyzing U.S. history and culture (Roberts, 1998, Ferguson, 2012, Collins, 2005).

Patriarchy continues a historical legacy of oppression and domination within America, providing a role model for the emergence of white supremacy. White supremacy is shown as a key feature of why some women and girls receive justice for their rapes, such as whites, whereas others, do not. This concept is the rapable versus the unrapable, ideas presented by Andrea Smith, Elena Gutiérrez, Patricia Hill Collins, and Danielle McGuire in
their works centering on marginalized women. Patriarchy operates effectively due to the social construction of gender and the requirement of heteronormativity in the 20th century and beyond. Chapter 2 examines the social, historical, and cultural legacies of America to find the roots for the institution of rape culture and to establish motives for its continuation.

**Summary of Chapter 3: Profit: The Industry of Rape Culture**

A culture of rape supports, condones, and furthers the sexual assault and rape of people in society, and promotes structures that institutionalize victim/survivors. There are three basic reasons, most of which relate to the “industry of rape.” 1. To control the place and movement of women and girls in our society, to keep them in line through threat of rape and sexual assault, and to create an illusion of safety provided by law, law enforcement, government, and men/masculinity. These forms of control and power placed over this group creates another need for protective items such as, pepper spray, self-defense classes, rape whistles, roofy-detecting fingernail polish, anti-rape tampons, condoms with jagged teeth, chastity belts, body armor, and more (Murano, 2013). 2. The institutionalization of victims/survivors creates “care networks,” an industry to help, support, and advocate for victims and survivors through law enforcement protocols, health care diagnostics, diagnoses, treatment, and prescriptions, rape crisis manuals, procedures, and interventions, and a host of other prevention methods, techniques, and programming. 3. Rape and sexual assault costs an estimated $127 billion a year (excluding the cost of child sexual abuse) and should be defined as the industry of rape culture, a form of business that profits from the prevention, action, threat, and result of the event/act (National Alliance to End Sexual Abuse, 2018).
Of course, these actions and programming offer support to the victim/survivor, which must be done, at minimum to support their recovery. The healing process and the psychological, emotional, and financial burden placed upon victims must be dealt with and in a manner that is empathetic, victim-centered, and empowering. These are non-negotiable objectives that must stay in place, regardless of philosophy, political opinion, and budget cuts. There has to be a legal system that is accountable for bringing perpetrators to justice, presently that system increasingly fails victims and trivializes crimes against them. The paltry 3% prosecution rate of rape and sexual assault events is deplorable, especially considering how 20-33% of women be raped in their lifetime (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2017). Laws at the state and national level must change to be victim-centered instead of contingent upon legal definitions. Shifting this attitude when drafting legislation and issuing guidance on sentencing and enforcement must occur, as it stands victims are often investigated more than the perpetrator in these crimes. This results in blaming the victim for their own attack and scrutinizing their behaviors instead of focusing on the rapist and their actions.

Consequently, the support services that victims receive from various agencies are charged at market value and are profitable industries. The legal and court system comes with a large price tag for attorney fees, legal fees, court costs, and expert witnesses. For example, researchers estimated that each rape cost approximately $151,423 (National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, 2017). The purpose of rape culture in a capitalist society, like the one in the U.S., is centered on money making and growing an industry where victims increasingly seek help dealing the crimes perpetrated against them. While it may seem that these products and services are used to protect victims and potential victims, the
system is flawed. Instead of helping to eradicate rape culture, these industries flourish as rape and sexual assault rates stay the same and could potentially increase.

Living in an economic and governmental system of capitalism assigns a price for everything, rape and sexual assault are no different than buying a bag of coffee or a car, monetary worth and the ability to profit from it is standard business practice. Of course, this perceived value and worth is based on race, class, sexuality, and ability level, because some lives and experiences are worth more than others. The lived reality of these issues as related to rape culture is significant, whereas as perception is often regarded as fact. The lived experiences of marginalized people should be equally valued as others. This is invented through the institution and system of white supremacy and the implementation of racial and ethnic identities and categories. The institution of white supremacy demarcated the “other” as a comparison for whiteness and civil behavior, which also created the intrinsic value of whiteness and dominate culture as superior and established the worth of human beings based on able-bodiedness, socioeconomic status, and skin color.

**Summary of Chapter 4: Punishment: The Purpose of Rape Culture**

The ideas from the previous chapters provoke a more thorough investigation about the scope and depth of rape culture and how it operates on a daily basis. This chapter looks at governmental responses to gender-based violence and sexual violence that predominately affects girls and women. It examines what has been done to prohibit certain behaviors and actions from women and girls. It explains the idea that governmentality and social control supports and encourages a culture of rape.

The result of this inquiry is quite simple, rape culture is as essential to American values as baseball, bald eagles, and apple pie. In practice, rape culture is a system of control
and domination perpetuated by American culture, society, and government. Institutionalized rape culture should be used as a method for analyzing and contextualizing the United States as a nation-state and governing body. Chapter 4: Punishment: The Purpose of Rape Culture speaks to the ways that institutions and the nation-state disciplines girls and women into a subservient position and restricts the freedom of female-identified people.

The effectiveness of rape culture makes it an institutional weapon leveraged against women and girls to keep them in their place as second-class citizens. The indoctrination of rape culture starts at birth and its tenants keep women in their place until death. Any female-identified person can explain the horrors of sexual violence as a threat and, especially, as an action. The power leveraged over girls and women is effectively done through sexuality and controlling one's sexual expression (Freedman, 2013, Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 2015, Harding, 2015, Ferguson, 2016, Friedman and Valenti, 2008). One of the major ways this is conducted is through limiting sexual activity, controlling appearance and white supremacist cultural beauty standards, and strict gender policing in American society. The resounding effect is an environment where girls and women can never feel truly safe and at ease, whereas their male-identified counterparts can, have, and potentially, always will. The expression of women as complete agents of themselves, as empowered through agency, is impossible without the destruction of rape culture.

As a result of this dissertation, rape culture is exposed as a foundational aspect of the United States and provides evidence that government, society, and individuals condone and provoke the continuation of rape culture in America. Rape culture’s purpose is to control populations, create social codes, and incite social enforcement, particularly based
on gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and ability status. Another function of sustaining a culture of rape comes from reaping profits derived from sexual assault related products and services, while promoting different forms of sexual assault and rape related enterprises and businesses. Enabled by the creation and implementation of prevention, procedure, and advocacy under a capitalist system of economy and government, rape culture is merely stalled, creating a lasting space for profit. Lastly, the threat of rape and sexual assault within the context of American rape culture has double meaning, to create a façade of protection and order, while at the same time, allowing for spaces of terror and terrorism to justify the forms of violence inflicted upon specific marginalized groups and individuals. The dissertation was written to better understand these concepts and how each is dependent on the other to formulate a culture of rape in the United States. To be an effective piece of analysis, an intersectional methodology has been used to interrogate the resiliency and versatility of these individual and institutional systems that comprise rape culture.

Methodology

The intersectional methodology used for collecting data, assembling research, and effectively writing was chosen to punctuate the crisis of rape culture. Rape culture prolifically affects the lives of Black and African-American girls and women, those living with disabilities, trans women, and women from impoverished backgrounds, along with all other marginalized women in ways that are different from white, heterosexual, affluent women. Those white women are important, and their rapes count, but women and girls who live at the margins deserve a theory that explains the tremendous impacts that rape culture leverages over them. An intersectional account of rape culture presents a larger
picture of how it operates on a structural level and is ingrained in all of what is professed as American. The intersectional research method has many advantages.

One of the major benefits of intersectional analysis is understanding that diverse identities intersect with various forms of oppression and privilege yet operate together in a matrix. Comprehending that multiple realities exist and that each person’s perspective and lived experience is critical to understanding a given phenomenon gives credit to those who are often ignored and silenced. This is a perfect framework for looking at the reasons that rape culture is often silenced and hidden, as it professes the ugly truth about the daily lives of women and girls. Although this project does not include any specific accounts of rape or sexual assault nor provides any definition of rape or sexual assault, be assured it is purposeful and intentional. A structural analysis does not depend on trauma stories and master rape narratives to assess the truth of rape culture. We do not require the revictimization of people impacted by sexual violence to come to a definitive conclusion that rape culture exists.

Intersectional research methodology is inclusive and can be used without using personal narratives, ethnographies, surveys, and accounts of individual experiences. The work is written in a way that does not explicitly call out every instance of how something might be different for various migrants, ability levels, races, incarceration statuses, and other oppressed peoples, but every word was considered with them in mind. Intersectional research is intended to provoke a response that legitimizes knowledge that others might dismiss, a method of inquiry that makes new connections among topics many believed to be settled information. The disruptions caused by intersectionality are intended to be uncomfortable, particularly for readers who possess more privileges than others.
We can identify structures of power that are used to dominate and control those with less power, to understand why there is oppression in our world, and how we can contribute to impactful solutions by using intersectional mythology. The intersectional methodology used to complete this inquiry looks at historical, social, and political contexts that are instrumental in rape culture. The chapters focus on how rape culture was established and remains a dominate force in controlling certain groups of people in society. The purpose of this inquiry is to name and elaborate on institutionalized forms of power and control leveraged over the public in the name of protection, safety, and accountability for rape and sexual assault.

The reason that intersectional will be central in this discovery is due to the overwhelming evidence that exposes rape culture as a force used to control many different groups of people for diverse reasons, a point expelled frequently throughout the work. Scholarship, activism, and advocacy concerning sexual violence that is absent of an intersectional analysis overlooks the varying criteria that enable rape culture to flourish. This collective forgetting of intersectionality ignores the lived realities of victims/survivors and neglects to identify the patterns associated with different facets of institutional and individual life that significantly shape rape culture. The stark realization is that without using intersectionality and looking at systems of interlocking oppression, a rape-free and sexual assault-free society is impossible.

**Critiques of Rape Culture**

Over the course of this dissertation, it will become evident that rape culture is real, that it is impactful, and that action should be taken to make a change. However, there are some that will discount the evidence presented and will call rape culture a hoax, intended
to obscure the realities of those who have been victimized. Even the largest organization that centers their advocacy work towards victims of sexual violence, Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) wrote in 2014, to the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to dismiss rape culture. Ironically, on the letterhead used to submit the comments, under the RAINN logo was the endorsement, “One of ‘America’s 100 Best Charities’” from Worth magazine, “a media company that publishes finance, wealth management and lifestyle content for an audience of high net worth individuals” which speaks to the message of Chapter 3 (RAINN, 2014, Worth, 2019).

As for the critique of rape culture, RAINN (2014), an organization dedicated to advocating for victims of sexual violence, writes,

In the last few years, there has been an unfortunate trend towards blaming "rape culture" for the extensive problem of sexual violence on campuses. While it is helpful to point out the systemic barriers to addressing the problem, it is important to not lose sight of a simple fact: Rape is caused not by cultural factors but by the conscious decisions, of a small percentage of the community, to commit a violent crime.

How does the largest organization dedicated to helping victims and supporting survivors of sexual assault and rape condemn the increasing evidence that indicates there is a culture of rape? A culture of rape can exist while at the same time perpetrators of sexual assault and rape can be held accountable. Cultural factors and societal ideals are important when understanding that rape and sexual assault are more than just crimes perpetrated against a victim, there are other equally significant consequences of sexual violence. A cultural attitude that is dismissive of rape culture, regardless of non-profit status, is indicative of rape culture. When RAINN specifically villainizes the concept of rape culture as being the reason why sexual violence perpetrators are not reported or prosecuted, there must be a
reason why an organization would want to obscure structural influences connected to sexual violence.

Further in the letter, continuing the insistence on legal measures to combat the crisis of sexual assault and rape, they write about a study conducted in 2002 about campus rape (RAINN, 2014). The researcher in two studies done in the early 2000's by Dr. David Lisak, “estimates that three percent of college men are responsible for more than 90% of rapes. Other studies suggest that between 3-7% of college men have committed an act of sexual violence or would consider doing so” (RAINN, 2014). The sample size for one of the articles was a trivial 1,882 men college students, to draw the conclusion of 90% of rapists, which shows a lack of data on college campuses in the early 21st century. Indeed, referencing three studies by the same person is not enough evidence to dismiss rape culture, even in a letter to a congressional task force.

The Introduction is Over

If we all took the stance that being tougher on crime and leveraging the maximum punishment would be the best deterrent, besides prevention education, then we would be waiting a long time to end sexual assault and rape. One could make a parallel argument with institutionalized racism, ignore the structure and focus on the individual, because the lived experience of one is indicative of the whole issue. Except it is not, institutional racism is understood to be of equal importance; to stop racism, we have to attack the structures that allow and proliferate racism. That is why we must remain cognizant of how the various structures work to make the institution invisible of rape culture, whether it be for power, profit, or punishment.
We have come to a moment in time, where we must take another look at the epidemic of sexual violence in American society. We must ask ourselves why this happens, to benefit whom, and for what purpose. Asking those questions and desiring answers does not dismiss a victim telling their story, it does mean they cannot report their crime, it does not mean they do not deserve justice, it does not mean that whoever perpetrated that form of sexual violence should not be arrested, tried, and convicted. It does mean that rape and sexual assault are part of a larger culture of rape, and is a social and cultural issue, as well as a legal one. The time to look at other methods of deterring sexual violence has come and to answer the call of what we should do about it, we need to gather more evidence. This dissertation is intended to be part of the gathering of data to figure out what will be effective, after all the goal is to end sexual violence.
Chapter 2: Power: The Foundation of American Rape Culture

Rape culture, as a system of power, is a foundational aspect America. North America was forcefully settled by European men during colonization under the direction of Imperialism, as a project of Empire. A portion of these men were also perpetrators of sexual violence. This chapter discusses the structural aspects of the forms of sexual violence inflicted upon Native women, Indigenous women, and African women by white colonial settlers. The larger context of how patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy work together to reinforce rape culture is detailed in the following paragraphs. Further, the idea that America is built on sexual violence is profiled through the works of Dorothy Roberts, Andrea Smith, Elena Gutiérrez, Patricia Hill Collins, and Danielle McGuire, which all make the point that white supremacy and rape culture are entwined.

Institutional rape culture is an effective partner in the white washing of history and collective social memory. Whitewashing sexual violence obscures the racial aspects of rape and sexual assault, both as victim and perpetrator, and assembles a false narrative of individual, isolated, personal accounts of sexual violence (McGuire, 2011). The creation of race copiously masked the structural aspects of sexual violence and purposefully obscured what we now know as rape culture, a form of biopower. The thirst for power and desire to prove power by domination was an instrumental part of founding the American nation-state and is the central reason why sexual violence is so rampant, both past and present. This chapter details the different forms of power and oppression that are interwoven aspects of rape culture.

We should look to the past to understand the present, as we search for an understanding of rape culture, holding securely to the historical context of sexual violence.
For example, the book, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a new History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power,* written by Danielle McGuire (2010) explains, “The sexual exploitation of black women by white men had its roots in slavery and continued throughout the better part of the twentieth century” (xvii). While not all white men were rapists, a significant number of them failed to recognize the sovereignty of a woman’s right to her body. During genocide and enslavement, where were white women while women of color were sexually brutalized?

The cult of white womanhood, a guide to idealistic white femininity, exalted by the virtues of submissiveness, piety, purity, and domesticity, proliferated rape culture (Welter, 1966 and Cogan, 1989). White women whose heterosexual partners were the sexual abusers of Native and Black women rarely spoke out against them (McGuire, 2011). White women who chose to be submissive to white men were complicit in rape culture and institutional racism (Jones-Rogers, 2019). While white women were victims themselves, they had a space to make a moral argument against sexual violence, if nothing more than in their social circles (Jones-Rogers, 2019). As with slavery, many failed to speak out against sexual violence inflicted upon women of color (McGuire, 2018, Roberts 1998, Smith, 2005, Jones-Rogers, 2019). Patriarchal history often portrays these white women as being jealous of women who were enslaved for getting the attention from white men they so desired (Jones-Rogers, 2019). Part of the narrative seeks to excuse the physical and emotional violence that white women inflicted upon women who were enslaved, using the justification that African women sought to seduce their husbands (Jones-Rogers, 2019). As it stands, white women benefit from conquest and enslavement now via the white privilege they possess.
Despite their victimization, Black women, ever resilient, fought back even when they struggled to survive the sexual violence inflicted upon them. McGuire (2010) writes, “Decades before radical feminism in the women’s movement urged rape survivors to ‘speak out,’ African-American women’s public protests galvanized local, national, and even international outrage and sparked larger campaigns for racial justice and human dignity” (xix). Another aspect of dismantling rape culture involves crediting Black women for beginning a movement for to end sexual violence. Even through intimation, threats of violence, and after being sexually victimized, African-American and Black women spoke out about what happened to them and demanded justice. These women called for an end to lynching, a horrific method used by white people to execute Black boys and men accused of sexual violence against white women. All the while, white men were the predominate perpetrators of sexual violence among all women. Consequently, this chapter seeks to understand the roots of America through a culture of rape and contends that rape culture is so American that one cannot be separated from the other.

**Rape Culture, Patriarchy, and Gender**

The creation of a patriarchal nation-state began as the first ships arrived with colonists from Western Europe. Yet as colonists fought against English rule and as America became its own nation, patriarchy flourished and remains the seal of dominant culture and ideology. The continued privileging of men and boys in the United States has resulted in a society and culture that places value on masculinity and its hyper expression, worth on cis-male related traits and characteristics, and on the general expectation that men and boys are better and more important that women and girls. The privileging of men and boys in society is entrenched in every aspect of America.
This can be seen in fashion and clothing, where men and boy’s clothing is less expensive, more comfortable, and lasts longer. The depiction of what it means to be strong equals being physically strong, mostly meaning visible muscle mass, and that being the marker for independence and authority. Patriarchy is exampled in leadership, collectively thought of as a male dominated and identified characteristics and occupation, and that it is a natural, normal expectation for men to be born leaders (Freedman, 2007). The lack of emotionality, apart from anger and rage, is the measure of ultimate manhood and that the first answer to any problem is violence, and how widely accepted men’s violence is accepted in media, in public spaces, and in the home (Freedman, 2007). Conceptually, patriarchy involves desiring toxic masculinity as a national value and an as expression of patriotism. The embodiment of the masculine and the devaluation of femininity and characteristics deemed feminine is the essence of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is a system that privileges masculinity and traits deemed to be masculine over those regarded to be in the realm of femininity. It values men and boys over girls and women, which renders worth based on adherence to masculine traits and is the basis on which all things are judged. Patriarchy also supports hierarchical power structures which are used by one group to dominate and control another, most often observed as men exercising power over girls and women. Patriarchy and heteronormativity go hand in hand. Heteronormativity is constructed on the idea that heterosexuality or straightness is considered normal and ordinary and becomes the standard that explains any other form of sexuality as being deviant and strange (Guerrero, 2019). This oppressive standard automatically assumes straightness unless otherwise contradicted. The concept of “presumed straight” continues gender binaries of woman/man and girl/boy while reifying
CIS-gender characteristics that are assumed to be fixed-- as if it is biological, anatomical, and natural (Guerrero, 2019). The enforcement of heteronormativity is a product of capitalism.

The economic basis of capitalism includes products and services that are made by workers, who most often do not control their own labor (Marx, 1990). The means of production, such as raw material, forms of labor, ecological resources, and machinery are controlled by capitalists (Marx, 1990). Capitalists are most often people who have accumulated the most wealth and power in a given society (Marx, 1990). Capitalism and patriarchy are bred within one another and unconditionally reinforced by each other. Capitalism works to ensure binary gender adherence through advertising, media, and consumption.

Products, services, and goods are marketed and consumed based upon gender binaries. As society and the home are increasingly gendered and as enforcement of masculinity and femininity in aspects becomes more rigid, the need for gendered consumption of products is paramount. Thus, duplicate consumption in the heteronormative household becomes accepted and common, fortifying the economy and upholding capitalist logic (Guerrero, 2019). Gender, consumption, and capitalism create the conditions for the expansion of rape culture in the 19th century and beyond.

Within this heteronormative household, there are separate spaces that men and women are told they should occupy (Freedman, 2007). The private sphere is for women and the public sphere for men (Freedman, 2007). Women should be concerned with the home, maternity, children, child-rearing and care work, domestic tasks, and their appearance (Freedman, 2007, Cogan, 1989, Welter, 1966). Men should primarily focus on
work, strength, leadership, politics, discipline, and recreation (Freedman, 2007). These spheres solidify femininity and masculinity as concrete and expected, as ideas and practices not to be challenged. These spheres also normalize and standardize gender as “being the way it is” in society. Thus, the status quo teaches people not to question patriarchy or gender, just to do it. This extends to methods of consumption based on these spheres, which further delineates binary gender and entrenchment in capitalism which are both supported by a system of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is the blueprint for white supremacy. The core of patriarchy is the subordination of one group over another, white supremacy and the project of race-making are similar (Roberts, 1998, Collins, 2005, Holland, 2012). White supremacy names the created category of whiteness as being biologically, socially, and culturally superior to all other racial categories (Jorde and Wooding, 2004, Holland, 2012). Within a white supremacist society, labor, wealth, and power are made into racial issues that are definitive of the society’s values, norms, and expectations that are explicitly in support of white people (Roberts, 1998, Holland, 2012, McGuire, 2011, Jorde and Wooding, 2004). Connecting white supremacy to capitalism and heteronormativity can be done through identifying patterns in each concept; basically, harnessing power and control over others (Jorde and Wooding, 2004, Holland, 2012). These are the same characteristics that enable rape culture to thrive, especially in U.S. society.

Patriarchy wounds American men and boys inflicting them with a social disease that promotes unhealthy emotional, psychological, physical, and social expectations (Jorde and Wooding, 2004). While at the same time, patriarchy confines women and girls to subordinated status within American society and undervalues them as human beings
Women and girls’ worth is based on attractiveness to heterosexual men, as the eventual bearers of offspring, and as consumable sexual objects. In the confines of patriarchy, women are to be seen and not heard, that their opinions and expertise are always fallible based on men’s ideas related to the same content (Valenti, 2009, Freedman, 2007, Friedman and Valenti 2008). Patriarchy encompasses every moment of the living, is a system of social control that all participate in, is incorporated in all social structures, regardless of size, and continues to breed itself into every generation. All genders suffer under the condition of patriarchy and no person can live a full life under the rule of patriarchy. However, women and girls’ experiences living in patriarchy are dramatically different compared to men and boys. The oppression and discrimination that women and girls face in society, government, employment, reproduction, media, education, and most especially, individually, is unparalleled. This is most evident when looking at gender-based violence, sexual violence, and domestic violence.

Further explanation of patriarchy includes that standards by which women are judged. There are social standards that apply to women that would rarely or will never be used to judge men and their abilities. One way this occurs is by setting standards of beauty, attractiveness, sexuality, sexual expression, and judgement of how well one can conform to these standards. The cult of white womanhood constructed specific and rigid standards for public and private appropriateness, purity, submissiveness, and adherence to male authority. Beyond outlining behaviors of girls and women, the cult of white womanhood established a code of white supremacist beauty standards—which includes preferred hair texture and styles, body shape and size, facial features, able-bodiedness, and stature. All women and girls were judged according to their bodies, their ability to embody fragile
white femininity, and their ability to live a chaste life (Valenti, 2009). All women were prohibited from expressing their own sexual desire and pleasure but were pushed to be objects of desire for heterosexual men (Friedman and Valenti 2008).

