I HEARD THAT'S WHERE GIRLS GET RAPED: EMBODIED EXPERIENCES OF (IN)SECURITY AND CRIME PERCEPTIONS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN STUDENTS

by

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As members of the Master's Committee, we certify that we have read the thesis prepared by: Sonia Bat-Sheva Kaufman
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ABSTRACT

Drawing from trauma-informed interviews with women undergraduate students, this article examines the ripple effects of sexual violence on student (in)security and mobility. Campus sexual violence is an exceedingly common occurrence, with 1 in 5 women having experienced sexual assault during their college tenure. Women undergraduates are also shown to have the highest rates of sexual assault anxiety of all demographic groups, yet despite the ubiquitous nature and high rates of fear, it is still not well understood how such violence collectively impacts women students' notions of security, geographical mobility, and independence, regardless of whether they as individuals have experienced assault. Focusing on a cross-section of women undergraduate students from the University of Arizona, I analyze how their perceptions of sexual violence impact their behavior and safety strategies. I illustrate how exhaustive women undergraduate's 'prevention' methods are, and how women students shoulder the burden of safety and care in lieu of the university. Lastly, despite data that women are most likely to be assaulted by someone they know in a private space, interviewed students expressed great fear of strangers and public spaces on campus, perhaps signaling that misleading sexual violence narratives have impacted women student's independence the most.

INTRODUCTION

"*Sometimes I am by myself…[and] I have to go in the tunnel [on campus]. It's really late at night, because that's the time I get out of work. And I'm like, this is a perfect like killing spot or raping spot. And it's like, those things always go through my mind whenever there's a possibility of it happening. I always had a taser in my hand or my pepper spray and I was just like, "oh my god, it could happen right now".*

"Laura" is a third-year Latina student at the University of Arizona who shared with me her insecurity of walking alone at night. Her story demonstrates how women undergraduate students' fear of violent crime shapes their decision making and mobility in public space. Laura's experience does not take place in a vacuum, and her fear of walking alone must be connected to a broader context in which sexual harassment and assaults are exceedingly common on university campuses, especially amongst undergraduates who identify as women.[1] Documenting how women students perceive danger and change their mobility in response is an important component to understanding broader impacts of sexual violence on college campuses today.

It is estimated that nearly 1 in 4 women will be the victims of sexual assault over the course of their lifetime (Krebs et al. 2007). Young women, from ages 18-24, face the highest rates of sexual assault and dating violence in the United States (Sinozich and Langton 2014) and 1 in 5 undergraduate women will experience sexual assault just while in college (Krebs et al. 2007). Although sexual violence is one of the lowest reported crimes to campus authorities, more accurate statistics can be determined through anonymous reporting and campus climate surveys. Results compiled across 33 public and private U.S. universities in 2019 showed that over 25% of undergraduate women experienced nonconsensual sexual contact since beginning college. Further, undergraduate women shared the most concern regarding sexual misconduct

[1] I use the word "women" or "woman" in this article to refer to people who identify as women, with recognition that the term woman is not just applied to people who were assigned women at birth. For the study, all research participants self-identified as women, and in terms of readability I will use the "woman" throughout the rest of the paper while recognizing this is not necessarily a stable or fixed category.

on campus out of any demographic group (Cantor et al. 2020). It is evident that women undergraduate students have the highest rates of sexual assault victimization and anxiety, yet it is not well understood how such violence collectively impacts their notions of security, geographical mobility, and independence, regardless of whether they as individuals have experienced assault. It is within this context that one can view Laura's fear of public space at night as a highly rational spatial strategy.

Scholars and activists frame sexual violence as a public health problem that impacts survivors both during their time in school and over the course of their lifetime (Muehlenhard et al. 2017; Potter et al. 2018) Adverse effects are oftentimes compounded as most survivors do not report or seek help post assault, leaving them to cope with the emotional and psychological burden without professional care (Holland and Cortina 2017; Spencer et al. 2017). Instead, survivors are more likely to disclose such trauma to family members and friends (Ahrens, Stansell, and Jennings 2010; Banyard et al. 2010). While an empathetic reaction from a friend can substantially support survivors, disclosure of sexual assault can also lead to secondary trauma and fear amongst survivors' friends (Banyard et al. 2010). This can result in students like Laura, who have never been assaulted, changing their mobility because of such fear. Perceptions of campus sexual violence amongst undergraduate women must be understood across multiple dimensions given the low level of reporting and likely high level of secondary trauma (Banyard et al. 2010; Spencer et al. 2017).

This article examines the ripple effects of sexual violence on college campuses, drawing from trauma-informed interviews with women undergraduates at the University of Arizona, a public RI university. In undertaking an analysis of women students' experiences navigating public space and their understandings of safety and danger, I move away from the emphasis within existing scholarship on the direct impacts of sexual violence on survivors. Instead, I explore how a broad swath of women undergraduate students perceive and respond to the widespread threat of campus sexual violence. I did not recruit "survivors," although some

women did disclose during interviews, rather I sought to capture the voices of women students who are outside the framework of formal reporting and traditional notions of 'trauma'. By doing this, I will add to scholarship on campus sexual violence which has previously prioritized direct impacts of sexual violence, (Kellison and Busch-Armendariz 2016; Potter et al. 2018), institutional policy responses (Patel and Roesch 2017; Richards et al. 2017), and quantitative studies of incident rates (Fedina, Holmes, and Backes 2018; Krebs et al. 2007).

