



Article

Toward a Critical Sociology of Campus Sexual Assault: Victim Advocacy as the Lifeworld Resisting the System

Sarah Jane Brubaker

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1001 W. Franklin St., Room 2015, Richmond, VA 23284, USA; sbrubaker@vcu.edu

Abstract: As scholars, practitioners and activists continue to strive to better understand, prevent and respond to campus sexual assault, we need stronger conceptual frameworks that provide insight into both causes and potential solutions. In this article, I propose a critical sociology of campus sexual assault, informed by Jürgen Habermas's and Dorothy Smith's work, and illustrated through data from interviews with campus sexual assault victim advocates. Specifically, I examine how understanding policies and practices operating primarily through the system versus the lifeworld can help us to identify those that serve institutions versus those that serve survivors. I argue further that policies and practices that prioritize consensus, self-articulation, and care—those that promote a particular understanding of the “lifeworld”—can help us to resist systemic oppression that contributes to the problem of campus sexual assault, potentially strengthening our response to this problem. I argue that our best hope for more effective efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate campus sexual assault requires collaboration among academics, activists and advocates who center the experiences of survivors, in the spirit of critical theory's insistence on the active participation of citizens in their own emancipation from oppressive systems.

Keywords: campus sexual assault; critical theory; Habermas; lifeworld and system; victim advocates; Title IX



Citation: Brubaker, Sarah Jane. 2024. Toward a Critical Sociology of Campus Sexual Assault: Victim Advocacy as the Lifeworld Resisting the System. *Social Sciences* 13: 125. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13030125>

Academic Editor: Belinda Winder

Received: 27 December 2023

Revised: 9 February 2024

Accepted: 14 February 2024

Published: 20 February 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

I have been working in the field of gender violence for many years, both conducting academic research and supporting the work of activists and advocates in the community. Insights from feminist and sociological theory have shaped the way I understand the problem of gender violence, and I see much of the work of activists and advocates as consistent with the praxis of particular aspects of critical theory. I propose that there is value and utility in applying a critical sociology lens, such as the one I articulate here, to the field of gender violence.

In this article, I begin to develop a critical sociology of campus sexual assault, drawing primarily on theoretical insights that I illustrate through an analysis of empirical data. I draw on interviews that I conducted with campus-based sexual assault victim advocates that have been analyzed for earlier publications, as well as on advocacy best practices and campus sexual assault policies and prevention efforts, to articulate how a critical sociology of this form of gender violence can lead to a useful framework for developing and evaluating prevention, intervention, and response efforts. First, I situate my project within campus sexual assault policy in the U.S., including a brief description of campus victim advocates and their role within campus systems. Next, I give an overview of specific insights from Jürgen Habermas's notion of the colonization of the lifeworld and Karl Marx's and Dorothy Smith's insights regarding self-articulation that I argue provide a promising foundation for a critical sociology of campus sexual assault. I argue that these conceptual insights contribute to a useful—but insufficient—framework for understanding and responding to campus sexual assault. I argue for the need to expand the theorization

and enactment of the lifeworld in resistance to the system. I then apply the insights of Habermas, Marx and Smith to a critical analysis of formal campus sexual assault policies and practices from the perspectives of campus advocates and demonstrate how they navigate and respond to these policies in particular ways that invoke and enact what I view as a particular understanding of the lifeworld in resistance to the system, thus addressing the inadequacies of Habermas's more academic approach. I end with recommendations for how we might further pursue efforts to reduce and eliminate campus sexual assault by resisting oppressive systems and relations of ruling through an emphasis on self-articulation and elevation of social relations of the lifeworld.

Campus Victim Advocates and Title IX

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) enforces numerous statutes, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Education 2021). In 2011, the OCR issued a "Dear Colleague Letter" that formally applied Title IX legislation to how college campuses handle sexual assault. All campuses that receive federal funding were subject to the requirements that formalized and dramatically changed campus processes and practices. Some of the primary changes included mandated reporting requirements for all employees who were aware of policy violations, diminished protections of victim confidentiality, and formalized procedures for investigations and hearings (Brubaker 2019). Specific Title IX requirements and policies continue to be considered and updated (Know Your IX n.d.).