In addition, the cult of white womanhood promoted the proper place of white women as birthers of the nation-state and insisted they promote the values of white supremacy to their children as keepers of the Republic (Freedman, 2013, Cox, 2003). This concept is best illustrated through the history of the Daughters of the Confederacy and their overbearing quest to influence American culture and history to favor Confederates and their racist agendas (Cox, 2003). The revisionist history touted by the Daughters of the Confederacy polluted Southern primary education by shaping the political narrative about the Civil War and the Confederate cause as one of heritage in textbooks (Cox, 2003). The various monuments, markers, and “historical” information located all throughout the country, prominently in the South, whereby the facts of the Civil War have been perverted to embrace the culture of enslavement (Cox, 2003). The pathetic quest to paint confederate soldiers not as holding up a white supremacist order, but as keepers of Southern heritage and culture has profoundly impacted the United States (Cox, 2003). White women excused enslavement and still uphold the white supremacist order that is entrenched in American society.

This privileged, yet confined middle to upper class white women to domestic pursuits, however this status was rarely ever afforded to women of color in American society. At the same time, this value system is reliant on the bodies of women of color as the ‘other’; ironically, without women of color this ideal would have no meaning (Guerrero, 2019). However, to explain and elaborate on the ways that white femininity and gendered
expectations of whiteness are critical in understanding the roots of rape culture, this dissertation will refer to the concept explicitly with whiteness being named due to its significance. Most importantly, the summation of these standards would be and continue to be the way that all women are judged and their lives validated through their ability to conform to these societal expectations of white femininity. Moreover, in contemporary American society, these ideals are also used to determine those who are un/rapable in the context of rape culture.

Alleviating the fears and actions associated with sexual violence will never be enough, even as white girls and women predominately benefit from such initiatives, there are other factors that encourage rape culture. Andrea Smith (2005) in Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide, explains, “Sexual violence is a tool by which certain peoples become marked as inherently ‘rapable.’ These peoples then are violated, not only through direct or sexual assault, but through wide varieties of state policies, ranging from environmental racism to sterilization abuse” (p. 3). The objective to end rape culture is not confined to concluding individual acts of rape/sexual assault, it is a commitment to identify, address, and rethink all aspects of society that condone and encourage rape and sexual assault in the U.S. One mechanism that supports and enforces rape culture is state-sanctioned violence (Collins, 2005).

White Supremacy, Race, and Rape Culture

The structure of American society is predicated upon the intentional creation of the category of whiteness which is a racial and ethnic marker for groups of people who are considered white, Caucasian, Anglo-Saxton, initially with Western European ancestry, and is based on legal, social, and historical definitions of race (Jorde and Wooding, 2004,
Holland, 2012). However, the construction of whiteness also implies a set of shared values. These values have been morphed into American values, which is code for dominate ideologies and culture based on white supremacist ideals (Jorde and Wooding, 2004, Holland, 2012). These cultural practices and social traditions place white people above all others due to biological determinism, principals of eugenics, and the overall collective assumption that people of color are lesser than (Jorde and Wooding, 2004). This system was installed and created specifically to benefit white elites who needed a racial divide to derive more profits from the inexpensive labor of share croppers, factory workers, and builders of infrastructure (Jones-Rogers, 2019).

As white and whiteness has been used to create binary racial categories, often analysis is centered centers on race and ethnicity. Most often taking the form of white and whiteness versus the other and “non-whiteness” careful always to center white experiences and lives over the other (Guerrero, 2019, Jorde and Wooding, 2004, Holland, 2012). This binary overlooks the influence that gender, sexuality, and class have on defining, both socially and legally, whiteness. Without the other, whiteness is meaningless. A specific example involves the shaping of white womanhood and the methods used by white culture to enforce chastity, restricted movement, and propriety for white women. These characteristics are reliant on descriptions and characteristics of Black women’s sexuality, their status in society, and the need to keep this group in a subservient position (Collins, 2005 and Roberts, 1998). The sharp contrast to the illusion of consent that white women possessed, this privilege was absent for enslaved women.

**Native Ethnocide and the Establishment of American Rape Culture**
These factors contributed to a uniquely American white supremacist heteropatriarchal government which was initiated by European imperialism and its colonial settlement model. What is distinctive about settlers of North America, is that they took methods of imperialism one step further, choosing to ruthlessly root themselves in domination and control over Natives through systemic forms of power (Allen, 1986). Settlers felt they were entitled to ecological resources and Native people, specifically to serve their economic purposes with little regard for the humanity of others (Allen, 1986, A. Smith, 2005). The conquest used gender-based violences, like rape and sexual assault, as one of its primary methods of domination (Smith, 2005). Most colonists that invaded North America were men who often came over without women from their own countries (Allen, 1986). These circumstances created a predatory environment, due to lack of family and social structures from their Native lands (Friedman, 2013). The absence of social controls, such as punishment for ethical violations and an enforced homogenized value system, allowed open access for anti-social activities (Friedman, 2013). Part of establishing dominance over Native and Indigenous people and destroying their kinship structures was done through both raping women and landgrabs (Allen, 1986). The connection among rape and theft of Native and Indigenous lands is a breaking of social bonds among these peoples and their land (Allen, 1986). Cultural ceremonies that use the geographic specificities of their ancestral land, which include water, fauna, soil, and flora, where forever changed as they were encamped in reservations (Allen, 1986). The systematic rape of Native women was significant in the cultural change of tribes and bands across the United States. Rape and sexual assault cause unimaginable trauma to not only the person who experienced it, but also there is inter-generational trauma that continues with each generation as a result.
of sexual assault and rape (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Native women are strong and sovereign and can help themselves, often people develop a white savior complex intended to shepherd Indigenous people. They have survived genocide, disease, land theft, and sexual violence inflicted by white colonizers and have worked diligently to reclaim spaces that promote their cultures and languages.

While not all relationships and sexual activities between colonists and Natives were non-consensual, often these interactions were forced. The rape of Native, Indigenous, Asian, and African girls and women, among others, frequently resulted in children. These interactions provided a way to instill fear in these populations, both through the threat and action of rape. Colonists’ conduct contributed to the genocide perpetrated upon Indigenous peoples in the United States (Smith, 2005). This method of conquest created many people of the emerging American nation, but more astonishingly, established the basis of rape culture and the ability to deny it within the larger society.

The late 1490’s in the Americas symbolizes the beginning of colonial conquest, domination and eventual rule in the area, and can be used to conceptualize rape culture’s roots (Smith, 2005). The “discovery” of Native inhabitants in the “New World” by imperialist Western European countries and the subsequent colonization of their lands would give rise in the 18th century to a new nation, the United States of America. This colonized land was pilfered from Native and Indigenous North Americans through the use of sexual violence as a tool of war and in the conquest of land, peoples, and natural resources (Smith, 2005). The racialized subjugation of this group, and later of captured, transported, and enslaved African Natives, was based on visual perceptions of skin color, ideas of contamination and purity, and the need to control Native populations for material
profit derived from their bodies and labor (Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Gutiérrez, 2008, Collins, 2005, Jorde and Wooding, 2004). Skin pigmentation, which is the reason for variation in skin colors across the globe, was perverted into a racial hierarchy by Western Europeans which situated lighter skinned people, Europeans, at the top (Jorde and Wooding, 2004). All subsequent browner shades influenced by melanin in the middle, including Native and Indigenous peoples (geographically: the areas now known as Mexico, countries in Central America, and from the Caribbean island chains), and the bottom as being made up from kidnapped and enslaved peoples from the African continent (mostly from the West and some Central regions) (Roberts, 1998, Collins, 2005, Smith, 2005, Jorde and Wooding, 2004). This reprehensible visual designation delineates the good and the bad and has ruled American lives since the beginning of the nation.

This racialization combined with Western patriarchal values and Europe’s ravenous quest for revenue streams formed an institution of power and domination which continues today. A system of sexualized and racialized domination, known as rape culture, predominately affected of women of color during the colonial period of North America. Andrea Smith (2005) explains this idea writing, “The history of sexual violence and genocide among Native women illustrates how gender violence functions as a tool for racism and colonialism among women of color in general” (15). Further, “Native peoples’ individual experiences of sexual violation echo 500 years of sexual colonization in which Native peoples’ bodies have been deemed inherently impure” (Smith, 2005, p. 13). Colonizers’ attempt to purify Indigenous lands of its Native peoples resulted in the removal of people from their homes and relocation to undesirable parcels of land, as determined by colonizers (Allen, 1986).
This was accomplished through institutionalized rapes of Native and Indigenous children and women and the threat and action of violence (Smith, 2005). The resulting genocide included the mass murder of hundreds of thousands Native inhabitants of North America (Smith, 2005). Adding to this, the diseases and vermin brought to North America by colonists resulted in millions of deaths of Natives caused by a lack of immunity due to in non-exposure (Smith, 2005). Colonists were aware of the diseases they brought, including smallpox, measles, cholera, mumps, and typhus, and that it would kill people who had no previous exposure (Smith, 2005, Allen, 1986). By more contemporary standards, such as the biological weapons convention, which is an international treaty that bans such weaponry, these diseases would be considered biological weapons and crimes against humanity (United Nations, 2019).

The combined methods of rape, murder, and disease were inflicted upon Native and Indigenous women without reprieve and continue to significantly impact Native and Indigenous communities today (Smith, 2005). For example, presently women and girls who live on reservations have little recourse if they are raped by non-Native men (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019, The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2019). The crimes inflicted upon these women must be handled by the Department of Justice, specifically by the Attorney General’s office (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019). This branch of government and its leaders rarely file charges against non-Native perpetrators, citing lack of evidence. Perpetrators of these crimes are most often white men who work in remote areas of the country, frequently working in mineral extraction (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2019). There is significant legal and historical contexts and events that make the rape and sexual assault of Native and Indigenous women some of the most gruesome
crimes in America. We must recognize Indigenous peoples as the original inhabitants and
users of North America and respect their stewardship of lands that rightfully belong to
them, including the right to enforce laws on their own land, with supplementary help from
the federal law enforcement.

The term ethno-genocide is used to describe the wide-spread practices of
murdering, pillaging, and sexually assaulting Native and Indigenous peoples for the
purpose of removing them from their ancestral lands, condemning and outlawing their
cultural practices, and interrupting their familial lines through the rape of Native women
(Allen, 1986). While the term genocide adequately explains the murder and physical
assaults inflicted upon Native peoples, there are serious consequences that can be seen in
contemporary society. The disruption of Indigenous societies and culture amounts to an
ethnocide of this group in the context of forced assimilation, the removal of Native children
who were sent to boarding schools, and the reservationist approach to internment of
Native peoples, among various other consequences of white supremacy and the goals of
colonial rule (Smith, 2005, Allen, 1986). Thus, rape culture was used to colonize, control,
and punish Indigenous people. This was socially acceptable among white people and
allowed due to a dominate social narrative of "saving the savage" (Smith, 2005). When
ethno-genocide is combined with emerging forms of capitalism, it can be seen that the
project of making America and the establishment of its economic structures would be
virtually impossible without significantly altering Native North Americans’ cultural
institution to implant white supremacist ideologies (Smith, 2005, Allen, 1986).

These forms of genocide have amounted to the “disappearing” of Natives within the
revolutionary and antebellum periods in the U.S. (Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) elaborates on
why it is critical that Americans have a historical and social memory of Native American genocide, and explain its relation to biopower, writing:

Furthermore, the methods of disease dispersal used to destabilize Native and Indigenous populations is a form of biomedical genocide. After disappearing Natives and the subsequent acquisition of their lands, newly minted America needed increased funding, and thus power, for its fledgling nation-state. If we acknowledge the state as a perpetrator of violence against women (particularly Indigenous women and women of color) and as a perpetrator of genocide against Indigenous peoples, we are challenged to imagine alternative forms of governance that do not presume the continuing existence of the U.S. in particular and the nation-state in general (p. 5).

After a severe decline in population, colonists believed Natives could be assimilated into white culture. These actions constitute a method of biopolitics which was so successful it continues to be the primary method of forced American indoctrination for incoming immigrants (Smith, 2005). For many immigrants, becoming American means forcefully losing or forgetting parts of their Native culture. The need to fit into white society and its expectations often means the erasure of one’s traditions, clothing, gestures, and language, among other things. Despite white colonizer efforts to exterminate their cultures, languages, societies, and histories, Native and Indigenous people work to reclaim their heritage and to decolonize.

These methods also extend to enslaved African peoples, but the major difference is that those people were kidnapped and forced into unpaid labor systems that purposefully physically and sexually assaulted them into submission as chronicled in Dorothy Roberts’ 1998 book, Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty. African peoples were initially brought to North America to work as indentured servants like their European counterparts (Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Collins, 2005). However, after servant uprising and threats of future rebellions, white male elites formulated a plan to combine
ideals of race and class to control their property. The did this by slightly elevating impoverished, sharecropping whites into positions of power over enslaved peoples (Roberts, 1998). This allowed for the public recognition of race and class differences among field workers until the collapse of the indentured servitude system in the U.S. After that point, Africans who were enslaved and arriving to the colonies were considered chattel, with their humanity reduced to the status of property (Roberts, 1998, Collins, 2005, Smith, 2005). Biopolitical mechanisms of control were exacted by slave owners and were used to extract the most economically advantageous forms of labor and profit from the reproduction, health, and physical bodies of enslaved Africans. Consequently, the propertied status of enslaved African peoples, allowed the use of a new technology of power, control of reproductive capacity.

**Enslavement and Rape Culture**

While the colonial white supremacist project rendered Native and Indigenous people disappeared and worked to reduce the number of births by Native women, the opposite was true of enslaved African women, yet both were considered “inherently unrapable” (Smith, 2005, Roberts, 1998). Specifically, “where colonizers used sexual violence to eliminate Native populations, slave owners used rape to reproduce an exploitable labor force (the children of Black slave women inherited their slave status). And because Black women were seen as the property of their slave owners, their rape at the hands of these men did not ‘count’” (Smith, 2005, p. 16). On the other hand, when considering the financial incentives derived from rape culture and slavery, passing down lineage from the mother, instead of the father, which was frequently the slave master, was a
lucrative business decision, when looking beyond the appalling practice of chattel slavery (Roberts, 1998).

The manufactured crisis of white women being raped by enslaved and later freed Black men provided a guise for while men to seize the moment to “save and protect” white women (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970). This false sense of protection by white women made the practice of lynching acceptable and desired by white folks (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970). The virginity and fragility of white women was contrasted with the animalistic, hypersexual stud stereotype forced upon Black men (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970, Roberts 1998, Collins, 2005). These binaries of prey and predator provoked disastrous consequences that targeted Black men for death and white women for life (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970).

As the tragedy of lynching Black men became a common event, white men who were slave owners, raped enslaved women without consequence (Roberts, 1998). Under the system of chattel slavery, Black women were considered property (Roberts, 1998). While in this status as property of white slave owners, these men felt entitled to rape and sexually assault African enslaved women (Roberts, 1998). Chattel-statused women were a double-profit venture, as those born to these mothers, continued their propertied status. The concept of African women’s maternity and motherhood were ignored and purposely violated to further dominate and disrupt kinship ties during enslavement (Roberts, 1998). However, African-enslaved people survived by creating new familial relationships and turning to each other to thrive in horrifically violent and oppressive conditions. African Americans, most specifically women, have continued to express their agency despite centuries of oppression inflicted by white Americans.
Another form of oppression leveraged by white enslavers specifically worked to subjugate African women and their children, many of whom were conceived non-consensually through sexual servitude by African enslaved men who were dubbed as “studs” (Roberts, 1998). These men who were studs deserve to be recognized as victims of rape and sexual assault and through understanding their victimization, we might better analyze the burden of Black masculinity under the regime of white supremacy. Moreover, the system of enslavement allowed white men to be abdicated in their responsibility to children born from rape. Under usual circumstances, a child would be named according to the father, however the authority of saying who does and does not belong, has long been a privilege that white men possess. The idea of the “fatherless” child and the surname heir allow men to make birth their own achievement, as one stems from the conquest and the other as a mechanism of control. Consequently, women’s labor, both in gestating, birthing, and rearing of children is second to who is named as the father. Mere personhood is defined by men and their desire to claim or ignore—and is a central piece of patriarchy. The condition of taking a patrilineal surname continues as a tradition yet needs to be identified as a hallmark of rape culture.

African women’s status as property and the ability to birth profit made them vulnerable to white capitalists and allowed unchecked sexual violence to be inflicted upon these women (Roberts, 1998). The rapes of these women were selectively prosecuted and occasionally made newspaper headlines unlike the alleged rapes of white women by Black men, that were overly publicized (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970). This double standard for white women and Black women and their accusations and prosecutions connected to rape continue to validate the idea that certain victims that are inherently rapable and
unravelable, even in modern society. Another aspect of this issue is that white men, no matter what their class, were always given the benefit of the doubt, their claims that they did not commit sexual crimes against women are societal belief that carries on today (Freedman, 2013).

Looking at Emancipation and beyond, white men continued to rape Black women unabated and while there was an uptick in lynching for Black men accused of raping white women (Roberts, 1998, McGuire, 2011). To better understand the historical context of the situation, another aspect of the issue must be examined:

The Civil War ripped apart the Southern social structure; white men were no longer the unquestioned masters of their region. The threat of white-Black racial amalgamation coupled with post-slavery Black competition in social and economic spheres struck fear into the hearts of white men across the South and compelled them to reassert their power over both “their” women and the Black men who were their competition (The History Engine, 2015).

The threat and supposed competition for the “prize” of white women between Black and white men created the conditions that put thousands of Black men in their graves (Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970). The fear that white men embody and the threats and actions provoked by their frail masculinity, lust for supremacy, and inability to confront sharing power has and continues to be a primary cause of death for many people in American society.

While this may be a historical legacy, contemporarily the stark reality is that as white men become more financially insecure and face losing racial dominance over others, violence is quite often the result. When looking at statistics, white men overwhelming commit the majority of violent crime in America, including rape and sexual assault (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018, National Alliance to End Sexual Abuse, 2018). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2016) states, “White individuals were arrested more often for
violent crimes than individuals of any other race and accounted for 60.1 percent of those
arrests.” When a whole group of people, white men, cannot live without power over,
especially considering that rape is about power and less about sex, it is especially
challenging to end rape culture (Brownmiller, 1975). 68% of reported rapes were
committed by white people in 2015 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). As much as
the U.S. government and American society tries to erase the legacy of slavery from the
collective social imagination, we must never forget the merciless, gruesome violence
inflicted upon enslaved people. The consequences of slavery still impact people of color
every day, from racism and discrimination to education and employment inequality to the
injustices inflicted by law enforcement and the legal system to redlining and voter
suppression. Black and African American people survived one of the worst atrocities
perpetrated in the American nation-state and have maneuvered obstacles to shape
American life socially and culturally.

Reproduction: The Labor of Rape Culture

Reproduction and capitalist logic have been and continue to be driving forces of
rape culture, just as each was within the system of slavery. While enslavement demanded
increased births from African women, the present agenda is to limit births from African
American and Black women, along with other women of color, lower income women, and
Reproductive capacity and governmental control have a long legacy in the context of
capitalism, as legislation about women, procreation, and the desire to end pregnancy have
always been regulated by law (The National Abortion Federation, 2019). The demand for
stricter, prohibitive legislation began during the civil war, described as the quickening,
which made it illegal to abort after fetal movement (The National Abortion Federation, 2019). The goal was for white Southern women to repopulate after the devastating Civil War that left populations dwindled. The Daughter of the Confederacy succeeded in pushing for more births among white women and the perseveration of white Southern culture post-civil war (Cox, 2003).

While these forms of social, political, and governmental reproductive control affected marginalized women in limiting conception, yet white women were encouraged to breed to expand the white supremacist project and to continue exercise dominance over groups. Reproductive laws were unevenly applied depending on group status, specifically based on ability, class, and race, among others. Understanding the historical and social contexts of reproduction are fundamental in understanding the expanse of rape culture and will be examined more extensively in Chapters 3 and 4. For now, the forced reproduction of African women is centered to better elaborate on rape culture and how rape contributed to the building of America.

The reproductive technology of power exercised by slave owners over their ‘property’ was a new form of control over women, specifically Black women and is a legacy that continues today (Roberts, 1998). Dorothy Roberts elaborates on this in *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, when she says “Racism created for white slave owners the possibility of unrestrained reproductive control. The social order established by powerful white men was founded on two inseparable ingredients: the dehumanization of Africans on the basis of race, and the control of women’s sexuality and reproduction” (1998, p. 23). These are the same ideologies that contribute to scientific racism and the methods it used/uses based on so-called biology for controlling African-
American women’s sexuality and motherhood. Furthermore, Collins (2005) in *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* notes that while under the dehumanized confinement of slavery, African (American) women who worked on plantations only had to “yield” to their master’s wishes; after emancipation, there was no safety from rape by any white man or group of white men.

When current conversations about sexuality and rape culture occur, the atrocities perpetrated on the ancestors of African-American women in the U.S. are never uttered. As a nation, our silence about these rapes and a fixation on the horrors of lynching after emancipation, speaks volumes about the way the struggles of Black women are largely ignored by society and the ways in which society refuses to be cognizant of rape culture (Collins, 2005, Roberts, 1998). Collins (2005) makes the connection that both the institutionalized rape of Black women and the mass murder of Black men through lynching are related and are forms of technology of government and biopolitical methods of controlling masses of people. She writes, “state-sanctioned violence, especially practices such as lynching (ritualized murder) and rape, operate as forms of social control” (Collins, 223). Furthermore, these methods are built into institutionalized medicine and the medical establishment as a whole, which often use women of color as bodies on which to conduct experiments, often concerning reproduction (Smith, 2005, Collins, 2005, Roberts, 1998, Gutiérrez, 2008). This can be seen in drug trials of experimental and ultimately, harmful forms of birth control, which range from depo-provera, a birth control injectable, to intrauterine devices, which are implanted birth control mechanisms (Roberts, 1998). Issues of reproduction, sexuality, and reproductive justice are critical to understanding the multi-layered foundation and issues that formulate rape culture.
The foundation of rape culture and the making of America as an imperialist project would have failed without the seizure of Native and Indigenous lands and the raping and sexual abuse of women who inhabited confiscated areas (Smith, 2005). Similarly, the implementation of slavery offered economic incentive for the enslavement of peoples to produce goods and services, the major benefit was less expensive labor costs (Roberts, 1998). These actions and attitudes were instrumental in the making of raced populations, the strategic use of sexual violence to control and dominate, and the formation of hegemonic ideologies of patriotism and normalized violence that targeted marginalized populations especially for economic gain (Gutiérrez, 2008, Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Spillers, 2003). The combination and implementation of ideas and policies were sanctioned by white supremacist leaders, supported by the legal system, and provided a ruthless foundation of patriarchy, capitalistic economics, and rape culture, that together grounded the American government institution (Gutiérrez, 2008, Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Spillers, 2003).

These polices ranged from forcing Native children into government-sponsored boarding schools and forced removal to reservations, to segregation and Jim Crow laws aimed at Blacks, the rise in popular and political discourse around immigration that focused on Asian and Latino/as, as a result of overpopulation rhetoric (Gutiérrez, 2008). Most of these policies were drive by economic trends, such as recession and depression, that increased the unemployment rates of whites (Gutiérrez, 2008). The threat of joblessness was driven by the vilification of minoritized groups as economic enemies and continues today in the concept that “immigrants are taking our [white] jobs” that shapes political conversations about immigration (Gutiérrez, 2008). In sum, capitalism,
racialization, and white supremacy work together to ground the concept of rape culture and as the igniter of the current moment that disregards the epidemic of sexual violence in America.