Given the ubiquity of sexual violence on college campuses, universities serve as physical landscapes of fear and collective trauma, especially amongst women undergraduate students. Aiming to capture how undergraduate women navigate this landscape, I interviewed a sample of women-identified students (n=27) across class standing, race, and ethnicity to understand how they perceive their safety and risk of sexual assault on and around campus. Further, I asked what strategies they employed in times of fear, how they navigate the physical environment on campus, and whether they changed their mobility independence and behavior in public space as a result. Interviews revealed a range of self-protective behaviors in response to fear of crime, shedding light on the present-day geographies of sexual violence at U.S. universities.

Gendered Geographies of Fear

Feminist scholars have long sought to demonstrate how gendered production of public space replicates societal norms regarding where certain bodies belong, and where they are deemed out of place (see Stanko 1995; Bondi 1998). As the geographer Liz Bondi wrote, "the distinction between city and suburb was [historically] imbued with ideas about separate spheres for men and women" where the urban/public space was seen as masculine, and the suburban/private sphere was labeled as feminine (161). This is a simplistic and heteronormative illustration to draw from, yet contemporary mundane understandings of 'safe places' for women pull directly from such a binary (see Walsh 2015; Farrall et al. 2000 for examples). In particular,

crime narratives of fragile women attacked in dark city alleys (Easteal, Holland, and Judd 2015) shape discourses of gendered safety and result in fear and mobility differences across geographic space (Pain 1997; Day 1999).

Women's negative experiences, especially with male strangers, in public places have also been shown to impact women's movements and use of space (Valentine 1989; Day 1999; Bastomski and Smith 2017). Citing strangers as the highest concern, women adjust their transportation independence and avoid travel at night (Pain 1997). Despite the statistics that men are most likely to be the victims of a violent crime in public space, women are consistently more afraid of crime in public and willing to change their behavior as a result (Stanko 1995; Brownlow 2005).

A 1999 a study at a private U.S. college campus found that women students were partially avoiding public spaces on campus after dark because of environmental factors such as overgrown bushes and lack of lighting (Day 1999). The author concluded that unfamiliar places led to feelings of fear and insecurity, yet after students became familiarized with an area, they learned to fear specific spots rather than generalize. Other studies reached similar conclusions about the impact of the built environment on perceptions of security, showing that "women, especially at night, have a heightened consciousness of the micro design features of their environment" (Valentine 1989, 386) and that when public space is well lit, it can sometimes ease fear of violent crime (Pain et al. 2006).

'Geographies of fear' research is the literature in geography which specifically studies these phenomena; physical spaces are examined in relation to perception of danger, varying across not only gender but race and sexuality. For example, women's mobility patterns across cities can reflect their personal geographies of fear as they attempt to avoid perceived 'dangerous areas' (Mehta and Bondi 1999). Within geography of fear literature, scholars also explored perceptions of fear in relation to the messaging that violent crime, including sexual assault and rape, comes from the 'other' rather than the familiar. Such scholars took care to

point out that the reality is most women are assaulted by someone they already know in private spaces, such as the home or dorm room. Women may take special precautions to avoid strangers, but an “accurate map of urban rape would highlight far more bedrooms than alleyways and parks” (Pain 1997, 233).

Gendered fear and women’s use of public space is of specific interest to feminist geographers because women’s fear of sexual violence can help to perpetuate spatial expressions of patriarchy (Valentine 1989; Pain 1997). Women’s (in)security and avoidance of public space reproduces traditional notions about what places are appropriate for women to be in, especially when alone or after dark (Walsh 2015). Catcalls, comments, and unwanted physical contact in public can cement these ideas of ‘stranger danger’ (Bastomski and Smith 2017), leading women to perceive and experience their environment differently than men (Brownlow 2005). The flip side of this idea is that private spaces, such as the home or a campus dormitory, can be falsely assumed to be safe places for women.

Much of the groundbreaking gendered geographies of fear research was conducted in the UK during the 1990’s and tended to focus on adult women in urban settings (see Valentine 1989; Stanko 1995; Pain 1997; Bondi 1998), with little specific attention paid to college campuses. Studies on geographies of fear from that decade also centered on White women’s experiences. However, non-White, and marginalized populations often experience higher rates of sexual violence and trauma post-assault (Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman 2016; Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2011), potentially leading to greater rates of fear and unique strategies for navigating that fear. It cannot necessarily be assumed that mobility patterns of women students across race mirror the patterns of White adult women in urban settings. By examining women students’ notions of fear, across race and class standing, the analysis developed here provides a perspective that has not been closely examined in existing conversations about geographies of fear.