**Capitalism, Class, and a Culture of Rape**

Capitalism is intricately tied to rape culture. Capitalism is a system of economics that situates ownership of production within one group, usually those with power and wealth, and supports the idea of private property (Chomsky, 1999). Capitalism functions through using raw materials, such as: people's labor, ecological resources, ideas, machinery, and artificial intelligence, to provide goods, services, and products, based on market demand (Duggan, 2003, Chomsky, 1999). These market demands influence pricing, competition, and profit (Chomsky, 1999). Capitalism contributes to wealth building, influence of power, and social positions within society based on one's ability to successfully sell labor to capitalists, which are also the characteristics that establish class (Marx, 1990, Duggan, 2003, Chomsky, 1999). The ways in which class shapes rape culture is equally important to consider we think about the development of modern rape culture (Guerrero, 2017).

The large social, political, and economic institutions of class, a hierarchical value system, determines forms of worth and value of people in American life. Class is also referred to as socio-economic status because as an institution compared to race, gender, disability, it can be hidden, especially in a time of neoliberalism (Duggan, 2003, Chomsky, 1999). The manipulation of class through racial constructs, has resulted in significant contributions to rape culture, as seen in slavery, Jim Crow segregation, rights equality, war on poverty, welfare reform, mass incarceration, the hypo and hyper sexualization of
women of color, and police brutality, to name a few. These are all systems of oppression, and are all tied to rape and sexual assault because each of these time periods or (non)sequential events involve the rape of certain groups of women. The rape and sexual assault of specific groups of women have been used to invoke fights against or to reinforce these practices, depending on the victim’s status as rapable and unrapable.

For example, the lynching of black men for the alleged rapes of white women (rapable) during the Antebellum to Jim Crow eras, the sexual abuse of Asian women (unrapable) during Westward expansion and the Gold Rush, for which men were rarely prosecuted, the rapes of Mexican women (unrapable) as their ancestral lands were confiscated in the Mexican-American war, their rapes were considered the spoils of war (Gutiérrez, 2008, Bergoffen, 2013, Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, McGuire, 2011). The creation of the business of rape culture, the relation to capitalism, and connection to neoliberalism is detailed in Chapter 3. It focuses on rape culture and its profitability that provoke a conversation about the industry and business of rape culture and methods used to expand the need for rape-related goods and services.

These methods show rape culture to be a longstanding American industry that is profitable and successful based on a system of capitalism, one that builds wealth and expands the gross national product generated by the rape and sexual assault of its inhabitants. In other words, class, and capitalism have contributed to the origin and proliferation of rape culture and gender-based sexual violence in the United States. The basic premise of capitalism and the goal of wealth building provided the economic foundation for imperialist violence and genocidal colonization of North America. The goal of colonization in North America was centered on land theft, mineral extraction, and the
belief that Native and Indigenous peoples would supply an essentially free labor source, within a system of mercantilism. This is also known as a period of pre-capitalism, where the country shifted from a nation-centered economy, to a global network of production (Foucault, 2004, Marx, 1990, Chomsky, 1999). When land-owning (or alternatively land theing) white elites realized that Native and Indigenous peoples were a threat due to their inability to be enslaved, they invested in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The slave trade was a financially viable alternative to capturing Natives and would prove to be more profitable.

American capitalism was built upon inflicting violence upon “othered” groups that were not aristocratic, white, land-owning men. More specifically, it was manufactured from the forced labor of impoverished Europeans, as indentured servants, slaves who were captured from Africa, and the ethno-genocide and near erasure of Native and Indigenous peoples (Gutiérrez, 2008, Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005). These groups were violently coerced into participation and threatened with sexual assault and/or death for noncompliance (Gutiérrez, 2008, Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005). Historically, the threat of rape and sexual assault has always been a marker for the business of rape culture; contemporarily this translates into to the increased production of rape-prevention products, such as mace, tazors, and rape whistles, to name a few. The fear of rape and sexual assault is used to influence the ideas about rape culture, personal responsibility, and products tied to rape culture in a capitalist economy and society.

Using fear and punishment to control groups of people is central to the invention of the United States. Europeans who were debtors, those who were incarcerated, and those seeking an escape from poverty were some of the first to colonize North America. Under
pre-capitalism, these people’s labor was used to build settlements, yet their production was used to support the wealth building of the nation-state which sponsored their voyages. As these colonial settlements were built, the burgeoning industries of farming, mineral extraction, and factory production needed more bodies to work. Since Native and Indigenous people proved too difficult to control for labor needs, other forms of labor were needed to usher in a capitalistic economic system (Roberts, 1998). This led to the implementation of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade system brought kidnapped peoples of African-origin to North America and enslaved these human beings as the property of white, wealthy plantation owners. To keep African men in line during slavery, the threat of lynching was always present, the fear of death kept many enslaved people working through harsh conditions (Roberts, 1998). Although efforts for resistance did exist, for example labor slowdowns, sabotaging equipment, rebellion, and escape, most enslaved people were terrorized by the risk of death and continued to work. This threat forced the increased production of African men and reinforced the system of capitalism by providing labor, materials, and the production of goods which built wealth for plantation owners and for U.S. government through taxation, tariffs, and other economic policy (Roberts, 1998).

These actions established the capitalist driven system of chattel slavery. This organization of enslavement was especially entrenched in the founding of United States, as a government and as a population. The people’s status under a system of chattel slavery, as property, was especially dehumanizing due to the reproductive demands placed on women and men. In the context of affirmative consent, which is a yes means yes dynamic in sexual relations, including the agency to engage in freely-chosen sexual activities, enslavement
afforded few of these privileges to those trapped in the system. Placing affirmative consent as the standard to measure whether rape and sexual assault happens, this method assigns substantial value on the ability to freely choose when and if to have sexual relations and the person's exercise of agency.

Consequently, there was a significant absence of affirmed consent under a system of slavery, where African men were used as studs. A stud being a term used in animal husbandry, to denote an animal used for breeding (Roberts, 1998). These men were used as property, bred to make more property, and to increase the production of raw material to produce goods and services under the emerging system of capitalism. In other terms, African men were raped and forced to rape African women, to produce children, who would be born as property, and would hold the same status of their parents (Roberts, 1998). This cycle of rape continued as African women were also sexually assaulted and raped by white masters, which resulted in more property accumulation.

This cycle of rape continued through subsequent generations, as a child born into these conditions, was always under the threat of rape. Acts of sexual-based violence affected girls most, because they would be continually raped from menstruation until menopause, if not more. The systemic rape of African, Black, and African-American girls and women is a legacy that continues into present day as these contemporary women face literal and symbolic marks of rape culture (Roberts, 1999, Collins 2005, Wells-Barnett and Duster, 1970). These marks can be seen in media’s stereotypical portrayals of Black women as hyper or hypo-sexualized, through the lack of prosecution for their rapes to the reduced sentencing of their perpetrators in comparison to their other raced counterparts, and
through the control and condemnation of their sexual activities and reproduction, among other examples of rape culture (Collins, 2005).

The connections among rape culture, capitalism, and race also include links to other large social structures such as: white supremacy, imperialism, colonialism, slavery, rape as a tool of war, property ownership, patriarchy, and the status of women in the United States. Identifying these relationships is critical to understanding gender issues in American society. These gender-based oppressions are rooted in patriarchy and flourish under systems of class, race, and sexuality, among others. For example, in capitalism, human resources included unbridled access to women for reproduction, as sexual objects, as subjects to be controlled and dominated, and for men's pleasure. The hierarchy of rapable and unrapable was and is based on race and class, is reliant on social location, and ultimately derives the appropriate places for women in society through the inherent un/rapability of specific groups.

The result was based upon race and class status, depending on social location, formulated the appropriate place for particular groups of women. Furthermore, this shaped white women's place to exemplify proper femininity, as birthers of the republic, and as sexually desired objects in service of the nation-state. The preeminent status of white women as inherently rapable and created the binary of “othered” women as unrapable (Weinberg, 2002). The formation of categories of women and girls who were unrapable and rapable were based on ideas of civility, respectability, and contamination, which are markers of white womanhood. This social and legal structure allowed for white women to be uniquely situated as being in the service of the nation. White women were situated as symbols of Americanness, through birthing new members of the nation-state to

The sexuality of white women and the controlling of it by white men, government policy, and society at large, placed significant emphasis on the purity and propriety of whiteness. The cultural expectation was that no white woman should ever be attracted to a man of color, but more importantly the sexual relations between white women and Black men were to be prohibited at all costs (Jones-Rogers, 2019). The enforcement of anti-miscegenation laws and shunning of white women who engaged in romantic and/or sexual relations with Black men supported the capitalist project (Jones-Rogers, 2019). In the larger picture, enforcement and control benefit the nation-state by maintaining a revenue stream that is based on the detainment, arrest, incarceration, and release of those who violate laws, despite those laws being unequally enforced and by targeting groups for punishment (Alexander, 2010). Furthermore, societal controls over white women’s relations with Black men often meant isolation socially and economically, as many white women who engaged in these relationships were fired from their jobs, lost their social circles, were ostracized from their places of worship, etc. The point being that there were significant consequences for those who violated strict racial and sexual codes that separated whites and people of color (Jones-Rogers, 2019, Holland, 2012, McGuire, 2011). This hallmark of white supremacy is part of the system used to dominate and control minoritized groups through official and unofficial governance.
While at the same time, using this ideology to inflict sexual violence onto Black women. McGuire (2018) furthers this point, writing,

When African Americans tested their freedom during Reconstruction former slaveholders and their sympathizer used rape as a “weapon of terror” to dominate the bodies and minds of African-American men and women. Interracial rape was not only used to uphold white patriarchal power but was also deployed as a justification for lynching black men who challenged the Southern status quo. In addition to the immediate physical danger African Americans faced, sexual and racial violence functioned as a tool of coercion, control, and harassment (xvii-xviii).

This proves how significant rape culture is as a method of biopower. Specific sections of the population utilize sexual violence against another portion to maintain power and control, while the remaining section is dominated by the threat of death for non-compliance.

In sum, patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism are foundational aspects of the United States of America, each as prolific as rape culture in the making of the nation-state. Through this chapter, the historical and social contexts of rape culture were put forth to identify reasons why rape culture is a significant force in America-- politically, culturally, socially, and historically. Looking at the roots of American rape culture helps identify the factors that play into condoning, supporting, and profiting from a culture of rape.
Chapter 3: Profit: The Industry of Rape Culture

Rape and sexual assault are more than social and cultural issues that plague contemporary American society. While victims and survivors need access to support systems such as rape crisis centers and hotlines, medical and mental health personnel specifically trained to handle instances of sexual assault and rape, the ability to receive legal justice (or something like it), and community support, there are larger institutions and systems at play in the context of rape culture. If the goal of anti-rape activists, victim’s rights groups, and victims/survivors are to end rape and sexual assault, we must critically analyze the economic, social, political, and governmental aspects of capitalism and its contribution to foundations and modern-day forms of rape culture. Failing to address the capitalist system while discussing and attempting to eliminate rape culture is futile and allows for further exploitation of victim/survivors.

In Chapter 2, I established the foundation of rape culture in the United States, the connection to imperialism, colonization, and enslavement. In the next chapter, we must examine the profitability of rape and sexual assault. When the pursuit of monetary gains is centered in any situation, people and their existence become secondary. Historically, the dehumanization of native and indigenous peoples, those who were enslaved, and currently, those who are marginalized, open a space for further exploitation under the reign of rape culture. This is accomplished through the oppressive command of capitalism, global capitalism, and neoliberalism (Chomsky, 1999 and Duggan, 2003). Flatting the overall concepts of capitalism, global capitalism, and neoliberalism, each is the other and reinforce one another (Chomsky, 1999 and Duggan, 2003). It is the reinvention of capitalism under rupture and in times of crisis, that lends to the renaming and re-envisioning, as a mutated
form of capitalism, one that is most often seen as “new” and “improved” (Duggan, 2003 and Chomsky, 1999).

Rape culture must be analyzed a capitalistic economic system, as an industry, and as the means of production. Without an economic assessment, it is likely that a culture of rape will continue into a post-capitalist future. In chapter 3, I will discuss the business of rape culture, how rape and sexual assault are integrated into capitalism, and has been embedded as a form of control and power under neoliberalism constructed in the 1980’s forward. In conjunction, the concept of biomedicalization will be utilized to discuss medical models that pathologize victim/survivors and institutionalize their bodies and experiences as “raped.” Closing out the chapter will be a focus on post-capitalism and the potential futures of rape culture as an industry in the era of technology and artificial intelligence.

A brief overview of capitalism and its connections to sexual violence

Capitalism is intricately tied to rape culture in numerous ways, from the local, individual experience, to social institutions, as a system of oppression, in state and federal laws, and as a global phenomenon. In the context of this chapter, capitalism is an economic, political, and social model of using capital, people resources, and natural resources to enrich the wealth of a ruling class, to dominate and control those selling their waged labor to survive. Specifically, rape culture and capitalism are connected through may layers of American society and its institutions. These domains include: white supremacy, imperialism, colonialism, slavery, rape as a tool of war, property ownership, patriarchy, and the status of women in the United States.

To better understand how capitalism and rape culture reinforce one another, a brief overview of capitalism is necessary. However, the periods that pre-date the transition, or
prior to the 17th century, while important to the making of capitalism, will not be extensively explored in this dissertation, but would provide further research opportunities. In an effort to condense a broad history, only certain aspects of capitalism will be explored, often through the telling of social history.

Agrarian capitalism, or subsistence farming, can be characterized as occurring between the 14th and 16th centuries (Foucault, 2004, Weinberg, 2002). The manorial system included land owners and people called serfs, who farmed noble’s land, in exchange for meager existence—the minimum requirement for life—in exchange for their labor (Weinberg, 2002). This period ended with the collapse of the feudal manor and a resulted in a transition to mercantilism (Weinberg, 2002). It is important to conceptualize that prior to mercantilism, when people were employing substance agrarian farming, that forms of work and the dualism of gender roles that are now commonly perceived as biological, were non-existent (Weinberg, 2002). While rape existed, the definition of and the social meaning of rape and sexual assault was assessed as an issue with character and virginity (Freedman, 2013).

Mercantilism or merchant capitalism is dated between the 17th and 19th centuries, and was a barter and trade system, and included monetary transactions in exchange for goods (Foucault, 2004, Weinberg, 2002). The idea being that a nation-state should use its own resources, natural and human resources to build the wealth of the nation, this lead to imperialist projects and colonial settlements (Foucault, 2004, Weinberg, 2002). Extending this idea to rape culture, human resources included unbridled access to women, who should service the nation-state. This includes sexual availability and the creation of groups
that were “rapeable” and “unrapeable” based on ideas of civility, respectability, and contamination (Smith, 2005, Weinberg, 2002, Hill-Collins, 2004, Roberts, 1997).

According to the tenants of mercantilism, all forms of manufacturing were to be done within the country or territory to quell the need to trade with other nation-states (Weinberg, 2002). This supports the idea that women were to be used in service of the nation, through birthing new members of the nation-state and to refuse to procreate with those who had unacceptable lineage (Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Weinberg, 2002).

Liberalism or liberal capitalism ushered in many changes, including an increased dependence on global trade, although much production still occurred in the home country. This coincides with the use of exploited girls’ and women’s labor to cheaply produce consumable items. It also created an industry of human and sex trafficking, each of which are components in mapping global forms of rape culture.

Liberalism started in the 19th century and many scholars believe it is the current system of capitalism that dominates Western countries. Liberal capitalism included the end of slavery, promoted hourly labor practices, shifted ideas about what was and is considered productive forms of labor, and left out reproductive labor as constructive and critical to the economy (Weinberg, 2002). Without valuing reproductive labor and care work, women and girls are left out of the economic institutions. This absence is reflected through the devaluing of women’s work and emotional labor which is expected of 21st century women and was forced upon their feminine ancestors. Thus, society was restricted to accommodate changes in labor and production technologies yet continued to support rape culture rooted in white supremacist heteropatriarchal socio-economic systems.
Presently, the U.S. is now considered to be part of neoliberal capitalism (henceforth referred to as neoliberalism), or neocapitalism, and includes free trade agreements. Free trade is touted as lowering or eliminating tariffs to open nation-state borders to trade (Chomsky, 1999, Foucault, 2004, Weinberg, 2002). In addition, under neoliberalism, a significant portion of manufacturing jobs moved outside of U.S. borders, some of which include free trade zones (Gutiérrez, 2008). Under neocapitalism everything has a price, from people, goods, services, and natural resources, there are no boundaries of the free market (Chomsky, 1999, Prashad, 2014). This comes at the expense of global women and their right to bodily integrity. Many women who are employed in free trade zones and through global expansion are paid low wages, fired when they become noticeably pregnant, and subjected to sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape by men in powerful positions (Gutiérrez, 2008). Global capitalism is not helping people, yet it fully engages in displacing their work and dispossessing their bodies (Prashad, 2014).

Global neocapitalism expresses the maximization of cost benefit analysis to make decisions and supports the idea that profits are more important the people (Chomsky, 1999). This market as destiny prescription influences the ways that we see rape culture and its definitions. This is created so that we may separate what is society and what is economy. However, we must not lose sight that they occur simultaneously and work in conjunction to shape rape culture through financing forms of oppression.

Going back, the pursuit of a capitalist project was not in full swing in the U.S. until 1865 (Weinberg, 2002). Through the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980’s, the American economy depended more on service work in comparison to manufacturing work in a matter of a few decades. Further, it created a complex system of consumption and an
economic model based on the consumption and extending credit to Americans. This grew
the trade system globally. Applying these concepts to rape culture, new innovations in
biotechnology, such as genetic material testing, DNA extractions, emerging date collection
during and after a crime, and the ability of all of these to be interpreted (i.e. rape kit
processing) requires forms of medical professionalism and government sponsored
payments to ensure the idea of justice exists for rape and sexual assault victim/survivors.

Of course, America was built upon inflicting violence on impoverished Europeans
who came over as indentured servants, slaves who were captured from Africa and brought
to the U.S., and the forced removal and ultimate near erasure of Native and Indigenous
peoples through coercion and installing a fear of death within these populations for
project would have failed without the seizure of Native and Indigenous lands, slavery, the
making of raced populations, and dominate ideologies of patriotism, normalized violence,
and a government who encouraged and made laws to support these things (Gutiérrez,
natural to industrial, techniques such as rape as a tool of war, saving the native woman
through forced marriage to European men, and rape as reward for conquering are
paramount actions that developed the rape culture recognized today.

The point being, that these factors contributed to a uniquely American white
supremacist heteropatriarchal government. The idea of rape as a weapon of warfare in the
U.S. took on unprecedented status in the 17th century and beyond. For example, U.S. troops
were accused of rape and sexual assault of Afghani and Iraqi women during the invasion in
the aftermath of 9/11 (Oliver, 2007). The conceptualization of native and indigenous
women and African-origin peoples who were brought to the U.S. without their consent and the treatment of both groups, through ideologies of inferiority, hypersexualization, and bodies in need of correction were a means of establishing rape culture in the U.S. This mechanism is still used today and is hidden to render rape culture invisible in everyday America.

**The industrialization of rape culture**

Overall, capitalism contributes to rape culture through the defining and enforcement of gender roles, through the support of white supremacist patriarchy, and through profit motivation. The American economic system of capitalism provides the conditions for the invention of new industries and the expanding of markets. One such invention is the rape culture industry, rape culture as an economic system, and how the means of production include rape culture. The rape culture industry is characterized as a help-needed and service-based industry. The crisis of a rape/sexual assault event necessitates protocol for rape crisis hotlines and centers, treatment teams, of doctors, nurses, therapists, etc., law enforcement and the courts, victim advocates, and more. The table (2.1) below provides information about the human and natural resources used to address the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in America via relations of production.

The rape and sexual-assault product and services market is a currently a booming business. Due to a national commitment to helping victims of sexual assault and rape from the Obama administration, there are numerous government-funded programs aimed at helping a survivor. This assistance is administered through therapeutic means, creating and implementing rape prevention programs, and additional resources allotted to providing justice for victim/survivors. All of these things provoke an illusion of protection.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Professional workers related to the rape culture industry (the means of production)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rape crisis hotline operators</td>
<td>Staticians</td>
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<td>Sexual violence programming creators</td>
<td>Researchers</td>
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<td>Doctors</td>
<td>Self-defense instructors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Entertainers</td>
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<td>Hospital staff</td>
<td>Producers</td>
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<td>Lab workers</td>
<td>Directors</td>
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<td>Social workers</td>
<td>University and college administrators</td>
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<td>Psychiatrists</td>
<td>Academia and the professorate</td>
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<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>National and state-level legislative bodies</td>
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<td>Victim advocates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawyers and legal staff</td>
<td>Bartenders, bouncers, and waitstaff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td>Priests, minsters, and pastors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Pornographers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance abuse counselors</td>
<td>Athletes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abortion providers</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
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<td>Programmers/developers</td>
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<th>Modes of production within rape culture</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>rape kits</td>
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<tr>
<td>addiction treatment facilities</td>
<td>swabs, urine catchers, hospital gowns</td>
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<td>rape crisis center and abortion facilities</td>
<td>pharmaceutical companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>real estate</td>
<td>media companies</td>
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<td>online rape prevention programming</td>
<td>pornography companies</td>
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<td>training based programming</td>
<td>universities and colleges</td>
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<td>literature based programming</td>
<td>organized religion</td>
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<td>medical supply companies</td>
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<th>Commodity Fetishism: other industries and products related to rape culture</th>
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<td>anti-rape devices and rape prevention</td>
<td>weaponry, stun guns, guns, mace</td>
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<td>gadgets</td>
<td>alarms</td>
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<td>chastity belt</td>
<td>software makers</td>
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<tr>
<td>color changing nail polish</td>
<td>artificially intelligent sexbots</td>
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<tr>
<td>anti-rape condom</td>
<td>bars and clubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>FemDefence Tampons</td>
<td>national sporting leagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>anti-rape apparel</td>
<td>college sporting leagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>makers of sex dolls</td>
<td>high school sporting leagues</td>
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<td>rape prevention apps</td>
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by government and society. More importantly, this focus increases revenue streams for private business and generates profits due to the continuation of rape and sexual assault in the United States. New revenue streams include: hiring more emergency response personnel, more doctor and emergency room visits (including the need for additional facilities in some cases), rape-kit manufacture and collection, lab analysis of collected bio-forensic materials, specialized trainings on rape and sexual assault, the creation of manuals and protocols addressing rape and sexual assault, training more therapists, counselors, psychiatrists, nurses, and doctors, and additional pharmaceuticals manufacture, all to address the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in America.

Frequently, aid offered by government is administered through competitive grants or through contracts. A large portion of funding is funneled into the private or non-profit sectors, which offer support services, at market value, for sexual assault and rape victims. Like other issues in society, a focus on rape prevention, not only through government-sponsored programs, but also through non-profit organizations’ initiatives, places emphasis only on how to prevent rape and sexual assault, not on how to actually deal with the culture of rape. This programming is turned into a product, much like educational services. This is concerning for a number of reasons, but especially considering the intensified efforts to contain sexual assault and rapes on college and university campuses. Often this is due to financial and public relations reasons, specifically the need for fewer lawsuits and less monetary payouts, now that students are suing universities and colleges under violation Title IX legislation, all of which amounts to negative publicity (Know Your IX, 2016). Within construct of the educational product, there must be an image projected to student consumers that include aspects of safety, descriptions of the security provided on
campus and in dorms, active shooter lock down procedures, campus police information, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act report for the school, etc. Thus, rape and sexual assault prevention programming on college campuses nationwide is at an all-time high due to those needs, not because of an actual concern for student safety or learning environment.

If there were no sexual assaults that occurred in America, nor any rapes there would be major financial ramifications. Due to the pervasive and some would say “enviable” occurrences of rape and sexual assault, many payrolls have increased to accommodate more people seeking out assistance and treatment for these events. Whether it be 30 years later or 3 days ago, a large group of people are trying to move on with their lives and heal the pain that comes with rape and sexual assault. There are specific therapy groups that help people recover from a sexually-based traumas, therapists trained in gender-based violence, nurses trained to deal with victims seeking help in a medical facility.

The legacy of sexual based violences stay with the family and through the generations. For example, a woman who was raped by a male family member when she was 12 might keep her young daughter away from most men out of a fear that her child would suffer the same childhood sexual violence. The same woman might over monitor her child in situations where men are present and might forego romantic relationships with men due to the concern of potential sexual abuse. The child in the scenario might be skeptical of men and boys’ intentions due to her mother’s experience. The child’s aunt might have been the victim of multiple sexual assaults and kept that burden to herself, unwilling to make connections with others after she was victim blamed. Their mother might have been raped by a group of boys as a teenager which resulted in a pregnancy and
being sent away to give birth in another town. Their great-great grandmother might have been raped as a tool of war and barely escaped to the United States to start a new life. The inter-generational trauma is a tangible consequence of rape culture. We rarely speak about the financial burden placed upon families who are dealing with rape and sexual assault.

We do not talk about how much work victims of sexual assault and rape miss due to their attacks. We do not calculate how much bi-monthly meetings with a psychologist for 3 years impacts the working poor woman that can barely make ends meet. We do not speak out about the tens of thousands of dollars charged to victims of rape by healthcare providers for going to the emergency room after being raped. We do not talk about the economic consequences that women and girls face by altering their lifestyles to accommodate the potential of being raped and/or sexually assaulted. We do not talk about the ways that women and their bodies are costlier after a rape. We do not discuss the economic costs of rape and the various industries that prosper because of rape. We do not calculate the number of jobs created by sexual assault and rape.

Researches have begun tackling these issues, asking how much does it cost when one is raped? The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (2017) summarized the research in a report, Costs, Consequences and Solutions, which totaled the yearly amount for all crimes and for sexually-based crimes. The organization writes:

The best available research tells us that crime victimization costs the United States $450 billion annually (National Institute of Justice, 1996). Rape is the most costly of all crimes to its victims, with total estimated costs at $127 billion a year (excluding the cost of child sexual abuse). In 2008, researchers estimated that each rape cost approximately $151,423 (DeLisi, 2010). Sexual abuse has a negative impact on children’s educational attainment (MacMillan, 2000), later job performance (Anda et al., 2004), and earnings (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual violence survivors experience reduced income in adulthood as a result of victimization in adolescence, with a lifetime income loss estimated at $241,600 (MacMillan, 2000). Sexual abuse
interferes with women’s ability to work (Lyon, 2002). Fifty percent of sexual violence victims had to quit or were forced to leave their jobs in the year following their assaults due to the severity of their reactions (Ellis, Atkeson, & Calhoun, 1981). In 2008, violence and abuse constituted up to 37.5% of total health care costs, or up to $750 billion (Dolezal, McCollum, & Callahan, 2009).

In simplest terms, rape costs Americans $127 billion dollars a year. This is not common knowledge, even the Federal Bureau of Investigation crime reports do not mention this figure. That is a significant amount of money spent due to crimes committed by perpetrators that are overwhelmingly male-identified, who rarely are ever prosecuted for their crimes, and only a minuscule number of offenders serve jail time for their actions. Yet, societally we blame women victims for what they drank and wore, how they behaved around and responded to their brutalizers, and judge them by the efforts taken to fight off their attackers and how much they really wanted to prevent their rapes. We demand their stories, criticize what they did or didn’t do in the situation, and dismiss their pain and anguish. We tell them it is not a big deal and to get over it. However, with a yearly $127 billion-dollar price tag, as capitalist we should demand a cost-benefit analysis of rape. It sounds so sensible, right?

Reflecting further upon the logic of simple policy and economic techniques of determining if something or someone, in this case, is worth it, we fail to fact find. Why is rape culture never evaluated as an industry? It makes a profit, it uses capital, human and natural resources, and provides economic output that impacts the net domestic product. Many jobs and people’s subsistence depend on others getting raped and sexually assaulted. There is a reason that we only discuss rape and sexual assault as an individual phenomenon, one that is usually between two people, that generally cannot be corroborated beyond a disagreement or misunderstanding. If we looked at Rape Culture as
the pandemic it is, daily life would halt, most people would not accept a billion-dollar price
tag for rape and sexual assault. Most ethical people would demand an explanation, but
instead we send thoughts and prayers for healing for the victim.

The lack of economic analysis about the real cost of rape is pathetic. As mentioned
before, individual rapes cost around $151,423. So that means for every “she said, he said”
rape event, the cost to the victim is what many people earn in two or three years of
working. This is economically savage, especially to those already financial vulnerable such
as women who live with disabilities, women of color, trans women, currently incarcerated
women, and undocumented women. While that cost is staggering it does not include those
who experience childhood sexual abuse.

Elizabeth J. Letourneau, Derek S. Brown, Xiangming Fang, Ahmed Hassane, and
James A. Mercy, authored *The Economic Burden of Child Sexual Abuse in the United States*
(2018), which calculated the total cost of child sexual abuse. They write,

“Estimating 20 new cases of fatal and 40,387 new substantiated cases of nonfatal
CSA that occurred in 2015, the lifetime economic burden of CSA is approximately
$9.3 billion, the lifetime cost for victims of fatal CSA per female and male victim is on
average $1,128,334 and $1,482,933, respectively, and the average lifetime cost for
victims of nonfatal CSA is of $282,734 per female victim. For male victims of
nonfatal CSA, there was insufficient information on productivity losses, contributing
to a lower average estimated lifetime cost of $74,691 per male victim.

Childhood sexual abuse costs $280,000 per victim or $ 9.3 billion over a lifetime. The figure
is breathtaking, both in the dollar amount, but more importantly in terms of damage and
trauma inflicted upon the most defenseless individuals in American society. Many of these
victims never tell anyone what happened to them as children and those who do tell are
often accused of lying. The heartbreaking number of 40,387 new cases of nonfatal
childhood sexual abuse does not reveal the thousands who did not or could not tell anyone what happened to even be counted.

This is how rape culture continues and persists even though we claim to want to end rape and sexual assault. We need to have a frank conversation about the facts of rape culture and the ways it affects everyone in society. There is not a single person in America that can claim they do not personally know anyone that has experienced childhood sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault as an adult, or been sexually harassed. If someone were to claim they knew no one, it is highly probably they just do not know anyone that has publicly told their story. Remember some victims never tell and might not even in a safe space, certainly, no one is entitled to know another’s story of sexual violence. We need to step up and fight for everyone’s right to have control over their bodies, to have the ability to be respected and listened to when a person draws the line at no, and to live a life free of rape and sexual assault from birth until death. There is no amount of compensation that will be enough, the only appropriate solution is the end of rape culture.

**Biomedicalization of rape culture**

Medicalization is a phenomenon that occurred after World War II, which ushered in a new medical model, as an institution and as a culture of treatment instead of cure (Clarke, Mamo, Fishman, Shim, and Fosket, 2003). Over the next few decades, “medicalization—the expansion of medical jurisdiction, authority, and practices into new realms” became the standard of the medical profession and medical culture (Clarke, Mamo, Fishman, Shim, and Fosket, 2003, p. 161). The gradual inclusion of more issues under, “medical jurisdiction....[includes] initial expansion around childbirth, death, menopause, and contraceptives in 1970's to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), premenstrual syndrome
...and so on" (Clarke, Mamo, Fishman, Shim, and Fosket, 2003). Interestingly enough, the shift from the white slaveowning master to the white supremacist medial institution is not all that drastic considering the control leveraged over women’s reproduction, most especially gestation, birth, and motherhood for women of color.

The documented sterilization abuses of Latina women at University of Southern California-Los Angeles County Medical Center in the 1960’s and 1970’s (probably for a much longer period that that), of Black, Latina, and Native women receiving medical care from Medicaid or Indian Health Service, both insurance products offered by the U.S. government, and women who were formerly incarcerated or currently are, these women have been and continue to be biomedically disciplined (Roberts, 1998, Smith, 2005, Gutiérrez, 2008, Collins, 2005). To further explain, Clarke, Mamo, Fishman, Shim, and Fosket, (2003) write in Biomedicalization: Technoscientific Transformations of Health, Illness, and U.S. Biomedicin, biomedicalization is a term for the increasingly complex, multisited, multidirectional processes of medicalization that, today, are both extended and reconstituted through the emergent social forms and practice of a highly and increasingly technoscientific biomedicine. We signal with the ‘bio’ in biomedicalization as the transformation of both the human and nonhuman made possible by such technoscientific innovations as molecular biology, biotechnologies, genomization, transplant medicine, and new medical technologies (p. 162).

It is important to reflect how these concepts reflect the eugenics movement and the quest to rid the American gene pool of ‘undesirable groups,’ including people of color, low socioeconomic status people, people living with disabilities, immigrant women, etc. The ideas of eugenics were and still are supported by the falsehood of scientific racism, which was created by and continues to be revived through biologists, sociologists, psychologists, geneticists, technobiologists, molecular biologists, and other bigoted medical opportunists.
These people believe that cultural and social characteristics that are “unwanted,” or better articulated as not building the white supremacist ideology and brand, are transmitted through biological and/or genetic means.

Interventions in health and the critical analysis of the medical institution and its products must be evaluated to determine the how seemingly innocent breakthroughs might actually be the product of racist, classist, sexist, and/or ablest scientific and technologic processes. Some of which are actually thinly veiled eugenicist movements that support white supremacy. Clarke, Mamo, Fishman, Shim, and Fosket, (2003), explain, “biomedicine has become a potent lens through which we culturally interpret, understand, and seek to transform bodies and lives” (p. 165). The reality being that targeted biopolitical strategies include and will intensify through the use of medical methods of discipline and by medical control over the body. Roberts identifies how this trend,

reveals how critical political objectives are to determining the nature of reproductive technologies—where they will be used for women’s emancipation or oppression. As the [birth control] movement veered from its radical, feminist origins toward a eugenic agenda, birth control became a tool to regulate the poor, immigrants, and Black Americans (p. 58-59).

These examples of regulation of the masses and the future potential of taking it farther by implementing the fear of domestic bioterrorism or the actions of, should be evidence to show how government and medicine have formed an alliance of control through biopower.

Foucault eerily predicted this turn when he wrote the goals and aims of government changed, “to rationalize the problems posed to government practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race...” (2004, p. 317). Continuing these thoughts, biopolitical control extends to new reproductive technologies, insurance risks that calculate the rate of death,
implementation and use of new vaccinations, the development of biomedical weaponry, and testing of new technologies on people of color. This is a historic trend: the amount of torture and trauma a Native woman can endure through colonization of her land, the caloric calculations that determined how much food a woman needed to subsist and procreate during enslavement, the inner-generational psychic and bodily trauma inflicted by a sterilization procedure upon a Latina woman who did not consent, the Tuskegee experiment on Black men that prolonged a painful death from syphilis and sometimes infected their families, the lack of affordable food and health care for poor people, and the list continues. The common connection amongst these examples is that all of them were either perpetrated or sanctioned by government.

Moreover, extending the analysis of biomedicalization to rape culture, it is clear that recovery from rape and sexual assault fall within the established boundaries of what is medicine and what requires medical care. Under the guise of security, care, and concern lies a more insidious and meticulous method of control through the practice of sexual violence. Collins particularizes, “rape as a tool of sexual violence may increase in importance because its association with women and privacy makes it an effective domestic tool of social control” (p. 224). This is especially prevalent when considering the racialized contexts of rape within the institution of slavery for procreative means and after emancipation, whereby African-American women were sexually brutalized indiscriminately to entrench white supremacist patriarchal culture in the U.S. Smith articulates, “If sexual violence is not simply a tool of patriarchy, but also a tool of colonialism and racism, then entire communities of color are the victims of sexual violence” (2005, p. 8). In the contemporary white supremacist nation-state, “it is the constant
purification and elimination of racialized enemies within the state that ensures the growth of the national body” and is accomplished through biopolitical methods (Smith, 2005, p.9).

**Pitfalls of the “rape narrative”**

A “master rape narrative” creates and reinforces the illusion of the perfect victim, an attractive, white, cis-heterosexual, thin, abled bodied, middle-class woman, who did not drink too much, wore the right clothing, acted in a manner that could not be misconstrued as sexually provocative, who was not promiscuous, vocally said no during a sexual assault/rape act, and so on (Ridgeway, 2014, Force: Upsetting Rape Culture, 2014, White House Council on Women and Girls, 2014, Smith, 2004, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, 2009, Know Your IX, 2016, Friedman, Jaclyn and Jessica Valenti, 2008, Ferguson, 2016, Bianco, 2018). Any person who falls beyond those parameters is told their case would not be good enough to go to trial, if the victim even decides to press charges or pursue a civil case. Thus, the majority of people who are sexual assault/rape survivors are rendered as “unrapeable,” their experiences rejected as illegitimate, as people undeserving of support and help, and ineligible for justice or retribution. While at the same time, statistics and national anti-rape and sexual assault organizations use the totaled number of all victims, those who report and estimated numbers that do not, to advocate for justice. Again, it is the “be seen but not heard” rhetoric that has held true for so many identity groups in America and is the cornerstone of neoliberal thought.

The “rape narrative” allows an individualized course of action to address the perceived causes and effects of rape and sexual assault in the U.S. Through neoliberalism, social, political, and economic matters are categorized as individual issues that are need of correction—rape and sexual assault are no different. The “rape narrative” can be useful for
3 reasons: 1) it provides a funded outlet for victims to seek help regarding their experiences after a sexual assault/rape event has occurred, 2) allows survivors of sexual assault and rape the opportunity to speak their truths and creates a visible community space for support, 3) can provide a tangible, human story to a topic that is rarely discussed. However, the “rape narrative” fails victims/survivors of sexual assault and rape by hiding the actual institutional, social, economic, and political reasons we do not live in a sexual assault-free and rape-free country. The “rape narrative” is convincing enough to elicit many types of programs at local, state, and national levels aimed at rape and sexual assault prevention and advocacy.

What the “rape narrative” does is individualize acts of rape and sexual assault so that it seems like the exception and not the rule. The reality is that a significant number of people, from all different groups, including people who are currently and formerly incarcerated, women of color, men and boys, people from the trans community, undocumented peoples, aging populations, children, people living with physical disabilities, and far too many others, are victims/survivors of sexual assault. The ability to turn an epidemic into an isolated account is a component of neoliberalism, as seen in any economic, social, or political crisis from Ronald Regan’s administration forward in the United States. The “rape narrative” also provides a new market for products and services for those who experience a sexual assault and/or rape act.

**Misconceptions in rape and sexual assault prevention**

Prevention methods aimed at curtailing or even ending rape often times have messages that include victim-blaming, slut shaming, bystander intervention, and limiting drug and alcohol consumption (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth, 2015, Freedman, 2013).
Most of the prevention programming is aimed at girls and women and provides a code of conduct to follow as to not get raped or sexually assaulted. What this does is confine girls and women to specific spaces for ‘their own safety’ which does not address the group that perpetrates the majority of rapes and sexual assaults in our society—men and boys. This supports the system of patriarchy, which we currently live under in the United States. The doctrine of neoliberalism condones inequality and is definitely facilitated by patriarchy and the privileging of boys and men in American society. Blaming women and men for their rapes/sexual assaults justified by personal accountability, expanding a market for rape and sexual assault services and products, and by promoting a law and order system that disadvantages victims/survivors of sexual assault, clearly indicates that the construct of rape culture, which encompasses all of these issues, is included within the neoliberal project. Rape culture flourishes and reinforces the logic and ideologies of neoliberalism.

Rape Culture and Artificially Intelligent Sex Robots

Perhaps the new feminist frontier involves artificially intelligent sex robots and the implications their deployment will have on culture and society, most specifically rape culture. Popular opinions positioned several Guardian articles, Change the Sex Industry but Could They Replace Intimacy? by Max Opray (2017), Claims About Social Benefits of Sex Robots Greatly Overstated by Nicola Davis (2018), and Child Sex Doll Imports Expose Previously Unknown Offenders by Kevin Rawlinson (2017) and the responses posted on their social media accounts, believe that sex robots could be the “cure” for rape and sexual assault, including pedophilia. Others believe that this creates a space to glorify sexual assault and rape, and that if available, that rapebots have the potential to increase instances of rape, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and will continue to oppressively trap girls and
women into sex trades/work (Davis, 2018). The un-human aspect of AI sexbots could and has, in preliminary research, shown that the use of sexbots increase the dehumanization of women and girls, which led to behaviors associated with gender-based violence (Davis, 2018). This section focuses on how AI sexbots are part of the rape culture industry, which was laid out in previous sections, and that in the next few years, this industry “is estimated to be worth $30 billion” (Welch, 2018). In addition, there is potential for sexbots to change human interaction and relationships, including gender roles, and its effect on feminism will be introduced.

In the most basic sense artificially intelligent sex robots can be described and identified by three characteristics: a humanoid form, meaning it resembles a human being in form and design, the bot possesses human-like behaviors and movements, and is artificially intelligent, a being that is capable of information exchange, from rudimentary programmed conversation and personality, to adaptive learning and AI consciousness (Danaher, 2017, Frank and Nyholm, 2017). AI sexbots are distinguishable from sex toys, such as dolls that look like humans, but do not have full functionality, like movement and AI, and from other inanimate sexual-use objects like vibrators, dildos, pocket pussies, blow up dolls, even those with “smart” features like those invented in the current sextech revolution, and so forth (Danaher, 2017, Frank and Nyholm, 2017). The hallmark of AI, is the ability to learn and eventually, that could mean forms of robot consciousness. If an AI lifeform possesses a will to knowledge and consciousness, does that make it a sentient being? And, if so, how does this take up ideas of consent and sexuality? These questions are critical to understanding if and how sexbots will affect rape culture and to what extent it might affect human beings.
Artificially intelligent sex robots, referred to as sexbots, sexual cyborgs, pleasure robots could have a programmable “feature” that allows the humanoid robot to resist, fight back, say no and other responses. As well as potential for mimicking human physiological and psychological responses during a rape event. These are options are being created and coded in the present, so the near future of AI becomes the present when thinking about how technology and rape culture interact. However, if we think about Brownmiller’s theorization of rape being a power-based phenomenon, how is that connected to AI humanoids, who are not currently considered as beings? Specifically, these artificially intelligent robots and their potential “rapists” lack a relationship based in power, depending on how one classifies AI humanoids. Does this make a rape event or an instance of sexual assault impossible? How do we as a society come together to make social rules and legal guidelines that will affect the deployment and use of sexbots or is it even necessary?

The Guardian article, “Should We Ban Sex Robots While We Have the Chance?” by Jenny Kleeman (2017), wrote about “Frigid Farrah,” which is a setting option on Roxxxy TrueCompanion, a sexbot who can have different personalities depending on the desired user experience. Kleeman (2017) explains Frigid Farrah as, “a mode in which she has been programmed to resist sexual advances and which will allow men to act out rape fantasies.” As expected, the backlash to this setting has been described by Laura Bates from Everyday Feminism as, “the sex robot that’s yours to rape for just $9,995” and by Kate Parker, an English barrister, as “the sophistication of the technology behind Roxxxy marks a step forward for robotics. For human society, it’s an unquestionable regression” (Kleeman, 2017). Additionally, there were over 800 comments on the Guardian website that posted
Kleeman’s article, which ranged from outrage and disgust to excitement and desire. So, does the question become should we limit “rape features” on sexbots or should sexbots be banned as a whole? Neil McArthur’s (2017) article, “The Case for Sexbots” from the book, Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications, provides further clarification about survey data related to sexbots, cheating, and human relationships.

He cites a YouGov poll conducted in 2013, that surveyed people about their opinions on robots and sex. The sample from the online poll, which appeared on the Huffington Post website, was taken by over one thousand adults and was a random sample (McArthur, 2017). McArthur (2017) explains that only nine percent said yes to the question, “If it were possible, would you ever have sex with a robot?,” eleven percent indicated “they were not sure,” and “eighty-one percent said no” which shows how unpopular the idea was in 2013. The question about whether or not someone would or should have sex with a humanoid is best done by the individual. However, sexbots that have rape features or appear to be children, are best controlled through legislation and banning of certain programmatic features that encourage or accommodate rape and sexual assault on a humanoid created specifically for sexual encounters.

Often technology and innovation advocates explain that government regulation or enforced parameters on development stifle progress and discourage participation for the most capable and creative technologists. The reality of sexbots and the use of them will change human interaction and dynamics and we have to be prepared for potential consequences and anticipate what could happen if society and government allows these forms of technology to be self-regulated by its creators. Should we allow these people to make the rules over what is and is not acceptable considering how the tech industry, as a
whole, is not open to understanding gender and sexuality from a feminist perspective and has largely remained a “bros only” corporate culture? If we want to end rape culture, we have to start being proactive instead of reactive and remaining victim/survivor centered.

Continuing the conversation about how to become a rape-free and sexual assault-free world should center childhood sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking of young people, and more accountability for pedophiles. Broadly considering if sexbots could be the “cure” for sexual assault and rape, we must think about how curing and the need to be cured stems from the medicalization of rape and sexual assault and continues to contribute to the industry of rape culture.

We can cure some illnesses, but rape and sexual assault are not illness and are not diagnoses for those who have been victims. Since sexual assault and rape are not a diagnosis, there are related issues which are diagnosis, like exposure to HIV/AIDS and STIs/STDs during a rape act and require preventative medications, suspicion of impregnation where Plan B would be administered, suffering from psychological and emotional disorders from post-traumatic stress to depression to anxiety disorders. All of which could require professional assistance from psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, and more, and are curable to some extent. Rape and sexual assault themselves are not a pre-existing condition, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) eliminated insurance discrimination based on previous health history, which would include the after effects of being raped or sexually assaulted.

With the 2017 congressional repeal of certain provisions of the ACA and the ability of states to request exemption from sections of the ACA, it has effectively allowed de-facto
discrimination based on “raped or sexually assaulted status.” National Public Radio’s Alison Kodjak (2017) reported on this issue, stating,

insurance companies didn’t specifically include rape as a pre-existing condition that would allow them to deny victims coverage or charge them more. But a handful of conditions and interventions that can follow a sexual assault could have led people who were raped to be excluded from buying policies.

Some victims must pay for medical expenses as a consequence of a sexual assault and/or rape, as shown in a 2014 *Times-Picayune* expose, “Billing For Rape: Louisiana Sex Assault Victims Often Face Hefty Bills For Medical Care” which reported that many women who were victimized were charged for their emergency room visits. Although the Violence Against Women act was “amended in 2005 to stipulate that sexual assault victims should not be billed for medical forensic exams in the wake of their attack, the requirements only include the basics for a rape kit” (Catalanello, 2014). That means that any testing for STIs and HIV are the responsibility of the victim, among other charges such as being admitted to the emergency room, which was required to access a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (Catalanello, 2014).

There is a reimbursement fund to cover the costs associated with rape and sexual assault in Louisiana, housed within the Louisiana Crime Victims Reparations Board, but there are conditions that must be met to qualify. *Times-Picayune* reporter Rebecca Catalanello (2014) writes,

Such reimbursements are "subject to the provisions of the Crime Victims Reparations Act and its administrative rules." That means the victims have to file a police report. They can't have had any felonies in the past five years. They can't have behaved in a way that, in the opinion of the board, "contributed to the crime." They can't have been involved in other illegal activity at the time they were victimized. Statistically, that closes out a lot of people.
What this means is that to be reimbursed, which is difficult for many victims who may not have the disposable income to pay incurred hospital bills, one must be a perfect victim, otherwise they do not count. That means that many sex workers, those with substance abuse issues, those who are victims of domestic violence, formerly incarcerated people, or even someone whose skirt is deemed too short by the Louisiana Crime Victims Reparations Board would be rejected for reimbursement and subject to pay for their own rapes and sexual assaults. Another requirement is that the criminal incident must be reported to the police, and as we know, rape and sexual assault is already grossly underreported in America. These laws and procedures serve to silence victims and to continue to fund the rape culture industry, which endlessly reaps the benefits of victimization and has no vested interest in ending rape culture. Moreover, these issues are nothing less than an attack on already marginalized populations and blames the victim for crimes committed against them.