Building on the pathbreaking work of Rachel Pain and others, it is critical for geographers to systematically examine geographies of fear on college campuses. And we must do so with careful attention to intersectionality between gender, race, class, and sexuality—especially considering how landscapes are interpreted across populations and how gendered geographies are shaped by heteronormative and sexist beliefs. Further, there remains much to be studied today, including how the use of technology may affect geographies of fear and safety behaviors amongst younger populations. Toward that end, I conducted research at the University of Arizona to assess embodied experiences and narratives of (in)security among women-identified undergraduates. In the spirit of feminist inquiry and collective knowledge, it is my hope that this opens the opportunity for further research on campus sexual violence that combines an analysis of student experiences with geographies of fear.

Methodology and Site Selection

The site of study is the University of Arizona (UA), a large, public research university located in the Southwestern United States. The main campus is in the city of Tucson, Arizona, and the campus borders multiple neighborhoods and is walkable to downtown and shopping districts. With a current undergraduate student population of over 30,000 it is the second largest university in the state (University of Arizona Fall 2020). The University is also a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), meaning that over 25% of the student body identifies as Hispanic (University of Arizona). This allowed me to bring Latina student voices into the conversations of fear of crime and (in)security on U.S. college campuses, a much-needed perspective considering how non-white populations have not been considered in gender and fear research in the past (see for example Day 1999). When recruiting for the study, I consciously advertised within Latina/o-led spaces, such as the Latina/o and Chicana/o student centers.

The analysis presented draws from interviews with 27 undergraduate women at the University of Arizona whom I recruited to speak with me about their experiences of (in)security

on and around campus proper. Participants were found through the distribution of flyers in undergraduate classes and campus cultural centers. Snowball sampling was also used as a recruiting method, with previous participants contacting their friends or classmates for the study.

Although my research goal was to explore women students' perceptions of sexual violence and fear on campus, I made the language within the research flyer more general to "campus crime" to broaden the pool of women students who might respond. For example, I described the research as "a study designed to investigate safety perceptions among women students." By consciously shifting the language away from the term "sexual violence," I felt that I could reach a wider swath of students with varying crime concerns and sexual violence histories. I wished to capture a sample of students who may not have experienced assault themselves but may be navigating their lives based off fear of such violence.

All participants self-identified as women and were students at the time of the interview. Class standings amongst participants ranged from Freshman to Senior (26% Freshman, 22% Sophomores, 26% Juniors, 26% Seniors). The sample population was also asked to self-identify by race or ethnicity, with 48% identifying as White, 26% Latina, 15% Asian, and 11% both White-and-Latina. Compared to present university enrollment, the study sample slightly underrepresented White students (63.7% at the university), and significantly underrepresented Indigenous students (3.3%), and Black students (6.1% at the university) (University of Arizona Fall 2020).

All interviews took place via Zoom between the months of December 2020 and April 2021. Interview lengths ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, with the average being 45 minutes. Interviews were semi-structured to guarantee key issues were addressed while still allowing interviewees to shape the content of the conversation and share their embodied experiences. While I had a research agenda and a goal, I left many questions open ended for the purposes of letting interviewees be active agents in the production of knowledge (Leavy and Hesse-Biber 2006).

The serious nature of the interview questions and research topic had the potential to uncover sensitive experiences and, as a result, I used trauma-informed and feminist-informed strategies to create a safe space (Burgess-Proctor 2015).[2] Considering campus sexual assault rates, I knew there was a high chance that participants were survivors of sexual assault or friends with a survivor, and I took extra caution to ensure care and empowerment throughout the interviews. I practiced methods such as asking participants to select their own pseudonyms (if they so wished), validating emotions expressed during the interview, and ending interviews by thanking the participant for their willingness to speak with me. I also informed participants prior to the interview that they could skip questions or end the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Taking cues from language expressed by participants, I did not impose fraught terms like 'survivor' or 'victim' unless they initiated using such terminology themselves.[3]

While the risk for this research was generally low, I adapted interview strategies to minimize potential discomfort for participants. I reflected on questions in real time with students, explained my own position as a graduate student, and disclosed my own personal experiences in an attempt to mitigate power dynamics and create a safe space for emotional topics (Campbell et al. 2010). In previous studies, survivors have found supportive and care-based interviews to be liberating and empowering experiences (Newman and Kaloupek 2009). At the close of every interview, I followed up with a heartfelt thank you, a debrief email, and information on confidential sexual assault and misconduct resources on campus. All participants were compensated with a $15 gift-card for their time.

University of Arizona served as an important research location as there is no mandatory sexual assault education for undergraduate students, meaning that students have not been

[2] Prior to this research I trained as a sexual assault hotline advocate and have had experience speaking with survivors about traumatic and emotional experiences.

[3] Many people who have experienced sexual assault do not wish to be referred to as survivors or victims for a multitude of reasons, including not considering their experience 'assault', not wanting to think of themselves as a 'victim' of a crime or not wanting to identify as a 'survivor' of a crime (Hirsch & Khan 2020). Such terminology is loaded and highly individualized.

educated on definitions of sexual violence, sexual violence geographies, etc. Instead, the university has prioritized more of a "law enforcement approach" (Silbaugh 2015, 1049) to address campus sexual violence, where Title IX and police offices have expanded while advocacy offices and prevention services have been downsized and subject to budget cuts. During an interview with a UA staff member involved in sexual assault care services, I was informed that university funding for their office was difficult to come by. Thea Cola[4], who served as the Director of Prevention Education and Training, explained UA's prevention and advocacy offices were always "too busy fighting [over funding] to hold the powers that be accountable". Both advocates to whom I spoke with have since left their original advocacy positions because of these systematic and financial problems.

With respect to current sexual assault rates at the UA campus, the only public records have been produced through anonymous surveys provided by the Association of American Universities (AAU). In both 2015 and 2019, Campus Climate Surveys were issued at the university, where undergraduate students were asked about safety issues such as stalking, harassment, assault, and rape. The published results in both 2015 and 2019 indicated around a quarter of undergraduate women reported nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since starting at the university, a number slightly higher than the national average for universities (Krebs et al. 2007). With the university's enrollment, 24% would equate to nearly 6,000 current women students who have experienced nonconsensual sexual contact since enrolling. The 2019 Campus Climate Survey also showed an increase in the number of students who thought sexual assault was a problem at the university—as compared to the 2015 survey—and most respondents, across both years, reported not knowing how to make a report or where to get help for an assault (Cantor et al. 2019; Cantor et al. 2015)

[4] Not a pseudonym. This participant requested that her name and title be included in the publication.

While the Campus Climate Survey gives us some insight into accurate assault statistics, campus police records tell a different story. According to public safety records from 2019, only 40 UA students reported that they were sexually assaulted, a reporting rate of around .03%. Reporting rates were significantly lower in the years prior (The University of Arizona 2020).

There is a chasm between experiences of sexual assault at the UA and the reporting of sexual assaults to campus authorities, a gulf that is comparable to dynamics at other institutions of higher education across the United States as well (Arizona State University 2021; UCLA Police Department 2021). Considering these figures, I approached the study with a presumption that many participants would have either experienced sexual violence themselves or would know a fellow student who had. Further, I imagined secondary trauma would be quite prevalent among participants, as high numbers of assaults combined with low reporting rates and investment in care services meant many students were likely relying on alternative methods of support, such as their friends.

Lastly, for the purposes of this study, I use the term ‘survivor’ in my writing to indicate someone who has experienced sexual violence and may still be experiencing the aftermath of such trauma. Other researchers may also choose to use the term ‘victim’ or ‘victim-survivor’ for this same concept. I use the terminologies ‘sexual assault’ and ‘sexual violence’ largely interchangeably as sexual assault can refer to specific violent action while sexual violence represents the larger structural epidemic. My personal use of these terms reflects my own views and experiences and may not always match participant’s vernacular in the interviews.

Secondary Trauma Amongst Students

For the most part, my prediction of high levels of secondary trauma and care and support amongst friends proved correct. I avoided the term ‘survivor’ and instead used people-first language, asking “since starting at the UA have you known someone who has experienced sexual assault?” Half of the participants reported knowing a friend who had experienced sexual

assault since beginning at the university. Seven participants (or 26%) disclosed being survivors themselves, although no participant used that term. One student angrily recounted her own assault story, stating that among her friends “it’s not if, but when.”

When I asked students if these experiences with sexual violence altered the way they experienced life at the university, many students acknowledged it did. Their responses were varied; some students made no changes to their daily lives while others started drinking less alcohol, educating their male friends on problematic behavior, or even organizing healing circles within their friend groups. The mental toll of having to emotionally support friends who had experienced assault was heavy.

Four students in separate accounts disclosed that after friends had been assaulted by someone within their friend circle, they took it upon themselves to confront the perpetrators. In one interview, Rachel, an Asian first-year student, explained how her friend was assaulted by someone they had met and become friends with during freshman orientation. Although she admitted not knowing him ‘*that* well’ there was a level of trust built within the newly formed friend group and she never suspected that he had ‘bad intentions.’

After the assault, a couple of her friends approached him on the matter. Rachel recounted his response: “he said: ‘you have no proof that I did any of that.’ He wasn't worried about our feelings…or how the situation was messed up. He was just like, ‘there's no proof that I did that.’” Rachel said her friend group tried to give him the benefit of the doubt until he tried to assault another friend.

I asked whether the friends that were assaulted sought help, and she explained they didn’t want to go to police because they did not think they would be believed. When I explained that there are different types of reporting options besides going to the police, including confidential support, she was stunned: “I didn’t even know that was an option.” Instead, the women within the friend group shouldered the burden of support and, to varying extents, punitive measures as well. Rachel’s unfamiliarity with campus resources mirrored what other

students reported; very few students mentioned anything about university support services, and no participant mentioned reporting an assault, either through Title IX or through police.