This premise provokes the thinking that rape and sexual assault are curable and that that cure should be humanoid sexbots, simplifies the legacy of imperial and colonial sexual violence, which is false. Moreover, the priming of women and girls to be raped and/or sexually assault is a condition of being born “female”, and the industry of rape culture that continues to profit and flourish under the conditions a white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal capitalist state and economy. Furthermore, saying that “curing” pedophilia is possible sets up pedophiles as victims of their own crimes, as well as removing some of the blame. It removes accountability for pedophiles and could potentially lessen the public perception of impact on victims and could alter future sentencing. We all have impulses to do things that are morally reprehensible, such as feeling murderous
before your morning coffee. Most of us quell those impulses because we have been taught to do so and because we know that a condition of living in society is a requirement to be lawful, regardless of desire.

Providing a sexual outlet for pedophiles should not be part of rehabilitation or retribution, the point of punishment is to deter one from recidivism, not to indulge their behaviors. Another aspect of “curing” pedophiles, rapists, sex traffickers and so forth, comes at the expense of society, using sexbots provides a space to participate in rape fantasies, perform acts that are traditionally considered sexual assault, and engage in forms of pedophilia, depending on how the nation-state defines possession of child pornography (England and Canada have strict laws about child pornography and its parameters).

Patrick Lin (2017), a robot ethicist, explains the issues concerning the use of child sexbots,

Treating paedophiles with robot sex-children is both a dubious and repulsive idea. Imagine treating racism by letting a bigot abuse a brown robot. Would that work? Probably not. If expressing racist feelings is a cure for them, then we wouldn't see much racism in the world. “Fighting fire with fire” may work in very specific contexts—such as treating heroin addicts with methadone—but not generally; that's why the expression is so surprising. This shows that the ethics of sex robots goes beyond whether anyone is physically harmed. There may be other issues at stake, such as moral character, psychological effects, social taboos, the ethical limits of experiments and therapy, and more. It's not as simple an issue as some people think.

The key here is that ethical and moral implications of sexbots are beyond human impact and the physicalities or embodiment of sex or rape acts.

The positive effects of sexbots, without rape features, is that many people who are unavailable for “traditional” sexual encounters have the opportunity to engage in sexual contact. This will be especially positive for those living with disabilities. American society desexualizes people who live with disabilities, with very few sexually-based aids to assist in
their need to be sexual beings (Guerrero, 2019). There is little media representation of sexuality and disability, leaving many to ignore the absence of sexually active disabled people in visual contexts. This extends to aging people who live with disabilities. Where is the representation of their sexualities? Many older people who have chronic conditions like arthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia, and other autoimmune and nerve-related ailments, can be more sexually active with robotic assistance. Often, many people in this group lack the ability to move their bodies in a way that is conducive to sexual acts, thus making robotic stimulation attractive.

In addition, people who suffer from sexual arousal disorders and those who may experience post-traumatic stress disorder related to sexually triggering events, might use sexbots to ease into sexual activity. Another option would be for those who are unable to attract sexual partners for a multitude of reasons and those who label themselves as “incels” could find sexual release through robotic intervention. Specially, incels, who are “[an] online community of ‘involuntarily celibate’ men radicalized by their shared mistrust of women” and who “believe that they are doomed by society’s cruel rules to never have sex, because they are too ugly or socially awkward” might be able to engage in sex via sexbots (Reeve, 2018).

In this aspect, ideally incels could learn to interact with artificial women in a way that would translate into respectfulness and appreciation for human women. Incels “aren’t really looking for sex; they’re looking for absolute male supremacy. Sex, defined to them as dominion over female bodies, is just their preferred sort of proof,” which might make an AI sexbots the cure for their misogyny and violence (Tolentino, 2018). The variety of people who could be sexually assisted and satisfied through interactions with a sexbots call into
question about the inherent good and bad of this form of artificially intelligent robot. As rape culture is further interrogated, we must think about potential solutions as we quest for a sexual assault and rape free existence.

We must publicly ask why and what for when debating sexbots and sexuality in our technologically advancing society. Sexbots contribute to the economy of rape, this growing industry will shape conversations about the correctness of using technology as a method of control and the domination of women. We must demand guidelines that center women’s concerns with rapebots and the issues that will arise from interactions with artificially intelligent robots with sexually capability.

Conclusion

The industry of rape culture profits from sexual violence. The epidemic of sexual violence in the United States combined with the economic system of capitalism, configures an emerging market that flourishes based on catastrophe. This profiteering is similar to the rebuilding of nations after U.S. invasion, as in Iraq, Japan, and Vietnam, whereby American companies exploited countries devastated by war. This has also been seen in the aftermath of environmental disasters, such as Katrina and Deepwater Horizon, where the rebuilding shifted public works into privatized industry. The proliferation of rape culture would be impossible without a system of capitalism which ignores the inherent worth of humans and reduces their lives to their consumption, including products and services generated by the industry of rape.

To end a culture of rape, we must be diligent in creating an economic system that is inclusive and equitable. Depending on capitalism to save us from disaster, epidemics, and social problem, is unproductive, due to the inherent oppressive nature of a system that
uses a cost/benefit analyses to determine worth. We must work together to find an alternative method of economy that benefits the least wealthy in America, for the problems of the world are not due to those who live without but the inability to satisfy those who have everything. We made the system of capitalism and now we have the opportunity to unmake it—human designed and implemented, it is not infallible. Living free from sexual violence includes the ability to live as agents that are not tied to the fluctuations of an economy controlled by the powerful and wealthy at the expense of the rest.
Chapter 4: Punishment: The Purpose of Rape Culture

This chapter will explore how women's sexuality and desire have been flattened and prohibited in many ways to make sexual desire, both hetero and homo, a crime against the nation-state. The nation-state is built upon a relationship between government, those who are governed, and those who do the governing. The purpose of the American nation-state is to be pro-business and pro-wealth while subverting the will of the people. The nation-state's primary concern is the labor and consumptive ability of those being governed. This is at odds with those who are governed, who seek freedom. Our desire is the ability to live a freely chosen, authentic life, in other words—to possess agency over their lives. The agency we all seek is difficult to manage under the system of rape culture. Just like capitalism requires an absolute entrenchment in the system, in every layer of living, invisible and unobjectionable, rape culture is the same. As mentioned in chapter 3, rape culture and capitalism are inseparable, each feeds off the other for existence. We, the people, are not offered an alternative to capitalism. Indeed, we are told there are no other possibilities, alternatively, this logic applies to rape culture. We are starting to better understand the foundational aspects of rape culture, to identify its existence, and to find what purpose it serves in American life. Is there another options besides rape culture?

The problem with the American nation-state is the insistence on using the economy to govern and confusing labor value as the purpose of human life. Those with wealth in America dictate what those without wealth are allowed to do with their lives, where they live, what schools they attend, what values to ascribe to, and how to feel purpose in every day existence. In a materialist context, this translates into networking for occupations instead of talent-based placement, gentrification and redlining, property tax-based
education funding, media and the rise of influencers, and how our identities are based perceived success. This alienates people from their inherent worth as humans and their value as thinking, sentient beings.

Since the 1980's a neoliberal, neoconservative movement has ensconced the United States and has resulted in a loss of freedoms for Americans (Duggan, 2003). This demise was particularly prevalent after September 11, 2001, where the United States was attacked by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban and Al-Qaeda) and resulted in significant changes to American culture and ideology (Oliver, 2007). The temperament of Americans after 9/11 shifted to focus on Islamophobia, and promoted policy that increased surveillance, control, and restriction. More than merely policing, surveillance became normalized, whether in the streets, online, or through government crafted watch lists. Governmental control leveraged through the “War on Terror” has created new streams of revenue through war-making, similar to the profitability of environmental disasters and rape culture, which are all discipline-based and rely on fear and terror to be successful. The connection among capitalistic endeavors related to catastrophe and epidemics ensure the wellbeing of the wealthy and the further oppression of regular folks. Shifting from capitalism and the nation-state, mechanisms of control are central to the institutionalization of rape culture and are as effective as ever.

A large portion of controlling the masses of people and society is based on sexuality, sexual preferences, and sexual activity. Sexuality encompasses so many parts of what the human experience is about. Sexuality is a large part of who we are as people and why we behave in many ways. Human desire for sex is a space that is both individual, personal, and private while at the same time, publicly displayed in ways that are not conducive to
expressing sexual agency. The contradictions that exist in the United States about sex and sexuality make it so that breasts are obscene when used to feed a child but accepted when advertising a product or featured in pornography. The biological functions of women’s bodies are only suitable when they are the vessels for future oppressed workers but are most valuable as sexual objects for consumption. Girls and women’s bodies and their interpretation are central issues within rape culture.

Chapter 4 takes up ideas of bodies, sexuality, control, and punishment through the structural aspects of rape culture. Using Foucault’s ideas on biopolitics and biopower in conjunction with Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* and the applications of social control, we see how rape culture is a method used to discipline women and girls. The ways that punishment is administered based on sexuality and sexual expression in the context of rape culture shows how the nation-state leverages unwritten rules and expectations unevenly based on gender. These ideas are explored in the sections of biopolitics, governmentality, and biopower. The methods for control are accounted for in making of a taboo, which explains how sexuality is a bodily function that has been politicized to become a mechanism of control. One of the traditional ways of doing this is through learning sexuality, the worship of virginity, and the way that purity and chastity are social constructions used to police the behavior of female-identified people.

Deeper into the chapter, a conversation about disciplining women who express sexual desire is concurrent with the approaches used to prohibit such behaviors. One key way is through the threat of rape and sexual assault. There are many procedures that girls and women are expected to use to prevent rape and sexual assault, however most of them
are ineffective. What these rape prevention guidelines do is restrict the behaviors and movements of girls and women and instill an ever-present feeling of fear. These directives do accomplish a particular cultural attitude of slut shaming those who fail to live up to expectation of being an acceptable object for heterosexual men's desires while maintaining an appearance of piety. In the scenario where sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape occur, it is due to the victim's inability to prevent an incident that is the issue and not perpetrator who inflicted violence.

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to uncover methods of control waged over girls and women to illustrate how becoming a victim of rape and/or sexual assault are expected outcomes of their lives. The root of sexual social control comes from the permissive societal and governmental attitudes surrounding pedophilia and our inability to appropriately catch and prosecute child rapists and sexual abusers. Although many do not take childhood sexual abuse seriously, we must recognize that the most accurate predictor of whether someone will be raped or sexually assaulted is if they have been previously victimized at any age (Peterson, DeGue, Florence, Lokey, 2017). We have a legal system that openly permits sexual abuse of minors and allows blaming of sexual assault and rape victims as the standard by which justice might be afforded to them. We have a judicial system rife with sexual predators from the Supreme Court to local courts and within the legal profession.

Basically, every aspect of a woman's life is shaped by rape culture. It is time to acknowledge that rape culture exists, that it is an unacceptable way to live, and work to derive a serious, immediate response effort to end the epidemic of sexual violence. We are in a crisis where far too many people experience childhood sexual abuse and rape,
domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and sexual assault. We must come together in an intersectional movement to end rape culture. An approach that combines a number of methods intended to help heal survivors of rape and sexual assault and to break down the institution of rape culture. We need to shift societal attitudes about the worth of girls and women, to form a society that trusts women, and thinks they are valuable to society. We must create programming that educates men and boys not to rape and sexually assault others. We need to hold people in power responsible for creating legislation in every level of government to end sexual violence and for powerful people to bare accountability for their sex crimes. We need an economic system that prohibits profiting from sexual violence and one that bars profiteering from human trafficking. We need an impartial judicial system that automatically believes survivors and leverages harsh punishments for individuals who commit sex crimes against victims of all ages, including offering victims access to restorative justice. We have the ability to do these things, we must find the will to make a change.

**Rape Culture and Biopower**

Biopower and biopolitical functions are useful in understanding why government seeks to control its citizenry and for what purpose. While not always nefarious, government policy has impacted the lives of girls and women through management techniques, population control, and promoting oppressive value systems which support a culture of rape. All of these methods can be considered technologies of government, which are different mechanisms, tactics, and procedures used by government as methods of control, discipline, and influence to ensure society’s malleable availability for service to benefit the nation-state (Foucault, 2004).
In particular, using Foucault’s concept of biopower and biopolitics serves as a tool of analysis in interrogating rape culture, which exists in one’s life from birth until death—there is never any reprieve. The purpose is to explain the methods of discipline and control that government and nation-states leverage over its citizens in the context of rape culture. In the United States, government for and by the people has been coopted by corporations, who richly benefit from rape culture, and seek to define the artificial as person, yet fails to contribute a fair share. To better illustrate biopower and its uses, a historical context must be considered as part of understanding rape culture.

The concept of biopolitics is rooted in the transition from a system of mercantilism in the eighteenth century to a system of liberalism in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 2004). During this shift, the goals and aims of government and governance were reformed; Foucault elaborated, “to rationalize the problems posed to government practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race...” (2004, p. 317). These characteristics were previously outside the scope of governmental control, as its size was constricted; this changed as political, social, and economic needs shifted to accommodate new forms of governance. The idea that governments need to control and manipulate a population was an invention of the 19th century. Changes in the ways a state and its government served its people transitioned when a code of law and freedom for subjects became the centerpiece of civic life (Foucault, 2004).

The method for this change came in the form of liberalism, which for this purpose, will be considered as a way of doing things that are directed towards objectives and a system that self-regulates based on contentious reflection (Foucault, 2004). Furthermore,
“Liberalism is to be analyzed as a principle and method of the rationalization of the exercise of government, a rationalization which obeys—and this is what is specific about it—the internal rule of maximum economy” (Foucault, 2004, p. 318). The nation-state does not assume a liberal thought itself, instead society demands the function of liberalism as a counter to perceived over-governance and bureaucracy (Foucault, 2004). While that may seem counterproductive, it is a response to the multifarious relationship between society and the state (Foucault, 2004). Foucault explains, “So, in different but simultaneous forms, it will be possible to find liberalism both as a regulative scheme of governmental practice and as a sometimes radical oppositional theme” (2004, p. 320). Thus, the induction of technologies of government are based on the concepts that disproportionate governance and excessive influence from governance are issues that society are charged with questioning—to determine its legitimacy and efficacy (Foucault, 2004).

When attempting to understand government and its uses, the standardized, central purpose must be conceptualized as the maximization of desired outcomes while at the same time, continuously reducing costs (Foucault, 2004). The conception of government as an activity, not only as an institution, is one that regulates people’s behaviors and attitudes (Foucault, 2004). From this idea, liberalism is not only a level of analysis, but something which purports that government cannot be its own ends (Foucault, 2004). Foucault drew this analysis from two examples, “German liberalism of the years 1948-1962 and the American liberalism of the Chicago School. In both cases, liberalism arose in a very precise context as a critique of the irrationality peculiar to excessive government, and as a return to a technology of frugal government” (2004, p. 322). While a system of liberalism may seem to operate to rein in an exorbitant and wasteful government, what actually happens is
that idea of government must be extended, not constrained, to account for the cost reduction/benefit maximization which is used as a technology of government to control its populace.

As Americans struggle to hold on to a democratic government during the Trump administration, we must recognize how government uses the fear of rape and sexual assault to discipline and control women and girl-identified people. We must remember that this is an issue that precedes the founding of the United States and became an integral part of the U.S. and its culture. The effect is chilling for girls and women who are expected to adhere to social and cultural expectations that limit their movements and diminishes their ability to exercise agency is all aspects of their lives.

These forms of marginalization support rape culture and allow pedophilia to be unchecked. We start the disciplining of girls’ minds and bodies from birth, gendering bodies first with clothing and later in the amount of space girls are permitted to take up in society. Girls are required to be quiet, to play nice with others, to be interested in feminine toys and activities, to be demure, and to submit to the wishes of boys and men in society. Living in a hetero-capitalist patriarchy conditions girls and women to be secondary and to take a back seat to the needs and desires of male-identified people. This conditioning takes place through internalized misogyny, encouraged competitiveness for girls and among women, adherence to white supremacist beauty ideals, restricted access to gender segregated occupations, and regulatory control of reproductive capacities.

Girls and women are taught to hate themselves through internalized misogyny. Internalized misogyny continues the project of patriarchy because of the methods used to make women believe they deserve this disparaging treatment, that men and boys are
worth more than women and girls, that men are automatically smarter and better leaders, and most importantly, that men and boys are to be believed over girls and women. This contributes to slut shaming and victim blaming, which are critical components of rape culture. Girls and women are taught to expect to be raped and/or sexually assaulted at some point in their lives, if not multiple times. They are socialized to disbelieve the stories of women and girls who have been victims of these acts. Learning to cast doubt on girls and women’s claim of having been raped or sexually assaulted are part of growing up female-identified.

Rape and sexual assault are one of the only crimes where victims are rarely believed and are frequently interrogated about what they did to encourage the crime to be committed. An almost equal comparison would be the unjustified shootings of Black and African American boys and men by law enforcement, whereby the detectives and media rationalize the murdering of innocent people due to their character prior to the shooting and the context of the event. The one difference is that victims of sexual assault and rape continue to live after sexual violence is inflicted upon them, and some victims might believe that death would be better. At least when one is dead, one gets to die, there is no trauma for the victim, only for their loved ones. Whereas victims of sexual assault and rape have defining moments of before and after attacks of sexual violence, and for many, life is never the same. The combination of these factors has led to victim blaming and continues to be a substantial reason why rape culture is so difficult to break apart.

**The biopolitics of rape culture**

White supremacy is one of the foundational aspects of rape culture and is one form of biopower in the United States, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This method of control targets
marginalized communities for domination and control based on the “white is right” standard which has informed much of the ideas about humanity by Americans. The formation of white supremacy includes a racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed sociohistorical order, one that continues to be pervasive, yet invisible for the majority of American society. The privileging of white, heterosexual, financially elite, men, past and present are ways that both rape culture and white supremacy continue to dominate and control people within the American nation-state. Moreover, white supremacy assumes default heterosexuality, as heteronormativity, and strict conformation to gender binaries; both of which are homogeneous and include severe punishment for any perceived and or actual threats to social order. Prior to the creation and implementation of white supremacy, patriarchy shaped rigid formations of binary gender which included the appropriate roles and places based on gender and sex. Patriarchy as a system that automatically values men and boys over women and girls, seeks to base worth in society on the traits associated with masculinity and manhood, while devaluing feminine characteristics.

Although men and boys are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of sexual violence on other men, girls, and women, most men and boys escape punishment for their actions, especially those who identify as white. At the same time, this signifies the status of men and boys in society and supports male (identified) privilege to discipline and control girls and women for perceived societal impropriety. Ironically, masculinity’s literal and figurative embodiment centers on being pillars of protection. For a more complex understanding of punishment, discipline, and protection, it should be considered that these all work together on a continuum used to regulate and control social behaviors (Collins, 2005). Due to the way that white supremacist heteropatriarchy operates in the United States, patriarchy
automatically gives more status and power to white heterosexual, middle to upper-class men and boys. Often this power is used to discipline girls, women, and men perceived to fall beyond the restrictions of dominant masculinity. Ultimately, this power and control restrict and regulate the places, people, and ideas that girls and women are allowed to experience and express.

Rape culture works to discipline women and girls through the threat/action of sexual assault and rape and is evidenced through the connections of men and government. The founding of the United States never included women as a group deserving of rights in the new republic. It was understood that fathers, brothers, male relatives, and husbands would provide for them, by protecting their interests in local, state, and national issues. Thus, the writing of the Constitution and the creation of a new nation proved to be in the service of white, land owning men. All other people were not worthy of rights granted by the Constitution and as a result, provided little legal or social outlets for their needs and concerns. It is precisely these events that codified rape culture in the U.S., as women and girls were a particularly vulnerable population. Enslaved peoples and women were considered property and white men only looked after their property in the context of their financial interests. This is an example of how biocapitalism is entrenched in the foundation of the U.S. (Guerrero, 2019).

Legal and social rights bestowed upon elite heterosexual white men reinforced notions of heteropatriarchal white supremacy and a paternal nation-state for their property, i.e. people of color, women, and children. Under the heteropatriarchal white supremacist nation-state, it was thought that white women needed protection from racialized groups, from sexual impropriety, and to be led into their natural role as mother
and caretaker. This patriarchal shepherding promoted the disciplining of women and children, and often included harsh punishment through sexual, physical, and psychological violence. The acceptance of a paternal nation-state and heteropatriarchy is precisely why violence, especially gender-based violence, is permissible today. Without these two core values, Americans would suffer less domestic violence, interpersonal violence, and fewer people would be murdered in the context of personal relationships. However, violence is not limited to the domestic and personal, these forms of brutality are intrinsic in governing.

While some may consider the government only to be an administering body of rules and regulations used to manage its populace, in the context of rape culture, the dual role as regulator and administrator of gender-based violence and forms of sexual abuse is inconspicuous. Provoking violence while continually calling for an end to violence is one of the most effective methods that government uses to enforce law and order in society. The ability to control citizenry (for our purposes citizenry is anyone residing in current American borders or those with citizenship status living abroad) is instrumental in inciting violence and prevention of it. This idea is illustrated when looking at the prosecution and punishment rates for those committing the crime of sexual assault and rape declines from 5% in 2011 to 3% in 2015, while rates of victimization increase, despite our best prevention efforts (FORCE: Upsetting Rape Culture, 2015).

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2016), “There were an estimated 90,185 rapes... in 2015. This estimate was 6.3 percent higher than the 2014 estimate, 7.1 percent higher than the 2011 estimate, but 4.5 percent lower than the 2006 estimate” these numbers should provoke significant questioning of governmental leadership at all levels. Prevention efforts increased in 2014 after a White House taskforce was created to protect
students from sexual assault, while the number of total assaults increased. The It’s On Us campaign rolled out to colleges and universities nationwide and were funded by government. Most rape and sexual assault prevention efforts are bank rolled by government, either directly through these initiatives or through non-profits, which often apply for federal block grants and solicit donations from their supporters. Ironically many of these supporters are victims/survivors of sexual assault, rape, and childhood sexual abuse themselves. This information provokes a more thorough understanding on the scope and depth of rape culture and looks at the governmental responses to gender-based violence, sexual violence perpetrated against women, and the lengths that are taken to prevent the epidemic of these forms of violence.

The biopolitical processes of rape culture are dependent upon race, gender, and class as methods of control, but also as populations to be controlled by government. These forms of biopower occur in tandem with white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism, all of which provide the larger institutional and structural aspects of rape culture. It is important to understand how these concepts and practices shape the ways that populations within the United States are managed and in many cases, dominated and oppressed to serve the goals of government. Furthermore, mapping rape culture includes understanding the connections among sexual violence, race, sexuality, reproduction, class, and biomedicalization as methods which make up forms of biopower. Examining historical and social contexts of race and class allow deeper perceptions of how rape culture is used as a technology of power.