Maya, White Junior talked about her experiences with 'problematic behavior' in friend groups: "sometimes people feel like they can they have more control over situations with strangers but when it's with a friend, you're like, 'I'm not allowed to have boundaries because I like this person." Maya rationalized that it can be easier to make excuses for friends as opposed to strangers, which can create a culture of forgiving assaults within friend groups while being hyper alert with strangers.

Campus (in)security

Through the interviews, it quickly became apparent that women undergraduate students at the UA were changing their mobility based on fear of assault, and that the fear was widespread. These results reflect findings from literature on gendered fear of violent crime (see Pain 1997; Mehta and Bondi 1999; Day 1999), that women change their mobility because of their insecurity. In a university setting, when life is centered around a relatively small area with events and classes regularly taking place in the evening, this can make a big difference in student lives.

Emily, a freshman, began our interview by lamenting her lack of access to campus resources in the evening, explaining she avoids going to the library or gym after dark out of fear. Tamara, a sophomore explained "there's so many places on campus I would love to study, but I'm not gonna go at 8pm…so, I'll just stay in my room even though I want to be in a different environment." Student insecurity shaped decisions of where to walk on campus, where to study, where to live, and where to eat.

As was consistent with previous findings (Day 1999), familiarity to geographic locations seemed to play a large part in student behaviors and comfort levels with students. One Latina Senior student from Tucson, Maria, explained, "I feel safer on campus, not because I believe it's

going to be safer there but because I know the area better." Familiarity with a location also led to her knowing which spots were 'sketch'.

Thalia, a White senior reflected on her strategies as she became more familiar with the micro-geographies around campus, "I would Uber [to my dorm] even though it's like a five-minute walk… because I didn't want get aggressively cat called in front of [the gas station] or be scared someone was following me. So, I would just uber and waste $8 but get back to the dorm safe." Five other students also mentioned the same Circle K gas station as an area to avoid, and seven students spoke about an underpass on campus that was seen as 'the perfect killing or raping spot'. Nineteen participants referenced lack of lighting on campus and surrounding areas as a problem which directly contributed to their lack of mobility.

As a response to feeling vulnerable while traveling through 'danger spots', many participants explained their safety strategies. Talking on the phone when walking alone was the most common technological safety strategy employed by participants though ten students also mentioned using Live-Safe, a phone application that tracks your location and can alert friends or family if walking home is taking longer than usual. Location tracking seemed to give students a sense of relief, not necessarily for their own safety, but in the sense that friends could follow where they were walking.

Thirteen students self-reported that they carried pepper spray with them on campus. Tamara, the same student who avoided study spaces after dark, reported that her parents gave her pepper spray before she came to the UA, almost as a rite of passage. Other students explained their parents or friends showed them the 'classic keys in finger trick', with eight students self-reported it as a defense strategy they use when walking alone.

Further interviews revealed the depths of safety strategies employed by students, ranging from carrying a Hydroflask as a weapon, walking in groups, running/walking quickly, speaking on the phone, removing headphones, dressing modestly 'to avoid attention', and dressing in larger clothing to 'look like a man'. Maria explained how she would wear puffy coats

to make herself “look like a bigger person”. Emily even explained that she wears a necklace with her initials on it, so that if she gets ‘taken or kidnapped’ she can “yank it off and throw it somewhere”. Safety strategies were purportedly thought up alone, with college friends, and passed down from parents to daughters.

Most students shared that a fear of strangers shaped their decision making daily. One student reflected, with some exacerbation in her voice, “I get catcalled, like, all the time. Like, whether it's by a university student, or by an 87-year-old man on campus, and whether it's 1pm or 1am”. Despite the statistics that women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know, women student experiences of verbal harassment from strangers seemed to solidify the perceived hazards of ‘stranger danger’ in public spaces.

The Social Lives of Undergrad Women

The threat of date-rape drugs was one issue that didn’t fit as neatly into the narrative of stranger danger. Roofies were understood to be coming from fellow students who were not categorized as strangers nor acquaintances, rather something in the middle, and the perceived sites of roofies (mostly Fraternities) served as public spaces in which some students lived. Safety behaviors were reportedly practiced as often in these liminal spaces as they were in public, though the safety strategies changed dramatically depending on geography.

Big fraternity parties were most often described to me as ‘dangerous’ events, where women students would have to be on the defensive, mostly against ‘roofies’ and the threat of sexual assault. Participants detailed going to extraordinary lengths to protect themselves in these semi-private social situations, particularly around alcohol and in response to predatory students. In these spaces, and perhaps due to a lack of university intervention, women students explained how they took it upon themselves to practice prevention against sexual assault.

Tara, a White sophomore student and sorority member, explained the process in a frustrated tone, “when we go out [to frats], we don't take their drinks. Unless they're like canned.

And if we do, then we hold that drink for the rest of the night". Practicing such prevention made her 'really uncomfortable,' but there were few other 'fun' late-night social options for underage students, such as her. Tara summarized it well: "we're there to just listen to music, dance, de-stress, and have a good night" but the setting isn't their space, and thus never feels totally safe. Such insecurity results in her and her fellow sorority sisters being on the defensive, monitoring their drinks, staying in a large group, and setting a strict deadline for everyone to leave. It made her nervous, and she worried about her friends as she had heard the stories too: alcohol and other drugs were regularly used by certain students to take advantage of others.

Tara's story matched with many others I heard over the course of this research: you have your 'whole hand' over your drink during parties, you never go anywhere alone, and you never drink the 'jungle juice'. Half the participants brought up the issue of roofies without prompting and multiple students recounted their friends being roofied at fraternity parties. No participants had reported the drugging to campus officials, as there was a widespread perception that the university wouldn't take these claims seriously.

My interview with Marisa, an Asian Senior student and sorority leader, was especially emotional. Marisa considered herself a change-maker and was not afraid to mix things up within Greek life or question when something felt inappropriate. She was in the middle of forming a committee on diversity and inclusion within Greek life when our interview took place. After recounting the stories of her friends who had been roofied, she explained how outraged she was by the experiences:

> *"You just don't drink or eat anything [at frats]. It's like, don't drink or eat anything. Wear very covered clothing, completely change every aspect of what you want to be there. And I'm like, why? Why go in the first place if you can't even wear whatever you want to wear around people and know that you're going to be treated with the same respect. Why would you even put yourself in that situation in the first place? That's kind of my question. Like, you can't even trust somebody to hold your drink."*

Marisa also recounted multiple times in which she was studying in the dorm on a weekend night, and her sorority sisters would come back 'dragging' their unconscious friend to bed after she had been roofied. I asked her whether the threat of roofying and sexual assault made her not want to go to parties. "Absolutely," she responded. Marisa also worried deeply for her sorority sisters and emphasized they had not been respected within fraternity spaces.

Fear levels associated with parties seemed to be correlated with a spectrum of familiarity. Students who expressed fear of fraternity parties were less likely to be familiar with the fraternity 'brothers' and more likely to use 'stranger danger' language to express their (in)security. Students who *were* familiar with the fraternity house were less likely to discuss their fear and more likely to use phrases like "they're good guys" and "they don't roofie there". In some sense, students did seem to be aware of the threat of student-to-student rape in such liminal spaces, but largely only in the context of parties and heavy drinking, perhaps pointing to the larger issue of familiar spaces not seen as potential sites of danger.

With regards to date-rape drugs, it's unknown whether the UA has especially high usage or whether the students I interviewed just happened to have such stories, as this information is not published in campus crime statistics. Notwithstanding, I found it shocking that so many students brought up date-rape drugs on their own and it was often the most emotional moment of the interview. Students' defense tactics against roofies seems to work in some situations but perhaps misses the more complex context in which sexual violence takes place, oftentimes with alcohol and within friend groups (Klein et al. 2018). Regardless, student fear of date-rape facilitators and the volume of date-rape drugs in circulation on campuses is a matter to be explored further, as few studies to date have looked at this issue from the perspective of students themselves.

Race and Identity in Geographies of Fear

Willingness to drink or 'party' on campus seemed to fall along racial and ethnic lines. White students were the most likely to disclose partaking in such activities while many Asian and Latina students expressed an aversion to 'party culture' at the UA. Latina students were the least likely to report that they drank or attended campus parties.

Maria, the same Latina student who wore large puffy coats as a prevention strategy when walking alone, reflected:

> *"I've actually never gone to UA parties or any of the frats. I kind of avoid them because of bad things I've heard…I've heard some of them won't let you in if they don't like how you look. Like, you know, to me that's putting myself in a place for men to evaluate me to get into a party… And because I think of my experience of the dorm, I was like, I kind of don't want to be around these people."*

The experience in the dorm that Maria's refers to happened during her first year in college during the 2016 election when "people were running around with Trump flags." This made her feel like she 'didn't belong' on campus despite growing up in Tucson for most of her life. Although Tucson is nearly 50% Latino/a and the UA student body is over 25% Hispanic, certain spaces on and around campus remain overwhelmingly White. Greek life for example, which Maria stayed far away from, is 72% White and only 17% Hispanic (Dean of Students Office 2021). Maria was eventually able to find her place by getting involved with the Chicana/Hispanic student center, finding teachers whom she connected with, and moving to a new dorm building.

Four other Latina students also expressed culture shock in coming to the UA and coupled with the fear of sexual assault and harassment, it resulted in them staying away from campus parties or social events. Despite most Latina participants having grown up in Tucson, I heard repeatedly that the UA felt like a different cultural space. This was evidenced by statements such as "I had to prepare myself for how many times someone would mispronounce

my name” and that White out-of-state-students “would say things like, oh, don't go south of this road”. This latter comment came with especially heavy racial implications, as South Tucson is considered ‘the Mexican part of town’ and was described as ‘dangerous’ during a couple interviews with White students.