In this pursuit, the biopolitical procedures of rape culture include the politics of the body, the self, and the population combined with the biology of the living, and utilized by
society and government to control populaces. Rape culture should be considered a form of state-sanctioned sexual violence, a technology of government, and a form of biopower that holds biopolitical significance. Michel Foucault (2004) produced the idea of biopower as a way to explain different methods that the government used to manage individual lives through the masses. The goal of biopower was/is to manipulate, control, and subjugate bodies and populations within the nation-state (Foucault, 2004). This same concept is named by Patricia Hill Collins (2005) in her book, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, as a form of social control. Rightly so, both scholars explain very similar ways that contemporary government, after World War I, transitioned from a body politic of the more bodies the better for the economy, to sustaining citizenry who needed a patriarchal figure to guide and maintain their lives. After the first world war, leaders and law makers supported and encouraged white supremacist ideologies of scientific racism, eugenics, and the need to control populations like women, people of color, those living with disabilities, and people who occupied lower socio-economic classes.

These people were groups that were commonly perceived as a social ill that needed to be managed for the sake of good old fashioned American values. The belief that people of color, the poor, those who did not possess able-bodies, and women who expressed their sexual agency, needed to be controlled relates to rape culture. These groups of people were, and are, the most likely to be raped and sexually assaulted in the U.S., even today. The concept of "rapable" and "unrapable" applies to the methods that the cult of white womanhood "protected" groups of women who conformed, but those who did not, were sexually exploited and dominated. The need of government to control different sections of the larger population have been explained through those groups’ "desire" and desire for
guidance and punishment from white, heterosexual, elite men. This variety of men was held up as examples of the pillars of American life.

Instead of combating sexual assault, rape, and rape culture, government appears to support victims/survivors, while it actually continues to dismiss their attacks and crimes, while at the same time, using the threat of rape as methods of control. When women and girls are policed through a social code of prohibitive behaviors associated with, “don't do (blank) or you'll get raped,” it represents the informal ways that women and girls’ lives are confined to specific spaces. This can be considered a technology of government, which are different mechanisms, tactics, and procedures used by government as methods of control, discipline, and influence to ensure society’s malleable availability for service to benefit the nation-state (Foucault, 2004). One of the forms is psychological and physical trauma used to provoke certain groups’ victimization as a way to regulate behavior and actions, while at the same time, allowing other groups to move freely through life without the same confinement and escaping behavioral control. For example, women and girls are often taught to prevent rape and sexual assault by not walking alone late at night, by guarding your drink at a party, by not drinking too much alcohol or using drugs, whereas men are almost never given any of this advice for rape prevention, rather men are told not to walk alone at night to prevent being robbed and assaulted.

State-sanctioned violence, as explained by Collins (2005), is the way in which the U.S. government, as a nation-state, has and continues to inflict violence on specific groups of people for the purpose of regulating their activities through the threat and/or actions of violence. Collins writes, “In American society, sexual violence has served as an important mechanism for controlling African Americans, women, poor people, and gays and lesbians,
among others” (2005, p. 216). These claims are echoed by Smith (2005), “It is clear that the state has a prominent role in perpetrating violence against Native women in particular and women of color in general” (p. 5). Within these two works, it becomes apparent that state-sanctioned violence and technologies of government are centered upon raced, classed, and gendered characteristics that work in relation to one another and in a hierarchical manner to achieve the desired goals of biopower.

Although the conceptualization of biopower by Foucault is typically used to define the period of the 19th century and beyond, the essence of the idea can be used to dissect colonialism and extract meaning from the systems of chattel slavery established in the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries. Further, in understanding the methods behind biopower, a movement towards biopolitics, as a new technology of power, must be considered when complicating ideas of race and class within a larger conversation about rape culture. In this case, constructing biopolitics means identifying forms of power exerted by connecting the biology of the living, with the politics of the body, the self, and population, in addition to the methods that society and its government use to control all of these milieus, especially in the context of race and class. As social phenomena, race and class affect every person residing in or within the reach of the United States. The application of this hierarchical system depends on one’s social location within it, but its methods are applied in all aspects—individually, systemically, institutionally, and are then used in practice to dominate the masses. Simultaneously this control apparatus reduces any concerns or struggles regarding race and/or class as merely interpersonal conflict. This masks that race and class are interconnected and that one would not be an effective tool of control without the other.
Similarly, class in the Americas has been denoted by property ownership, paternity, lineage, and one’s relation to wealth in the nation-state. The importance of paternity and lineage especially applied to indentured servants who became white and would later be formed into the white working class, employed during industrialization, and those living in poverty, as sharecroppers. While women of color are centered in this race and class analysis of the biopolitical methods and practices conferred in mapping rape culture, the understanding of whiteness and its gendered and classed mechanisms of control must also be considered. Race and class apply to the formation of the cult of white womanhood, which is a raced, classed, and sexualized status, and was/is personified in opposition to women of color, most often African-American women (Roberts, 1998, Collins, 2005). Within the white supremacist model, white femininity, virginity, and motherhood represent a gendered, classed, and racialized pillar against which all others were judged. While white womanhood is prized, it is also “protected” by white supremacist forms of masculinity, which protects on the one side and confines on the other (Roberts, 1998). The domination of all women through racist and classist means are instrumental in the biopolitical functioning of the patriarchal nation-state and its relationship of control within the construct of rape culture.

**Making of a Taboo**

Sex and sexuality in American society are a complicated series of medical and social events. Most children began discovering the pleasure aspect associated with masturbation in infancy and beyond (Mallants and Casteels, 2008). Cognizant of their bodies, most 2 and 3-year-old children discover their genitalia and its differences compared to other children, which sparks many conversations about sexuality with caregivers (Mallants and Casteels,
Between this age and puberty, children are exposed to many forms of education, or in many cases—miseducation, related to the body, sex, and sexuality (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 2019). Comprehensive sex education for all forms of sexuality is almost absent in contemporary American society and consequently, contributes to a culture of rape. The most common form of sex education comes from programming about puberty and how to deal with changing biological functions of the body, which often are justified by socially constructed gender roles and stereotypes (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, 2019).

This programming is so gendered, that children in grades 3 through 6 are often sex-segregated when information about the body and puberty is taught. Arguably, this method of teaching about puberty violates Title IX, because access to educational opportunities must be open to all genders. This is important because all children need to understand the biological functions of gendered bodies. For example, information about menstruation is critical knowledge for boys, especially those that will become engaged in heterosexual sex, because it explains how conception functions, how to avoid conception, and different methods of birth control. Furthermore, when boys and men are educated about menstruation, the functions of biological womanhood, and the purpose of it, it dispels conventional attitudes that periods are disgusting and unnatural. When feminine traits and experiences are normalized under a system of patriarchy, women and girls become human and their bodily functions are demystified. This idea extends to sex and sexuality because of the cultural messages that shroud the realities of sex and sexuality and contributes to rape culture.
In a most basic sense, sexuality is no different than the bodily functions of hunger and thirst. The need and desire to eat or drink and the pleasure that often derives from these activities, whether alone or with others, is similar to the craving for sex and sex acts. Although the spectrum of sexuality varies and is in-flux, much of the conversation about sex and sexuality in this chapter will refer to heterosexual sex and sexuality. There is ample opportunity to consider the concepts presented in this dissertation as related to a wider spectrum of application and could focus specifically on asexual people, trans people, people who identify as pansexual, and other members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community in other writings. For the most part, heterosexual sexuality shapes the conversations about rape culture and dominates the constructions of biopower and control as related to sex and sexuality.

Federal, state, and local governments, which will be primarily identified as government, have a vested interest in individual and group sexuality. Generally, this includes the wide-ranging clusters of birth and death rates, marriage and divorce statistics, economic forecasts, and methods of disciplining sexual bodies. As related to sexual education, government shapes the curriculum of sex education, from the department of education to the national institutes of health, although it might not fund all the costs, it contributes to a sizeable portion of the budget. The history of abstinence only education and funding can be traced to the culture wars of the 1980’s as waged by conservative, evangelical, and Republican leadership in that era and continues today. According to the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (2018),

The Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA)... created in 1981, followed by the Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program, created in 1996 as part of welfare reform
legislation, and finally the Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE), the most restrictive of the three, was created in 2000 and are legislative agendas crafted by these groups. These state sponsored programs often purport that abstinence education is better than actual education related to sex and sexuality.

Abstinence-only sex education requires that students ignore their bodies and quell their curiosity about sexuality and sex. Based on this information, how does ignorance and diminished inquisitiveness allow for a full exploration of the sexual self? The short answer, is that it does not allow for self-exploration related to sexuality and sex, it prohibits dispelling the taboos related to sex and sexuality, and most importantly, reinforces rape culture. Advocates for Youth, an organization devoted to creating sexual health equity for all youth, states,

Abstinence-only programs are geared to prevent teens – and sometimes all unmarried people from engaging in any sexual activity. Indeed, the federal government has gone so far as to specify that these programs must have, as their “exclusive purpose,” the promotion of abstinence outside of marriage and that they must not, in any way, advocate contraceptive use or discuss contraceptive methods, other than to emphasize their failure rates. Since 1998, over $1.5 billion in state and federal funds has been allocated for these abstinence-only and abstinence-only-until-marriage (hereafter collectively referred to as abstinence-only) education programs.

When government wills its people to be ignorant and miseducated, it is no surprise that sex and sexuality are commonly seen as mysterious, taboo, and fabled. Combined with a lack of federal budget dollars for inclusive sex education programs, the invisible hand of government utilizes biopolitical methods for controlling the body, most often the sexual self.

**Learning Sexuality and control**
This is the same culture that normatively breaks sexuality into two categories, homo and hetero, that forces babies to fit into a biological binary of female and male, and puts forth two sets of social rules about sexual activity. Sexual guidelines that are given to people who identify as boys and men is to have as much heterosexual sex as possible, with as many as women as possible, as often as possible. Whereas women are told to remain virginal as long as possible, that their worth is determined by their ability to control their sexual desires. Girls and women are told to restrict their sex lives, to have as few partners as possible. Girls are primed for this through movies, magazines, play, books, and general cultural expectations that they should desire the attention of men. The attention gained from boys and men should be considered the equivalent of worth, ability, and potential. Girls are coached on attracting a mate, getting him to fall in love with her, and then to bear his children.

Culturally, boys are not taught to fall in love before engaging in sexual activity, whereas for girls love is a prerequisite before sex. This sets up the situations for heterosexual sex, where the rules are different for both parties. The inability to communicate sexual needs and desires is part of the reason why rape culture exists. We rarely explain how communication and consent are the keys to a healthy sex life. American culture celebrates coupled love and considers it as the primary source of love and fulfillment in life. Sex and love are different, while each can occur together, just like economy and government, neither are the same.

The economy and government have a lot of say over the sexual lives of individuals and more importantly, over society. These societal sexual constrictions and unwritten rules permit the lives of boys and men to be minimally constricted, girls’ and women’s lives are
maximally restricted. The distinction should be characterized by gender and which group has unfettered movement, attitudes, and sexual desire. Most men and boys have never been told to abstain from a behavior due to fear. That is a freedom that girls and women are never offered, a feeling of safety never felt, simply because they are the one group most likely to experience sexual violence. Thus, it is through making sex and sexuality taboo subjects that government and society use sexuality as a biopolitical form of control and discipline.

The priming of girls by society and government to accept rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment, among other forms of gender-based violence, as a natural, normal part of life begins before her first birthday. It starts with the colors one wears as a gender is assigned, the room that she sleeps in, the shoes available to her, the stories she is read (often absent of a female-identified protagonist), the way she is taught to behave, the ways her other women relatives teach her appropriate femininity, and onward. One of the most basic, but important lessons learned concerns that of a romantic nature. Girls are given the message that they should desire a heterosexual, monogamous relationship based on coupled love at once.

These messages are intended innocuously but asking a girl toddler if she has a crush or if a kindergartener has found a boyfriend starts a dialogue. This discussion is about girls’ choices in life, specifically what they are doing to attract a heterosexual mate and how successful they have been. This opening allows anyone and everyone to ask a female-identified person about their sexuality and sexual expression. This is part of rape culture. The intrusion extends to social functions, every girl or woman can attest that they’ve all been asked “so, when are you getting a boyfriend/getting engaged/getting married” as if
that were an acceptable public conversation. The purpose is to shape girls and women to think the most important thing about themselves is what kind of boys and men they can attract and what social worth that gives them. In the book, *The Purity Myth: How America’s Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women*, Jessica Valenti (2009) writes, “A woman’s worth lies in her ability—or her refusal—to be sexual. And we’re teaching American girls that, one way or another, their bodies and their sexuality are what make them valuable,” and in rape culture, withholding sex is a woman’s only real power (10). It is not that women and girls are deserving of inherent worth, as granted to boys and men for being born, but is about the relation of her to a boy or man which gives her value.

This is not a new trend, this is a longitudinal concept that has ruled the lives of women and girls for the duration of patriarchy. When we value men and boys over women and girls, we set up a dual system that determines value and worth based eventual sexual servitude. This is especially related to women’s sexuality and their ability to move freely in society, as many find the natural, normal condition of women is pregnant. However, we must realize that the condition is actually rape culture and impregnated status is merely a symptom of a larger problem.

Historically the U.S. government and American society have regulated and condemned women for their sexuality, more so for lesbians, those living with disabilities, women of color, and the impoverished, in comparison to white heterosexuals. The heteronormative expectation of women as birthers is an idea permeated beyond the biological capacity of the body, but is due to the cult of white womanhood, otherwise known as the culture of domesticity and the cult of womanhood. As previously stated, a woman’s place traditionally, according to Barbara Welter (1966), in “The Cult of True
Womanhood: 1820-1860 and Frances B. Cogan (1989), All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America was in the home. The duties for true/real womanhood included piety, purity, submission, and domesticity (Welter, 1966, Cogan, 1989).

Generally, for white, heterosexual women who were of modest wealth during the early 19th century, there were certain expectations within society, primarily being consumed with the domestic, what we now call the domestic sphere (Welter, 1966). A woman’s proper place was within the home, as a devoted wife and doting mother (Welter, 1966). It was a woman’s job to keep their domestic life pristine and comfortable for her husband—to attend to his every need and submit to his every desire (Welter, 1966). If she had any spare time beyond cooking meals, cleaning her home, washing laundry and dishes, and tending to her children, she could indulge in Bible study.

Religion was critical to the keeping of the domestic sphere, because religious texts often explained the role of woman as submissive and her place as the caretaker of others. The piety that came from religious teachings removed women's desires and ambition and focused her attention on her father and later her husband. Women could not be trusted to control their own lives, much less their sexuality or intellectual curiosity. That is why the rightful place of girls and women were in submission to men. True women were obedient and believed that men were leaders due to divine intervention and were “regarded as women’s superiors 'by God's appointment’” (Welter, 1966). It is rather obvious how idealized religion, virginity, and domesticity are key factors to creating and continuing a culture that allows rape and sexual assault to be unchecked.
In today's standards girls and women who embody the characteristics of true womanhood are the ones that are worthy of protecting from sexual assault and rape. However, the ideal is as much of a false sense of security as those who had no access to true womanhood, such as women of color, those women living with disabilities, trans women, poor women, unattractive women, and migrant women. Currently, by including a racialized and classed understanding of the cult of domesticity, it becomes evident about who is worthy of saving and protecting from a culture of rape. Specifically, race, class, and disability are markers of the unsavable and the inherently rapable.

The gendered expectations associated with sex, sex acts, and sexuality, in addition to ability, class, and race, are scripted by the biopolitical. Consequently, these biopolitical forms of control work to enforce unwritten rules the govern individual sexuality and disciplines those who are non-conforming. As children, some of these rules include naming and identification of body parts, acceptable conduct for touching, and appropriate containment of actions that could be considered sexual. Some caregivers, who themselves have been raised in a patriarchal system that shames sexual knowledge, have difficulty engaging conversations about childhood sexuality and bodily changes with their charges. For instance, some adults give genitals like vaginas, penises, anuses, and other reproductive organs, like uteruses, names that are not scientific or medical. Instead of teaching children about their genitalia, caregivers refer to these areas “privates,” “private parts,” “pee hole,” “no-no,” “trinket,” etc.

It is interesting that few other body parts are referred to other than by their medical names; as a society we almost never call an arm by any other name. Inaccurate naming of genitals can confuse children who are starting to learn about bodies and sexuality, making
the lack of naming or its inaccuracies, a space for sexual exploitation (Mallants and Casteels, 2008). When we do not understand why something is or is not, it is difficult to have power over our bodies and to exert knowledge to combat that which wills away our sexual agency. Moreover, the overt renaming of genitals, due to Americans’ delicate sensitivities associated with sexuality, is to spare embarrassment about our bodies and to avoid encouraging sexual activity, according to conservative and religious teachings. What this actually does is create a space for predatory behaviors by adults, who leverage their knowledge and power over children, to groom them, to sexually abuse them, and to exploit them for profit.

Another hallmark of a rape culture is rampant numbers of people who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. Children under age 18 and those living with disabilities are the most prevalent groups to experience rape, sexual assault, and other non-contact forms of sexual abuse. It is estimated on average, “from 2009-2013, Child Protective Services agencies substantiated, or found strong evidence to indicate that, 63,000 children a year were victims of sexual abuse” but that does not measure unreported claims (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2018). A common measure for organizations that fight childhood sexual abuse, is that for every 1 report, there are 2 that are unreported, so that 63,000 turns into 189,000 children who were sexually abused in a year (Children’s Bureau, 2019). Currently, there is no federal report that measures the amount of childhood sexual abuse in the United States, nor is there any federal agency charged with collecting this data, there is currently a clearing house. The issue of childhood sexual abuse is considered to be a states’ rights issue. Most statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s report on crime are reported as those 12 and older for rape,
sexual assault, and attempted rapes and sexual assaults, for those under 12 and are sexually assaulted and/or raped, there is no calculation on how often it occurs. The lack of reporting is indicative of living in a rape culture and speaks to the grooming that all children, sexually abused or not, receive by living in a culture of rape.

Rape culture is also constructed on touch, what is appropriate touching, by whom, and for what purpose. Children are taught that touching is mandatory, through unsolicited hugs and kisses from various people, including relatives. For example, when a child does not want to hug a family member, it might be best to allow them bodily autonomy. In this way, the child learns to listen to their intuition and be in control of their own bodies. Arriving and leaving somewhere frequently includes touching for children and often children are given little to no opportunity to consent to these forms of touching. Some children are even punished for refusing touch.

From a young age, human beings in American culture are taught they cannot make decisions about their own bodies and that they have little power to say no when it concerns their bodies. This effectively teaches children that all touching should be welcomed and wanted. It primes them for adults touching others without their permission, which starts in infancy and continues into adulthood. Women and girls suffer the most under this unwritten policy, because as their bodies grow, unwanted touch continues. In many families, this may mean that male-identified family members have unfettered access to girls’ bodies, to touch and say what they like about them. This behavior is recognized from an early age and leads many women to not question sexually based comments about their bodies. It can often take the form of internalized misogyny that reflects an attitude that girls and women should be grateful for attention regardless of intent.
For many girls and women this becomes a daily occurrence, as they are affected in the hallways of school, the conference room, and the bedroom. This is a form of discipline leveled upon women and girls; for when they say no or don’t touch me, there are specific gendered responses, most often from men and boys. When girls and women do not consent to touch, then speak up for themselves, violence is most often what they are met with. Another method of discipline based on containment, involves the movement and actions of girls and how their bodies exist in American society.

Girls are taught from a young age that they are supposed to be “lady-like” and behave in a feminine manner. We are taught from our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and cousins about the way that we are to sit—legs closed, among other appropriate behaviors of our gender. Girls are told it is their responsibility to cover up their bodies, for example, when wearing a dress. Girls are told they cannot let anyone see their underwear, or their vaginas for that matter, while they are wearing dresses because it might give the wrong impression. What impression is that? Why do we tell little girls to constrict their movements instead of telling adults that it is impermissible to look between the legs of these girls or under their dresses? One reason could be due to the appropriate containment of actions that could be interpreted as sexual, such as a young girl in a dress sitting with her legs spread. We are much more comfortable telling girls not to do something rather than calling out people on their pedophilic thoughts and actions.

Whereas telling boys and men not to look is too great of a burden and instead, culturally, Americans tell women and girls it is their responsibility to protect themselves from the looker. This is the same action when dealing with sexual assault and rape, that women and girls are to prevent it from happening, yet we rarely have conversations with
men and boys that explicitly tell them not to sexually violate another person. However, the disciplining of women and girls requires that their mere existence be regulated, and that no matter how slight of an act, such as one’s legs being open while wearing a dress, must be punished, so patriarchal order is maintained.

**Rapability/Slut Shaming/Victim Blaming**

Rapability is often tied to identity--wealthy, able-bodied, white, heterosexual, cis-women again reap the privilege of being just ‘women’ and most often are the “believable victim” in a rape or sexual assault event. Whereas all other women are perceived as unrapeable, unable to “earn” victimhood in the same situation. Chapter 2 discussed the specifics of rapable and unrapable which stem from colonial violence and is a remnant of Empire. Rapability centers on being a believable victim. Who is a believable victim and why does it matter? A believable victim is someone who fits a specific list of characteristics, before, during, and after a sexual assault and/or rape attack.

The most important aspect of a believable victim comes from her sexual history, most often about when she first had a sexual encounter, how many sex partners she has had or could ever have, and if she liked having sex. This is especially damaging since sex-based crimes are mostly about power and control and very little about the form of sexual violence inflicted upon the victim. Then, to be believable one must have abstained from drugs and alcohol during the event timeline, and must not have had any addiction issues, past or present. The person who was victimized must have done her best to scream loudly, audibly said no, struggled with the perpetrator, not engaged in any sexual activity prior to the act, not been alone, or having an evening out, otherwise she was asking for it. The
victim must have been wearing certain clothing to prove her modesty, and of course her mortality, nothing too short or revealing.

The victim must have an appropriate job to be considered rapable. Housewives, sex workers, and domestic workers do not count as believable victims. A believable victim must be attractive enough to be desired but not beautiful, because those women deserve what they get, nor fat or ugly, because those women should feel lucky enough to be raped. Even if she is a virgin, anyone that has a reputation is fair game to be raped or sexually assaulted, but not good enough to be believable. Valenti (2009) speaks to the continued cultural value placed on virginity writing,

> Whether it’s the determining fact in our “cleanliness” and “purity” or the marker of our character, virginity has an increasingly dangerous hold over young women. It affects not only our ability to see ourselves as ethical actors outside of our own bodies, but also how the world interacts with us through social mores, laws, and even violence (13).

The purity factor has a lot to do with whether someone is rapable, if that person is a believable victim. As with the characteristics outlined above, any victim that does not meet the requirements were either lying, deserved to be raped and/or sexually assaulted, or were unrapable to begin with (i.e. sex workers and people who have addiction issues). The need to be a ‘perfect victim’ is the reasoning for many district attorneys and U.S. attorneys, in cases of rape and sexual assault on native reservations, to refuse to bring charges against rapists and those who sexually assault.

The method of using slut shaming in the media and by the court system to vilify someone who alleges rape or sexual assault is horrifying. In Ireland in 2018 there was a criminal trial, whereby the accused’s lawyer presented the lacy thong underwear worn by the woman that was raped, as a sign that she consented to the act. According to The New
York Times writer Valeriya Safronova (2018), “During the closing argument, the defense lawyer asked the jury to consider the underwear worn by the 17-year-old woman at the time prosecutors said she was raped in a muddy alleyway by a 27-year-old man” and the accused was acquitted. No amount of slut shaming someone for their sexuality and willingness or desire to engage in sex is justification for any kind of sexual harassment, rape, or sexual assault. A victim never deserves their victimization. All of these factors are often used to condemn women for their sexual expressions and to point to various reasons to “explain” why so many women and girls are raped and sexually assaulted.

Finally, the use of slut shaming, no matter if one is perceived to be promiscuous based on rumor or interpretation of a style of dress, is unacceptable. Girls and women should be encouraged to live an empowered sexual life and to express themselves in whatever way they see fit. Men and boys directly benefit from slut shaming, using it to discipline girls who overstep their boundaries by calling them a slut or whore, in an attempt to discredit their character. Due to the overwhelming amount of slut shaming within rape culture, the perpetrators of sexual violence elude discipline and forego punishment by blaming the victim. Again, Valenti (2009) explains,

When it comes to women who are perceived as “impure,” there’s a narrative of punishment that underscores U.S. policy and public discourse—be it legislation that limits reproductive rights through the assumption that women should be chaste before marriage, or a media that demonizes victims of sexual violence (14).

Contemporary rape culture echoes the same actions and behaviors of colonialists who worked on the project of empire building which founded the United States. These are important ideas to take up when thinking about the deployment and support of rape culture currently and the ways that government works to suppress victims/survivors of
rape. One way to do this is by making Federal definitions of sexual assault and rape as guidelines for state enforcement of Federal laws such as the 2005 Violence Against Women Act.

States have the ability to enforce this federal law to whatever degree current state government sees fit. Thus, states that have legislators who make comments about rape and sexual assault, such as “legitimate rape” so called by former U.S. House Representative, Todd Akin in 2012, or in 2011, when Wisconsin State Representative Roger Rivard, said, “some girls are just easy to rape,” these public comments make it simple to identify forms of rape culture that exist within the ranks of elected officials (Foster, 2016). Another example in 2012 was when Kansas State Representative Pete De Graaf, stated, “that women should plan ahead to be raped” (Foster, 2016). More than two decades prior, Clayton Williams, a candidate for the Texas governorship, said “Rape is kinda like the weather. If it’s inevitable, just relax and enjoy it,” both of these comments are explicit proof that rape culture exists (Foster, 2016). Many Americans reject that rape culture exists, but these comments from public servants show that these are not simply collected comments, but represent a larger issue that stems from lack of acknowledgement.

The lack of visibility that surrounds rape culture is a collective denial, which includes celebrating widely known rapists such as Roman Polanski, R. Kelly, Donald Trump, etc., the lack of belief of rape victims, such as cases at Vanderbilt University and Florida State University, the upsurge of rape scenes in film and television, and the increasingly popular genre of rape pornography, and along with comments from elected officials, among thousands of other examples. Moreover, many state and federally elected officials believe that cases of rape and incest are not reasons to receive abortion care or that women who
are in heterosexual marriages cannot be raped (Foster, 2016). These examples are indicative of how government creates and enforces laws that affect rape culture, yet continuously condone sexual violence. Rape and sexual assault are bi-partisan issues, both are social problems that have gone under-addressed for far too long, and issues that elected government representatives should work on behalf of victims/survivors.

Although this dissertation frames women’s sexuality within the United States, what is being described, especially the restriction in movement and in ability to freely chose one’s sexual being, has been inflicted upon women and girls from all generations and is likely to continue considering the hostile political and social climates today. Women and girls have rarely ever been in control of their bodies and the meaning associated with them due to imperialist and colonial rule. Victorian ideals about sexuality that still plague the global hinder the opportunities for sexual freedom and its expression. The inability to choose when and if to bear children has been a constant source of oppression for women. The changing landscape for reproductive rights is constantly under threat as women and girls are unable to make their own choices regarding their bodies.

Models of Prevention

This is evident if legal constructs of assisting victims/survivors and the intention to deter rape and sexual assault are examined. For example, until 1979 it was not a crime to rape or sexually assault a spouse (Congressional Research Service, 2018, The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2019). Public opinion and governmental rule believed that married people, most often women, were unrapable due to their status as wives. Many believe that women had a duty to have sexual encounters with their mates as part of an informal agreement in marriage. Governmental officials were often noted to say things
about rape within marriage as a private matter that government should not regulate.

Although, interestingly enough other laws regarding sex, such as sodomy laws, anti-miscegenation laws, and the Mann Act all formally regulated sexual activities. This speaks to the heteropatriarchal and white supremacist ideologies of crime, punishment, and sexual expression in the U.S.

Currently, the only federal laws, beyond the Violence Against Women Act, that address sexual assault and rape on a national level are: the Debbie Smith Act, the Clery Act, Campus SaVE Action, SAFER Act, Title IX, and Victims of Crime Act. There is no federal law that prohibits incest or sexual crimes against children. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (2016), the specifics of the federal laws are:

The Debbie Smith Act intends to eliminate the backlog of untested and unanalyzed DNA evidence by providing the resources to process evidence and add these samples to the national DNA database. The Clery Act requires greater transparency and timely warnings from colleges and universities about crimes that are committed on campus, including crimes of sexual violence. Campus SaVE amends the Clery Act to increase transparency requirements for colleges, guarantee rights for survivors, establish disciplinary proceedings, and require education programs. The SAFER Act supports efforts to audit, test, and reduce the backlog of DNA evidence in sexual assault cases and bring perpetrators to justice. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex by educational institutions that receive federal funding. Victims of Crime Act helps victims deal with the tangible costs of surviving a crime, such as medical bills, counseling services, and lost wages.

While these federal laws are helpful to those seeking justice, these pieces of legislation fall short in understanding the context of why rape and sexual assault occur, and do not provide methods of action beyond legal help. Moreover, most laws that support victims/survivors seeking justice do so through state laws. As previously noted, some states that are more conservative have active rape-deniers in their government.
These laws are either victim-survivor centered to address rape and sexual assault after it occurs or methods of prevention for individuals. This prevention prioritizes “saving” or protecting college women from sexual assaults on campuses, but the vast reality for most women and girls who experience sexual assault and/or rape in their lifetimes, is that they do not get the opportunity to attended college or that their instances of sexual violence occur before, during, and/or after college. The idea of protecting a specific group of women, such as college women, is flawed. It sends a nation-wide message that the only group of truly rapable women at this moment in history is those who are college-aged, college attending, or college-bound.

**Concluding Punishment**

In terms of biopower and biopolitics, this takes up the cult of white womanhood and defines from what girls and women are in need of protection. Ironically, it is government, which is mostly made of white men, which attempts to protect with these national laws and increased awareness, yet at the same time punishes those who fall beyond the idyllic femininity and propriety of white womanhood. This code switching in government covers the fact that women of color attend college at a lower rate than white women, that women who come from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to attend, that women living with disabilities often do not have appropriate access to accommodations to attend the university system, nor that trans-women are denied the same access to college as cis women. When government fails to address all girls and women in enacted legislation, that is not prevention, it is not addressing an epidemic, it is not protection. It is using forms of domination, control, and punishment outlined in biopower and uses biopolitical methods for managing the population of women and girls in the United States.
In contemporary society, for example, we see this focus play out through parents giving their girl children advice on how to avoid forms of gender-based violence and prevention methods for rape and sexual assault. The issue is not safety or protection, but teaches girls how to be appropriate, in manners, civility, and proper femininity. The effect of this training promotes the idea that girls' and women's place is within the home and that home is a place of refuge and security. The reality of home life for girls and women is dramatically different, for the home is the unsafest place for them. Most forms of gender-based violence, including rape and sexual assault occur within a home (Harris and Freccero 2011). This fact is contrary to the popular belief that stranger rape, which is idealized as occurring in a darkened public space, is the most prevalent method and action for attempting and completing sexual assault.

Paradoxically, parents do not teach their boy children how to navigate the patriarchal structures that force them into unhealthy and ineffective forms of toxic masculinity. Parents are critical in the training of boys and men, but we must also call on our communities to initiate and facilitate these social and cultural value systems. We must frame community as a large interconnected group that includes our educational systems, religious institutions, governmental organizations, and health care systems, among others, to promote the benefits of living in a society free from gender-based violence and how to accomplish this goal. Moreover, we do not teach boys and men not to rape and sexually assault others. We do not provide guidance through community settings that explain gender-based violence and why we should not engage in such behavior. We do not teach these children about consent. How are children going to transcend gender roles, rebel against traditional family values, and navigate the complexities of gender-based violence
and traumas associated with these structures? We are raising predatory and preyed upon children, by other children and most prevalently, by adults.

To enable change in a culture of rape, not only must we alter the way we raise our children, we must take steps beyond the justice system. We must modify our views of law enforcement, crime, and punishment to center victim’s rights, while at the same time reforming a system that is inherently oppressive. The justice system is overcrowded with non-violent drug offenders and the poorest housed in cages without the ability to pay bail. That is why prison reform is part of rape culture. Overcoming rape culture is more than working towards zero sexual violence, it is changing or abolishing oppressive structures that condone rape and sexual assault. While many politicians believe a tough on crime approach works, that is policing geared towards people of color, that unjustly target them for discipline due to their skin color. When will being tough on crime focus on sexual violence?

Victims of sexual violence deserve their day in court, but to get there we must change guidance for prosecutors, district attorneys, judges, and so forth. A tough on crime stances should apply to violent crime only. Judges must sentence those who commit sexual violence to lengthy terms to show that societally, we no longer tolerate rape and sexual assault in our communities. We must change the way that we prosecute those accused of sexual violence towards native women, that shift resources to tribal governments. Tribal government knows what is best for their people and the ways native and indigenous groups desire justice for victims of sexual violence in their sovereign nations.

Most importantly, a cultural shift in the perception of gender and the role it plays in determining life outcomes is central to ending rape culture. To stop sexual violence, we
must treat girls and women with respect and believe them when they tell us a rape or sexual assault happened to them. We can believe victims while still upholding the “innocent until proven guilty” portion of the American legal system. We need to change attitudes about sexuality and let go of taboo notions associated with sex acts, sexual orientation, and sexual education. An end to rape culture is possible, we just must want it enough and have the masses advocating and being activists to demand a change.
Chapter 5: Concluding Thoughts on Institutional Rape Culture

In the most basic sense, the purpose of this dissertation was to map out some of the institutional structures and ideas that make rape culture possible. Second to that, was to show the socio-historical legacy of rape culture and the ways that it is foundational to the United States. And, how social control and biopower are critical to the cycle of rape culture instilled in people from birth until death, while illuminating an industry that profits significantly from the existence of rape, sexual assault, and pedophilia, within systemic rape culture. The dissertation project is intended as a space for readers to think about what rape culture is, why it exists, and for what purpose. In that scope, the concluding chapter addresses selected current events and issues that especially highlight the concepts within the previous pages.

Rape culture is a system and structure

There are institutional influences upon a person’s life and the lives of society as a whole, which are education, family and community, religion, law and government, and media. Rape culture should be considered an institution that has tremendous impact on the individual, community, and society. The last section of this work discusses how specific institutions are complicit in furthering rape culture today. The purpose of waiting until this point in the dissertation to talk about these issues is simply that multiple dissertation projects, books, papers, and talks could be devoted to discussing all the examples and cases that pertain to rape culture in America alone. The analysis of current events related to rape culture could be done without a foundational rape culture component and the methods of institutionalization. Within a global context, it could be the life’s work of hundreds or more.
For this section, law, military, and government, religion, and education will be the general areas ripe for discussion.

Many think that rape and sexual assault are isolated, individual issues that affect a small minority of Americans. Often people believe that childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault are not a problem and that most of the victims associated with these criminal acts should have prevented their attacks. The ‘one bad apple’ scenario does not and never will apply to rape and sexual assault. There is a purposeful campaign of misinformation about the systemic, institutional assemblage of rape culture. Like white supremacy that remains mostly invisible to those possessing the power from it, rape culture does the same thing. The illusion of rape and sexual assault as individual, personal issues absconds the epidemic of rape culture. News coverage from all over the country, frequently refers to adults raping children as sex, when we all know that sex is a consensual activity and the other a criminal act. The language used to describe people who come forward with their testimony of what happened is often reported in a biased method, used to defame the person’s character and intentions. This was evident as Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford was vilified in media accounts for her interview about being sexually assaulted by now Justice Kavanagh before and during the senate hearing of his nomination for the highest court. Americans always give men the benefit of a doubt when they are accused of rape or sexual assault, that one allegation should not ruin their lives, but women are never given the same treatment. Women are frequently portrayed as attention-seeking, looking for a payout (the gold-digger troupe), or as angry about regretted sexual relations.

Well, yes, women are probably angry about being raped and sexually assaulted at an estimated rate of 25% of their population. Men and boys are not the victims of sexual abuse
at the same rate, although they suffer as much as women, from the trauma inflicted upon them. As media seems to become more conscious of these biases against victims and their stories, we have seen the rise of online activism related to rape culture. Any movement that brings awareness to an issue that negatively affects society is important in our development as a society to become our best.

**Law and Government: Anita Hill and Christine Blasey-Ford**

The combined institutions of law and government are constants in the life of Americans, we have one of the largest legal systems among developed countries. Mostly the legal system is an extension of enslavement and colonial rule, and as Michelle Alexander (2010) writes, is “the New Jim Crow,” which has created an under-class in the United States. This under-class status has predominately been forced upon communities of color and those with undocumented citizenship. The legal system and its practitioners have essentially criminalized poverty and with the wealth gap that exists, has continued its enslavement to include the poorest and most vulnerable within society. Americans live in a society where law enforcement and the legal system have more to say about their freedom than they do.

That is, unless you are a rapist. People who rape and sexually assault others are the fewest of all perpetrators to be indicted, tried, and/or jailed (Bureau of Justice, 2019). Childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape combined are consistently under reported crimes. As a society, we fail to send a message that sexual abuse and sexual violence is unacceptable. We do not tell others not to rape, we tell some not to be raped. Rape and sexual assault are the only crimes where the victim is blamed for being victimized, except for those who are unjustly murdered. We loudly and unapologetically exclaim that women,
the largest group of potential victims, are the problem and that women should be the ones to make a stand about ending rape and sexual assault. Girls who are sexually abused, raped, and/or sexually assaulted are least likely to receive justice after being victimized.

Currently, there are two known sexual predators on the Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh, and of course in government, the acting president, Donald Trump. Ironically, all of these men, who possess extreme power over the lives of millions of women and have the ability to shape forward thinking policy to address the epidemic of rape and sexual assault, fail to acknowledge their own actions as sexual abusers.

The United States federal government has a significant influence on rape culture and the ability to end rape and sexual assault. The government of the U.S. has the opportunity to create legislation and policy directives that support ending rape and sexual assault. The American government has the ability to support survivors and to create a national movement that calls for an end to all forms of gender-based violences. What happens instead is that the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), first signed into legislation in 1994, is touted as the best “solution” to the epidemic of sexual violence, while it does help, it is not the answer to the crisis of rape culture. VAWA does good things, like pay the costs associated with victimization, including legal aid, housing, and rape kit testing (The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2019, Congressional Research Service, 2018). It also funds violence prevention programming on the state and local levels, as well as rape crisis centers and sexual assault and rape hotlines (The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2019, Congressional Research Service, 2018). There are various legal protections such as housing issues associated with domestic violence, the creation of a Federal rape shield law, and for victims living with disabilities (The Women’s Legal Defense
and Education Fund, 2019, Congressional Research Service, 2018). Additionally, there is specific programming for immigrant women, women of color, and Native and Indigenous women, all of which is funded by VAWA (The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2019). According to the Office on Violence Against Women,

Since 1994, OVW has awarded nearly $4 billion in VAWA grant funds to state, tribal, and local governments, non-profit organizations focused on ending violence against women and universities. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed into law on February 19, 2009, includes an additional $225 million for OVW to combat the legacy of laws and social norms that long served to justify violence against women.

Not even $4 billion dollars can end rape and sexual assault, which proves that funding does not solve epidemics alone. Part of the issue is American culture and society, the other part is government, both of which are institutions that perpetuate rape culture and fail to acknowledge its legitimacy.

This is most evident when looking to the examples of Anita Hill and her testimony in the Clarence Thomas hearings in 1991 and Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and her testimony in the Brett Kavanaugh hearings in 2018. Although 27 years apart, these hearings for Supreme Court Justice seats are similar, yet have considerable differences. Both victims were well-educated, adhered to the politics of respectability, gave creditable accounts of the sexual harassment and sexual assault each endured, and put forth their testimony as their civic duty (Bouchard and Taylor, 2018). These women faced harassment, stalking, death threats, and upheaval of their lives so that the American public would know the truth about men who victimized them (Kim and Wagner, 2018). Unfortunately, neither was listened to by conservative elected leaders, both were vilified in media reports through victim blaming, and each had to take a leave of absence in their careers for simply telling the truth. Whereby their abusers had career defining moments, both were confirmed for
lifetime appointments to the Supreme Court, as sexual predators and law breakers, to rule upon future cases that affect women and their rights (Hill, 2018). Both Kavanaugh and Thomas were narrowly appointed, with the first being confirmed 50 to 48, which 2 senators abstaining from the vote and the later, a vote of 52-48 (Kim and Wagner, 2018, Hill, 2018, Bouchard and Taylor, 2018).

The considerable differences between Hill and Blasey-Ford are the crimes that were inflicted upon them. The circumstances are different, the locations dissimilar, the events unalike, and outcomes separate. However, both sexual harassment and sexual assault inflict trauma, are forms of gender-based violence, and are experienced by thousands of women every year. In the court of public opinion, sexual harassment is often seen as annoyance, not a criminal act. A minor inconvenience for women and girls, to be sexually harassed is no big deal, no matter if in the office, online, or on the street. For sexual assault, the believability standard is based on what the victim did to prevent an attack, how she fought back, who she told, and what her motive was for reporting. If one is not perfect victim, then whatever happened is irrelevant.

The dismissiveness of the public, the government, elected officials, and society is shameful. It is similar to the ways the HIV/AIDS epidemic was ignored and the ways that we pretend that institutional racism is irrelevant. Just as the legal and political systems failed gay men and people of color, the same can be said for victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault. The common message to victims is: do not become a victim, change your behaviors as prevention, stay silent and do not report, and if you do, be prepared to sacrifice everything to be heard and do not expect justice. In fact, in the news there are many stories of judges giving perpetrators of sexual violence inflicted upon minors light
sentences and saying those children provoked crimes committed upon them. Nowhere is
this flippant attitude about survivors more evident than in the White House, Congress, and
Supreme Court.

The inability of society to understand the trauma inflicted as part of rape and sexual
assault shows the callousness afforded to women and girls, who are the primary victims.
Girls and women have been socialized to question other women and girl's experiences with
childhood sexual abuse, rapes, and sexual assaults. Men and boys are taught a host of
reasons why girls and women are just conniving and malicious when alleging sexual
violence against a boy or man. That those female-identified individuals are seeking
attention, are regretful of sexual encounters, should have been more careful, and are
deserving of the violence inflicted upon them for not adhering to the strict unwritten rules
of rape culture. The burden of proof for most crimes does not lie in the victim's
believability. That is why sexual violence is different than other crimes, because the victim
is put on trial to see if they are worthy of justice—what the victim did in their past, during
the event, or what they might do in the future determines conviction, not the behavior and
actions of the perpetrator.

Religion: The Southern Baptist Convention and Catholic Church

Organized religious institutions exist to encourage individuals be their best, to see
the good in others, and to help those in need. Religious teachings must not be confused
with dogma, an unyielding loyalty to religious leaders that do not exemplify the values
expressed by the institution. Those who are leaders of religious organizations are supposed
to be the guides of spirituality, to live a life devoted to their sect, and to profess the glory of
their god, gods, and goddesses. Too often this is not the case, with many clergy members accused of sex crimes, including pedophilia, sex trafficking, rape, and sexual assault.

There are specific conditions within organized religion that breeds predators and shelters those who commit sexual violence. It is difficult to grapple with the reality that those who are intended to be some of the most trusted people in American society would use their power to victimize those within their religious institutions. Furthermore, after victims come forward with their accounts of childhood sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault there are certain responses from the church, for example, denial, containment, secrecy, and silence. Those within religious leadership consistently fail victims of sexual abuse by refusing to acknowledge a system that favors sexual abusers over victims.

When looking at sexual violence as crimes of power, it is easy to see how sexually violent perpetrators would flourish within the institution of religion. A system where men possess the overwhelming majority of power within the institution, no matter what sect, and where women are frequently left out of directing the organization and barred from leadership positions. There is a “bro code” that operates through a group of men defending its members who are accused of a sexually violent crimes and what happens is those men close their ranks to deflect and protect predators (Kimmel, 2008). This can be seen in instances were men feel attacked by women for any reason—this can occur face to face but is especially prevalent in online communities.

Additionally, as a society, we give unfettered access to children and vulnerable people to priests, rabbis, preachers, pandits, ministers, pastors, khatibs, pontiffs, and gurus under the assumption that those anointed by god(s/desses) would be trustworthy. Broken trust stemming from a person who is supposed to shepherd those on their spiritual journey
is atrocious. In many accounts of those victimized within the Catholic church and through Southern Baptist churches often say they have lost their faith in God (BBC, 2019, Downen, Tedesco, Olsen, and Shapley, 2019, McElwee, 2019). Of the major consequences of sexual violence is broken trust and some victims never fully regain their ability to trust others (McElwee, 2019, Downen, Tedesco, Olsen, and Shapley, 2019, BBC, 2019, Gamble, 2019). Using power to gain trust and then sexually violating someone is central to understanding how rape and sexual assault are forms of biopower. The result of being raped or sexually assaulted at any age can be devastating to one’s life and its potential outcomes for victims.

Lack of investigation into who is prophesizing and dismissive oversight creates an environment that affords religious perpetrators of sexual violence an endless supply of victims. This is evident when looking at the Catholic church and the Southern Baptist Convention. In the Southern Baptist sect of Christianity, “In all, since 1998, roughly 380 Southern Baptist church leaders and volunteers have faced allegations of sexual misconduct” which is most likely a smaller sampling of the total number of sexual abusers in a convention of more than 47,000 churches nationwide (Downen, Tedesco, Olsen, and Shapley, 2019). Most heinous is that, “They left behind more than 700 victims, many of them shunned by their churches, left to themselves to rebuild their lives. Some were urged to forgive their abusers or to get abortions” which is antithetical to the morals, values, and beliefs espoused by the Southern Baptist Convention and its congregants (Downen, Tedesco, Olsen, and Shapley, 2019).

The news article, “Abuse of Faith” which was a joint effort between The Houston Chronical and San Antonio Express-News was reported by Robert Downen, Lise Olsen, John Tedesco, and Jon Shapley states,
Many of the victims were adolescents who were molested, sent explicit photos or texts, exposed to pornography, photographed nude, or repeatedly raped by youth pastors. Some victims as young as 3 were molested or raped inside pastors' studies and Sunday school classrooms. A few were adults — women and men who sought pastoral guidance and instead say they were seduced or sexually assaulted. We must ponder why children and young people are preyed upon by clergy, what is it specifically about youth?

Some say there is a sexual attraction by some people to children but recognizing that power is the cornerstone of rape and sexual assault, that explanation is nothing more than an excuse. Children are much easier to dominate and control, they know little about appropriate relationships and boundaries, but are very trusting. Young people lack the sophistication to understand the complex social and cultural meanings of sexuality and sexual expression. A predator does not rape or sexually abuse a child because they are a mere vessel but is an act of ultimate power and control over someone else.

There are lifelong consequences of childhood sexual abuse that the justice system fails to account for. The news media highlights the lack of punishment for sexual abusers of young people and the type of victim blaming reserved for minors is astounding, often using the pathetic justification that the young victim seduced their abuser. The Roman Catholic church exemplifies how mishandling sexual abuse enshrines the structure of rape culture and cloaks pedophiles and rapists within their ranks (Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002).

Roman Catholics have known about their church officials' roles in childhood sexual abuse prior to the 1950's when accounts began to surface, although around the 1980's victims became more vocal about their attacks (BBC 2019, (Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002)). The BBC (2019) reported,
In the US, determined reporting by the Boston Globe newspaper (as captured in the 2015 film Spotlight) exposed widespread abuse and how paedophile priests were moved around by Church leaders instead of being held accountable. It prompted people to come forward across the US and around the world.