During interviews, one White student said anywhere south of campus made her ‘a little nervous’, while another told me that “South Tucson is known for being the bad part of Tucson”. Multiple Latina interviewees brought up similar comments they had heard from White or non-Hispanic students, as evidence of them struggling with cultural microaggressions. These narratives fall in line with previous geographies of fear studies that show women are more likely to fear racialized ‘others’ when it comes to sexual violence (Pain 1997). In these student narratives, the ‘others’ were subject to the racialized geographies of fear of White women students. No White interviewee actually detailed a dangerous experience they had in South Tucson, rather it was a more generalized fear of the ‘bad part of town’.

Contrastingly, when Latina interviewees described ‘dangerous’ areas of campus, many of the spaces they mentioned were White-and-male-controlled, such as fraternity parties and parties in expensive off-campus housing. Again, this seemed to largely be generalized fear from rumors rather than specific instances. Fear of White spaces from Latina students was in line with previous studies on racial and sexual geographies on college campuses that determined spaces affiliated with Whiteness to also be associated with high alcohol intake, male-controlled parties, and the threat of sexual assault (Hirsch and Khan 2020).

In conversations with Latina participants, several of them described navigating student life at the intersection of race, class, and gender. During one interview Layla, a first-generation Mexican American student from Tucson reflected on geographic differences in which she felt fear. Layla grew up in South Tucson and, as she put it, she loved living there, but struggled with the machismo culture: “I hate men... I feel like in particular, Mexican men are trash, just for the things that I've seen growing up, what my mom has gone through, what she saw growing up...

When I started growing up the men in my community would sexualize me" and she later added "mixed with my mom's trauma…it made me feel very unsafe".

When I heard this, I asked whether campus felt 'safer' for her to move around in than her neighborhood, she stated:

> *"It definitely felt safer around the college boys. My friends and I notice a difference. Like, probably because we're not their type, because we're Mexican. But there's this funny thing where…whenever there's [a] construction [site], we always get catcalled by the construction workers. Like, if we had to walk past like a construction site, we're like, fuck, here we go. And it was just makes you uncomfortable... It was just like, damn, I can't be walking comfortably."*

Layla explained how her racially coded body allowed her to walk comfortably in certain spaces, notably around 'White college boys', while still being subject to harassed in Latino and male spaces, such as the construction site or in South Tucson. In addition to feeling unsafe because of men in her community, Layla also confided that she worried police didn't take crime in her neighborhood seriously because it was the "Mexican" part of town. She described it as a both/and scenario: "I feel like if we're not struggling within our own community, we have to struggle with the outsiders who are against our community." In Layla's interview, it became clear that her (in)security was wrapped up in multiple layers of her identity, leading to high levels of fear.

Since Layla was a local, she lived at home and so her personal geography was larger than students who lived on or near campus. In other words, her community of South Tucson was part of her student experiences and thus part of her geography of fear as well. Layla was not alone in this and, early on in my interviews, I noticed the pattern of Latina participants being more likely to live at home and commute to classes, which resulted in Latina geographies of fear encompassing both the UA campus and their local neighborhoods. Layla was also not the only Latina student to reflect on the university landscape through a racialized and gendered lens, as

Latina student geographies of fear often included both fear of White-male spaces and fear of Latino-male spaces. Although there have been few studies on non-White geography of fear within the U.S., and we must take care not to over-generalize, Latina students in the study reported similar amounts of fear as their White and Asian student counterparts, but the geography of the fear was different in that it was more widespread. White and Asian students, on the other hand, were more likely to report living on or close by campus and less likely to bring up their own race as it related to fear.

Public Narratives of Public Danger

My respondents overwhelmingly emphasized public spaces and 'stranger danger' when discussing their fears and insecurities. Most participants, across age and race, shared stories of their friends and family giving them advice in how to protect themselves from strangers in public spaces before starting at the UA. Such narratives of shadowy strangers increased student anxieties of public space while paradoxically increasing their sense of control over their safety in private spaces. For example, some students articulated that they 'stayed safe' by avoiding certain public spaces altogether or at particular times. Although this may have led to those students feeling more secure, it did not necessarily make them more secure (Sinozich and Langton 2014; Pain 1997). This dichotomy sets students up to be particularly unaware of the realities of sexual violence with acquaintances in private spaces. I would also argue that reproduced crime narratives of 'dangerous stranger' seemed to be preventing students from seeing friendship networks as potential sites of danger.

Societal narratives of stranger-initiated rape and kidnapping specifically shaped student perceptions, with students recounting that their parents 'scared them' and the news made them more cautious. This sentiment appeared to be in line with decades of previous research on media narratives and women's safety where women restrict their own independence in

response to a certain conception of danger (Valentine 1989; Farrall et al. 2000; Easteal, Holland, and Judd 2015).

Emily, the student who carries a necklace with her initials for fear of being kidnapped, described how she limits her own mobility because of horror "stories about young girls on college campuses that are walking alone at night and get taken advantage of." Emily picked her apartment location because of the lighting and security fence around the perimeter and explained that her fear of strangers dictated her decisions 'every day'. She sounded exhausted as she told me this, and laughed slightly at my expression, "I know I'm paranoid" she said, "I was raised to have my head on a swivel." Emily largely blamed her mom, who made her feel like she wasn't safe anywhere.