The Boston Globe 2002 article, Scores of Priests Involved in Sex Abuse Cases, contributed to the information available about how widespread sexual abuse was and is in the church.

The Catholic leadership, “commissioned report in 2004 said more than 4,000 US Roman Catholic priests had faced sexual abuse allegations in the last 50 years, in cases involving more than 10,000 children - mostly boys” and some of those priests are still employed by the Vatican (BBC, 2019 and Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002). In 2019, more information about the coverup of sexual violence and what knowledge upper leadership of the Catholic Church, including the Popes who led the church during those decades, had about the events (Sakuma, 2019). Those ranking below those leaders worked to pressure victims into silence and to payout their claims of sexual misconduct instead of reporting to the police (BBC, 2019).

The national director of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, David Clohessy, said “the tendency by dioceses around the country to seek private settlements in cases against priests has left the Catholic public with little knowledge of the extent of the sexual abuse problem within the church” which is one reason the Catholic Church was so successful at hiding the abuse for so long, even as it permeated every level of the organization (Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002). Instead of reporting these rapists and sexual assailters to the authorities, the leadership of the church shifted around abuser appointments to positions with less access to children (Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002).
Through these actions, protecting the sexual predator came at the expense of victims, many of whom suffered in silence (BBC, 2019, Robinson, Carroll, Pfeiffer, Rezendes, and Kurkjian, 2002, Sakuma, 2019). The extent of the coverup included, according to Cardinal Reinhard Marx, "Files that could have documented the terrible deeds and named those responsible were destroyed, or not even created," and "The stipulated procedures and processes for the prosecution of offences were deliberately not complied with, but instead cancelled or overridden" (Sakuma, 2019). In February of 2019 further reports surfaced that nuns had been raped and sexually assaulted by priests and some of them kept as sex slaves (BBC, 2019, Gamble, 2019). The Tablet, the international Catholic news weekly reported about an article in the Vatican women’s magazine, Women’s Church World, which described, “The sexual abuse of nuns by priests and the resulting ‘scandal’ of religious sisters having abortions or giving birth to children not recognised by their fathers” (Gamble, 2019) Abortion is prohibited among members of the Catholic church and is considered one of the worst sins that can be committed. Obviously abortion critiques pale in comparison to endemic, systematic sexual abuse of children, the rape of nuns, and an organization wide coverup, all of which are surely sins.

Sexual violence and abuse should be a major agenda item for all forms of organized religion to discuss. There need to be significant strides towards automatically believing victim’s accounts and developing a process to handle such issues. The BBC (2019) reports on how significant childhood sexual abuse is, writing “The survivor said he thinks of his life in two parts: before and after his abuse. ‘I wish the perpetrators could understand that they create this split in the victim,’ he said, adding: ‘For the rest of their lives’.”
Overall, a new response from the Catholic church and Southern Baptist Convention is attempting to turn the tide of secrecy, silence, and abuse. In February 2019, Pope Francis spoke about structural rape culture that exists in the church, stressing, “child sexual abuse was a universal problem – ‘a widespread phenomenon in all cultures and societies’” and “admitted that the Church had an issue, and the roots lay in society ‘seeing women as second class’” (BBC, 2019). While the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, J.D. Greear tweeted, "It’s time for pervasive change" and “God demands it. Survivors deserve it. We must change how we prepare before abuse (prevention), respond during disclosure (full cooperation with legal authorities), and act after instances of abuse (holistic care)” (CNN, 2019). Hopefully these two men of God, who are the leaders of their sects will continue these comments aimed at taking radical action to correct the faults, failures, and sins perpetrated by their leadership on victims, parishioners, and religious culture. There should few empty promises of reform, as plenty have been handed to victims for over 70 years. The time to emulate the teachings of Christ and to be Christians is here; if they fail, faith in religious institutions will be costly. Religious institutions are akin to educational systems regarding access to children and young people.

**Education: Rape Prone Campuses**

The institution of education is shrouded within a relationship of trust among parents, children, and educators. While childhood sexual abuse in primary and secondary education is less prevalent, it does occur. Specifically, there have been numerous reports of student and teacher relationships that are predatory and include forms of sexual violence. One of the most dismissed is when a woman teacher sexually abuses a boy student. Many people believe that men and boys cannot be raped, much less by a woman. The fallacy is
that boys and men are never victims, especially when it comes to rape and sexual assault. This harms boys and men by ignoring their pain and feelings associated with these crimes, but also by not allowing them to speak their stories. At minimum, women are able to talk about their assaults and rapes after decades of organizing to demand a public space to share, grieve, and heal. However, few spaces exist for men and boys to do the same. When dismantling rape culture, we must be open to men’s emotionality and experiences of their rapes, sexual assaults, and childhood sexual abuse. In general, these spaces should be included in primary and secondary curriculum for students, to share and to be taught about rape culture. Education is one of the primary ways we can break apart rape culture.

However, within post-secondary education, there are numerous instances of rape and sexual assault that are covered up, condoned, and permissed. Most parents send their children to college in hopes of them expanding their opportunities in life and to learn a variety of subjects to help them better understand the world they are part of. They trust the school to take care of their children, to protect them to some extent as they come into adulthood, and to teach them forms of appropriate behavior. Most parents would be appalled by the lack of leadership concerning a culture of rape that exists on almost all campuses across America. The cultivation of a rape prone campus is not an accident.

A rape prone campus has specific attributes that make sexual violence possible and allows sexual predators refuge and a large pool of victims. Rape prone campuses have a culture that places a high emphasis on athletics, has a policy of alcohol prohibition, and a tradition of significant Greek (Fraternity and Sorority) involvement (Sanday, 1996, Ferguson, 2016). There is silence surrounding the amount and severity of sexual assault, domestic violence, and rape that occurs on campus (Know Your IX, 2016, Force: Upsetting
Rape Culture, 2014). These forms of violence on campus are often inflicted upon students by other students. This is combined with a lack of public awareness about sexual assault and rape that occur within the larger campus community (Ferguson, 2016, Sanday, 1996).

These campuses also have a tolerance for violence in these spaces, whether it be a “boys will be boys” mentality to criminal behavior, ignoring instances of hate crimes, or overlooking horrific numbers of women who describe experiences that are sexually violent (Sanday, 1996, Know Your IX, 2016). The overall idea is move along, there is nothing to see here. Furthermore, these are spaces where adherence to traditional gender roles and gendered expectations of sexuality are mandatory and attempts to go against these ideals are met with swift punishment. There is a lack of response from college administrators about these issues and when students decry the outrageous amount of sexual crimes in their communities, they are hushed by leadership.

Student victims of sexual assault and rape are encouraged not to report, as to not damage the appearance of safety on campus. The annual self-reported campus crime statistics required by the Clery Act, a law passed to combat sexual violence on campuses across America, is frequently inaccurate. University and college administrators, especially those tasked with upholding Title IX and enforcing student conduct, often discourage women from reporting (Ferguson, 2016, Know Your IX, 2016, Jarrett, 2014). On a rape prone campus, all levels of personnel charged with safety and security are implicit in making sure the crime numbers are not too high—they’d never want to lower enrollment due to a few rapes or sexual assaults. Student who are insistent upon reporting their sexual assaults and rapes to administrators are offered financial settlements ranging from waiving tuition costs, monetary payouts, and even assistance with enrolling and paying for classes.
at other institutions to ensure their silence (Jarrett, 2014, Ferguson, 2016, Know Your IX, 2016).

Layered together, a rape prone campus has the support of its donors and boosters to keep the reputation of the university or college at its best. Many of the alumni from the university and Greek system encourage a rape prone collegiate atmosphere and use their money to influence administrators (Know Your IX, 2016, Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Without donations to university foundations and alumni associations that fund school endowments, there would be significant financial ramifications, including university credit scores and interest payments on capital projects on campus, if those demands are unmet (Jesse, 2018).

A rape prone campus extends to auxiliary of the university, like those that sponsor youth programs in their athletics departments, such as at Michigan State University or Pennsylvania State University, among others.

Pennsylvania State University, a rape prone campus, had a sexual predator among its football coaching staff, with head coach, Joe Paterno, athletic director Tim Curley, Vice President Gary Schultz, and President Graham Spanier protecting child rapist and sexual assaulter, Jerry Sandusky (Chappell, 2012). Sandusky was the former defensive coordinator for Penn State, who maintained an office at the university until 2011, when he was charged with sexual abuse (Chappell, 2012). He was convicted of sexually abusing 10 boys between 1994 and 2009, although some say Sandusky victimized dozens more (Chappell, 2012). Sandusky, a sexual predator, founded a non-profit organization for young people who were considered at-risk and those from underprivileged backgrounds called The Second Mile in 1977. Through this direct involvement with the non-profit Sandusky hand picked boys as young at 7 years old to groom and later victimize (Zamudio-Suaréz, 2018).
Similarly, Larry Nasser, M.D. was convicted of seven counts of sexual assault. Nasser was a physician at Michigan State University, was faculty member at MSU, and a USA Gymnastics national team doctor (Adams, 2018). He was a serial child rapist, who has over 300 documented victims, his youngest age 6 (Zamudio-Suaréz, 2018). Nasser eventually pled guilty to sexual assault charges and admitted that, “he was in a position of authority over his victims, and that he used that position to coerce them to submit to ... All of the victims in the Michigan cases were under the age of 16 and three were younger than 13” (Adams, 2018). In the MSU case, just like PSU, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Catholic church, there was a code of secrecy surrounding predators. Leadership in all instances knew that sexual violence was occurring yet did nothing.

Evidence presented in Sandusky and Nasser’s trials both point to university officials that looked the other way, actively covered up sexual misconduct, or purposefully ignored claims to maintain the reputation of Pennsylvania State University and Michigan State University (Zamudio-Suaréz, 2018). During Sandusky’s trial,

A series of 2001 emails — now key to the government’s case — show that the men at least considered the situation serious enough to warrant contacting police. They ultimately rejected the idea, opting instead to bar Sandusky from bringing children on campus, to urge the former coach to submit to counseling and to inform his children’s charity, the Second Mile, of the allegations (Chappell, 2012).

Additionally, all men had knowledge of Sandusky’s predatory behaviors in 1998, yet none stepped up to say what was happening was wrong and that victims need protection and justice (Chappell, 2012). Similarly, in Nasser’s case, “A Detroit News investigation published last week found that at least 14 people at the university had heard abuse allegations against Dr. Nassar starting as early as the 1990s, and Ms. Simon was warned at least once about his behavior” (Chronical). Ms. Simon was the president of Michigan State
University until she was forced out after it was found out that she and many in her administration failed to notify police about the incidences of sexual abuse and went further to conceal the history of Nasser’s crimes (Zamudio-Suaréz, 2018).

Fernanda Zamudio-Suaréz (2018) for The Chronical of Higher Education writes, “The Nassar and Sandusky cases share obvious similarities: Both spanned years, involved both sexual abuse and athletics, and raised troubling questions about what keeps some colleges from investigating claims of criminal behavior by their employees” this statement is indicative of how a rape prone campus falls within rape culture. While this may seem isolated to two prolific cases involving sexual predators, the reality is there are dozens of campuses across the United States that face the same issues. When will leadership truly be held accountable for their roles in rape and sexual assault on campuses and perpetrated by its faculty and staff?

In the end, the intuition pays for the sexual abuse that occurs on colleges and universities. The cost to Penn State so far has been $237 million according to Mark Scolforo (2017) for the Associated Press and includes:

$12 million verdict awarded to Mike McQueary, the whistleblower in Sandusky’s case, who later levied a defamation claim against PSU, $93 million in payments made to 33 people who reported Sandusky sexually abused them, then a $48 million “fine” levied by the NCAA that is funding anti-child-abuse efforts in Pennsylvania, $27 million in lawyer fees to defend lawsuits, nearly $14 million that includes the legal defense of three former administrators facing criminal charges for their handling of Sandusky complaints and $5.3 million for crisis communications and other consultants.

The University claims that insurance will coverage a portion of the costs and the rest will come from interest revenue from university loans, presumably loaned to students of Penn State (Scolforo, 2017). Whereas Michigan State University is still trying to find the money for the $500 million dollars to the 332 people who settled lawsuits with the university for
Nasser’s sexual abuse (Jesse, 2018). Inside Higher Ed’s Jeremy Bauer-Wolf (2018) writes, “Since the scandal has unfolded, two financial ratings agencies have downgraded Michigan State to a negative outlook, though they maintain the institution has good credit” which points to how a rape prone campus survives the epidemic of rape and sexual assault on campus year after year. The economic costs of rape and sexual assault are highest for victims, who pay with a portion of their lives that are forever changed by the decision of one person to victimize them. Furthermore, these payouts speak to the untold numbers of students who have been given financial settlements as mentioned above and in chapter 3. There is an industry of rape culture and nothing is more evident than the payouts to victims, who deserve money, justice, and peace for the sexual violence experienced.

**Concluding Thoughts on Rape Culture**

Ending systemic rape culture should be a wide spread national conversation like gun violence, environmental issues, the deficit, or substance abuse, however it is not. Partly because rape culture is so much bigger than those other issues, in fact, rape culture is inclusive of those issues. Rape culture and gun violence are intricately linked due the reality that most women are murdered by someone they know, usually in a romantically-based relationship (Center for Disease Control, 2017). Physical violence, gun access, and rape culture are linked. Specifically, the Center for Disease Control (2018) states, “On average, 20 people per minute are victims of physical violence by an intimate partner in the United States. Over the course of a year, that equals more than 10 million women and men.” Most mass shooters have a history of gender-based violence and display misogynistic attitudes, both online and in-person towards women (Tolentino, 2018, Jennings, 2018, Reeve, 2018). When see these acts of violence in media depictions, the portrayals of the
shooters do not frame the issue based on gender-based violence, but strictly focus on how many people were murdered, what the shooter’s motives could have been, what kind of life the murderer lived, how people in his community perceived the killer, or otherwise provoking a humanized account of a person who inflicted serious violence on those who died, but also, those who lived.

It is almost as if the point was to explain every possible option besides a gendered, racialized explanation of why. Victims of sexual assault are never afforded that privilege, but mass murderers are, that is one of the despicable aspects of rape culture. Furthermore, environmental issues are part of the intuitional rape culture. As pointed out in Chapter 1, colonial conquest and the project of empire facilitated the entrenchment of rape culture within the United States. Imperialism is the beginning of environmental degradation and provoked the crisis of climate change we are currently faced with. The devaluation of the Earth and its resources go hand in hand with the way that girls and women are assessed in worth. Exploitation of the Earth is similar to the oppression of women, both have inherent value for simply existing, yet neither is a full agent of themselves. As climate change disrupts supply chains, as labor issues become conflicts, as mineral extraction scraps the last remaining material, and as pollution sickens people, we must realize that women and girls will pay the steepest price (Mies and Shiva, 1993). Especially girls and women who live in less developed parts of the world, those who live in the most impoverished conditions, who have the least access to contraceptives, who are rendered disabled by pollution, and who work closest to the Earth will suffer (Mies and Shiva, 1993). Of course, the critical aspect to all of these issues is that rape is often used as a method of war and many societies will respond violently as climate change pushes people to
desperation. Since rape and sexual assault are power-based issues, when people lose power, rapes increase (Bergoffen, 2013). This can be seen in genocidal conflicts around the world, including Darfur, Myanmar, Serbia, Rwanda, and Cambodia, among far too many others, and is further examined in the book, Contesting the Politics of Genocidal Rape: Affirming the Dignity of the Vulnerable Body by Debra Bergoffen. (2013). Overall, climate change is part of rape culture and without addressing structural rape culture in the environmental justice movement, there will be no real change.

The issue of drug use, abuse, and preventable deaths related to overdosing are a part of the systemic complexities of rape culture. There is a significant relationship between childhood sexual abuse and addiction issues, according to the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape,

Men and women reporting sexual abuse have higher rates of alcohol and drug use disorders than other men and women. In fact, 25%-75% of people who have survived abusive or violent trauma also report problems with alcohol use (National Center for PTSD, 2008). Women with substance use/abuse are more likely to have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives, with as many as 60% of women and 20% of men undergoing substance abuse treatment reporting having survived physical, sexual or emotional abuse as a child (National Center for PTSD). Furthermore, there is a high correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as sexual abuse, and a range of health, mental health, and social struggles in adulthood, including drug and alcohol abuse (Felitti, 2001)

As Americans struggle with addiction and work towards sobriety, a gender-based wellness component within one’s treatment plan must be included to explain the roles of gender and rape culture. Addiction is not simply about biology or choices, it is about life experiences and outcomes related to sexual violence, often rooted in childhood. The consequences of ignoring the role of rape culture in addiction contributes to overdose deaths, which took the lives of 70,237 people in 2017 (NIH, 2018). Clearly rape culture is a serious issue.

Abolition of Rape Culture
After researching rape culture for over 4 years, reading a large portion of the literature and countless news articles on the topic, then thinking about sexual violence daily during that time, I have come to the conclusion that we have a significant problem in America. Rape culture is a systemic issue. Rape culture is an institution. Rape culture is a system. Rape culture is oppressive. There are few societal issues that do not concern sexual violence. It was difficult to step back from accepted knowledge about rape and sexual assault to consider the conditions that enable and proliferate rape culture. The ideas that resulted from comprehending these diverse texts were not always expected, such as the chapter about the profitability of sexual violence.

Examining the capitalistic methods we use to combat sexual violence and critically analyzing organizational missions, budgets, and posted information from non-profits was grueling. In some ways, the analysis seemed like a betrayal to a cause I deeply support and advocated for. I felt guilty for critiquing organizations and programming I have worked with and that my students have initiated after taking my Gender Studies classes.

Understanding the past, whereby Native and Indigenous women were sexually abused by colonizers and reading that material made me rethink the purpose of humanity. Why would anyone inflict genocidal violence on another person or group? That is the place I would always come back to after a hard research session. The content on enslavement and the capitalistic purpose of kidnapping a group of people, then violently dominating them, and forcing them to labor under the threat of violence was atrocious. Reading the accounts of horrific sexual violence inflicted upon African women almost drove me to end my research. On those days, I would think about the vivacious ways that Native and Black women claimed their place in a white supremacist society, refusing to accept the status
I focused on the activism these women started as the originators of the movement to end sexual violence and how they continue the fight today.

I took inspiration from Anita Hill, who heroically faced a congressional committee of all white men to speak about her experience with sexual violence. I thought about Wilma Mankiller’s leadership and advocacy to ponder about all the potential that marginalized women and girls possess and how they need to be supported to be our visionaries today. I looked to Ida B. Wells, who took up the cause to end lynching and wrote about the duality of white womanhood and the cost to black men. Shirley Chisholm’s work to support social justice and equity helped me every day I felt like giving up. Of course, there were many more women from our past who helped me to make this work possible, I am inspired by and in awe of the women who came before us to enable this work.

Consequently, after a month of tough research, I had a break through where I thought that moving away from a victim-centered approach to ending rape culture would be best. I realized that there were lots of books and articles dedicated to supporting survivors and helping to tell their stories. We had been so focused working to comfort victims and help them heal from trauma that we had overlooked the ways that rape culture operated within larger structures. This dissertation project is the result of these thoughts. My committee and other readers of the project often wanted to know what solutions I had for the problem I wrote about. I do not have the answers to end sexual violence. However, in the following paragraphs, I include some suggestions that might help.

What would it take to abolish rape culture, as a system of oppression, an institutional force, and a sociocultural legacy? An astounding question, one that should have a readily available answer and a guide on how to complete the task. We do not have
either of those at this point in the fight against rape culture and sexual violence. We do
have hundreds of thousands of people who want to make an impact regarding sexual
violence, there are a multitude of organizations that work diligently to lessen the impacts of
sexual violence, there are bloggers and activists who change the dialogue and the methods
of resistance, and we have ourselves, the biggest asset to rape culture abolition. Agency will
set us free and dismantle the master’s house, in the meantime, here are a few opportunities
to help us along the way.

This dissertation was not intentionally written to provide a solution to rape culture,
but to corroborate what many others have written about. The need to legitimize rape
culture, even to sexual violence experts, is sorrowful. However, we must do whatever it
takes to abolish rape culture, our lives depend on it. There are many people who are doing
great work already, work that is often completed by volunteers without any pay. Anyone
that takes their time to advocate for an end to sexual violence in an official setting must be
paid a fair, livable wage.

Pay equity is central to ending a culture of rape, women who are financially
independent have the ability to leave sexually violent environments and do not have to
depend on abusers to meet their basic needs. We must pay women and girls what they are
worth, no negotiating, just pay people fairly and equitably and a portion of sexual violence
will end. Financial insecurity concerns power and power is central to the proliferation of
rape culture. If we must live in the oppressive, depressing system of capitalism for
economic subsistence, we must find solutions that benefit those at the margins, those who
are rendered invisible, those who lack proper documentation, those who work the lowest
prestige jobs, and those who lack a job. We must change our culture to stop equating a job
to success and as the purpose for living. Human beings have inherent worth for simply existing.

In this thought, the least expensive way to make a meaningful impact to end rape culture is to respect girls and women. Women and girls are under-respected in every aspect of American life, even as life-givers, we are rarely afforded the celebrations we deserve. Many of them take on more than their fair share to make sure life goes on, day after day, daily work that is under appreciated and over demanded. In conjunction, we must believe girls and women when they say there is a problem with sexual violence or that it has happened to them. We must believe victims. If we simply believe women and girls and take them at their word that they were abused, we would have less to break down in rape culture. This would stop victim blaming and when all accusations are believed, there is a culture of support for victims, instead of the current culture of deflection, denial, and disbelief.

Another way to impact rape culture is for women to support other women. Although patriarchy weaves the complex idea that all girls and women are in competition with one another, it is far from the truth. Patriarchal culture works in all possible ways to devalue everything about women, the purpose is to create the idea that a woman should only feel complete when acknowledged by a man as worthy. If girls and women embodied their agency from birth instead of having to regain it after struggling through so many patriarchal obstacles, our world would be dramatically different. American culture must grasp that living a moral and ethical life centers the accomplishments of women as equal and that women’s worth is not dependent on how attractive they are, nor how slim, popular, wealthy, or obedient.
We must stop dictating the appropriate form of sexuality for girls and women. It is really no one’s business. Every person should feel empowered to make their own choices regarding their sexual preferences and orientation without any pressure. There is no need for the socially constructed concept of virginity, it does nothing to benefit society or any person. Virginity and chastity have no redeeming qualities, there is little substance to either. We must stop forcing girls and women to change their movements, behaviors, and attitudes to accommodate men and boys under a system of patriarchy. Another critical aspect of ending a culture of rape is removing the biological function of maternity as the sole purpose for girls and women. Women do not owe us their bodies, their livelihoods, and their aspirations so that the Earth may be repopulated. Women have no obligation to bare children under the oppressive regime of patriarchy that dooms girls from birth to a lesser existence.

To end a culture of rape, we must not allow our boys to be burdened by patriarchy, while they do have ample privilege under the system, it really hinders their ability to be fully human. As we all work to heal the wounds of rape culture, we must acknowledge that patriarchy hurts men too, just in a different way than women. We must educate all people in our society not to use sexual violence as a mechanism of power or a way to gain power. We must relearn that power comes from building community and helping others—real power is collective not individual. When this is recognized, agency will become the key to happiness and fulfillment instead of shallow consumption and mindless work.

There are a million other ways that could be thought about, which many people are already working on. Whether it be through legislation, through vlogging and blogging, working on a rational wiki about rape culture, supporting a loved one as they recover from
sexual violence, through bystander intervention, or becoming more educated about rape culture, all methods that equal one less rape must be used. Even one rape is one too many. Each person who contributes to ending rape culture is committing an act of rebellion, and together radical action is what we must use to abolish rape culture.
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