Crime narratives coming from mothers seemed to have an especially large influence on student safety perceptions, with students whose moms 'scared' them reporting the most restrictive behavior. Pilar, a Sophomore Latina student explained her mom is 'really worried' about her, but not about her brothers who also go to the UA: "whenever I go to campus, [my mom] gives me the [safety talk]. My brothers live five minutes from campus…but she never tells them that." While this parental advice seemed to be coming from a loving place, gendered narratives such as these create false perceptions that women students must be always on the defense, while male students are free of such responsibility. It also reproduces the incorrect narrative that women are responsible for their own safety, and thus must change their behavior to protect themselves (Pain 1997).

Reflections on the University

Halfway through the study, a shooting took place at a parking garage on campus in which a male student was killed. For months after the murder, students brought up the shooting as a way of justifying their fear and, in some cases, anger with how the university hasn't prioritized safety. Yasmine, a Latina senior student irritably explained she has avoided walking

alone on campus since the murder because of these frustrations. When I asked about physical changes that would her feel more comfortable, she suggested increased lighting on campus, more people around, and getting rid of the underpasses. I heard similar suggestions throughout almost every interview, especially when it came to lighting and the underpasses, which interviewees seemed to especially dislike. While sexual assault rates will not improve directly because of student design suggestions, “planning decisions that reduce opportunities for stranger assault may increase women’s feelings of safety” (Day 1999). Perceived safety may allow for increased freedom and confidence of women students on campus, potentially leading to higher rates of involvement in night classes and campus events.

In some conversations, I spoke to students about whether they thought the university had done a good job educating them on sexual assault and prevention. The consensus I heard was “no”. Even among those who had some online training, information was not retained for long. Marisa, a student in sorority leadership, confided that she would have “literally would have no idea where to start” if someone came to her and disclosed an assault. Marisa explained that because her sorority feels like the university hasn’t done enough to protect them, they’ve shifted to proactively educating the sisters. They especially focus on harassment at parties, “which sucks, right? Because now we have to educate the people who are doing nothing wrong.”

A couple participants were visibly upset that the university has not done more to help, specifically when it comes to drugging of women at parties, which was seen as very common. I found many of the interviews quite upsetting, and through a couple of interviews I found myself tearing up with the participant. In terms of students feeling safe to walk around at night, there was not a lot of hope. A couple students said variations of the same sentiment: men scared them, especially ‘groups of men’. ‘Do you have any suggestions?’ I asked. That question was mostly met with humble recommendations. As Pilar said: “I think a lot of it should be preventive. There should be a mandatory training during orientation for all students, about how to be safe

on campus and how to be not a horrible person". Another student pointed out, 'they have time to teach us about the WiFi, why not this?'

Gender and Power: A Negotiation of Space

The purpose of this study was to assess how fear of sexual violence impacts undergraduate women's behaviors at the UA. I found that fear of sexual violence directly influenced the lives of all interviewed undergraduate women. This fear was present whether they were direct victims of sexual violence, whether they knew someone who had been assaulted, or whether they didn't know anyone who had. For participants, fear also impacted which classes they took, where they lived, whether they drank alcohol, and whether they were involved in extracurricular activities. Students used a great deal of mental energy in strategizing how to avoid sexual violence but lacked awareness of the realities of where and how sexual violence occurs.

Long standing conceptions of stranger danger were handed down to participants, mostly from their parents and broader cultural representations, leaving them perhaps prepared to be catcalled in the street but unprepared for the realities of acquaintance rape. Participants spent emotional energy being 'hyper-alert' around strangers but were less 'educated' on healthy relationships with acquaintances. Participants carried this misplaced fear in their spatial behaviors. As a researcher, I do not want to dismiss students' fears and -- I must point out how ill-equipped sexual assault narratives have left them.

Rampant sexual assault misinformation, combined with high volumes of sexual violence and secondary trauma on campus, has led to women students struggling to separate perceived dangers from actual dangers. Until this misinformation is addressed at a larger university-wide scale, women students will continue to have unequal physical and temporal access to activities on campus.

Through qualitative methods, this study contributes to an emergent body of literature on gendered geographies of fear and embodied (in)security experiences of women students across race and ethnicity. For the most part, findings aligned with previous geographies of fear research, showing how ingrained narratives of 'stranger danger' still are and how undergraduate women students navigate the tension between their identity as independent students and as potentially vulnerable subjects. By limiting their use of public space, either spatially or temporally, women students applied strategies in response to misplaced institutional and cultural narratives. Women students also shouldered the burden of informal prevention methods within semi-public spaces, notably fraternities, for which the university had left them unprepared.

Geography of fear differentials *did* emerge among Latina student participants, who were more likely to experience geographies of fear across multiple landscapes. Many Latina student participants who lived in Tucson and commuted to campus, reported a geography of fear within both communities, providing them with a different perspective and larger geographies of fear than White and Asian student participants, who were more likely to live on or close by campus. Latina geographies of fear deserve to be further explored and it is my hope that these findings will make way for further research in this area.

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