Most of the new requirements were viewed as having a negative impact on victims. For example, mandatory reporting requirements removed protections of confidentiality and pulled victims into formal investigations and proceedings that they may not want to participate in, and hearings became increasingly similar to courtrooms involving lawyers and cross-examinations of victims (Brubaker 2019; Lombardi 2017; Moylan 2017). One positive aspect of the expectation was the provision of victim advocates, recommended by the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) (ATIXA 2015). Their position statement on victim advocates describes their role, i.e., that they provide free and confidential support to students and employees who have experienced sexual harassment (Brubaker and Keegan 2019). Victim advocates, who serve as the "voice" of victims, help victims navigate university and community resources and university reporting processes and procedures and can accompany them to seek care from service providers (Brubaker and Keegan 2019). Organizations and researchers have noted that victim advocates also provide emotional support (ATIXA 2015; Nightingale 2023).

Multiple studies have noted the value that victim advocates bring to campuses' response to sexual assault (Amar et al. 2014; Strout et al. 2014; Campbell 2006; Carmody et al. 2009; Payne 2008). For example, campus administrators have included advocacy services in their perceptions of "ideal environments" addressing prevention and response (Amar et al. 2014). Studies have demonstrated that when victims are supported by advocates, they are more likely to report sexual violence and participate in formal processes (Strout et al. 2014) and to report more positive experiences with legal and medical systems in general (Campbell 2006). Scholars have emphasized that such support is in direct contrast to the "revictimization" that survivors often experience from the criminal legal system (Carmody et al. 2009; Payne 2008). Studies have indicated that survivors "experience less violence over time, report a higher quality of life and social support, and have greater access to community resources, when they work with victim advocates" (Allen et al. (2011) cited in Brubaker 2019, p. 308).

Researchers have found that many victim advocates identify as feminists and their work is informed by feminist activism that works to empower victims and engage them in decision-making regarding how they respond to experiencing violence (Nichols 2014; Kasper 2004; Zweig and Burt 2007). These advocates sometimes invoke a social change or systems advocacy approach focused on changing and improving social systems so

that they better accommodate survivors' needs (Nichols 2014). Davies and Lyon (2013) have distinguished between these survivor-focused approaches and those associated with "service-defined advocacy," where "advocates fit women into the services available without understanding their plans" (p. xxi). Martin similarly observed "RCCs' [rape crisis centers'] dilemma of accommodating mainstream institutions while trying to change them is reflected in a tightrope of tension and compromise" (Martin 2005, p. 116). These researchers raise questions about advocacy's fit within mainstream institutions, such as those of higher education, which I explore below in terms of the contrast between Habermas's lifeworld and system.

2. Conceptual Framework

Critical theory is a broad approach informed by Marxist theory that has contributed to a vast array of frameworks from feminist theory to critical race theory, queer theory, and numerous others. A recognition of structural oppression lies at the core of critical theory, and I further suggest that critical theory offers a framework for both understanding problems and identifying solutions. A major goal of critical theory is to actively engage those who are most affected by problems in the articulation and understanding of the problem, and in identifying and working toward solutions (Geuss 1981).

In this section, I draw on Habermas's notion of the colonization of the lifeworld, informed by Marx, to develop a conceptual framework for analyzing campus sexual assault. First, I define Habermas's concepts system, lifeworld, and colonization of the lifeworld. Next, I describe his insights into strategies for resistance and change based on participation in democratic processes.

2.1. Habermas

Habermas's theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984) is far too complex to fully articulate here. For this article, I focus on scholars' interpretation and application of his analytical distinction between the lifeworld and system and idea of the colonization of the lifeworld. I offer a simplified version of this conceptual framework to guide my analysis and development of a critical theory of campus sexual assault.

Several scholars have engaged in academic discourse and debates about Habermas's theory of communicative action (Baxter 1987; Fairtlough 1991) and others have applied Habermas's colonization of the lifeworld to analyses of interactions between systems such as education and health care and individual clients or consumers (e.g., see Barry et al. 2001; Froggatt et al. 2011). I am primarily concerned with these scholars' characterization of the lifeworld, its relationship to the system, and the ways that the system has colonized the lifeworld, i.e., how formalized knowledge and power, profit, and formal, purposive rationality have come to objectify and dictate lived experience. In this section, I define and distinguish between the system and lifeworld based on interpretations of Habermas's work. I then describe his conceptualization of the colonization of the lifeworld.

2.1.1. System and Lifeworld

Habermas suggests that in premodern societies, everyone engaged in the two primary types of reproduction, i.e., symbolic and material. As societies have advanced, these two distinct, but previously undifferentiated, types of reproduction have been separated or "decoupled," and material reproduction has been taken over by the official economy and state, or what Habermas refers to as the system. Symbolic reproduction, which involves socialization, solidarity formation, and cultural transmission, becomes the main enterprise of the private, restricted nuclear family, and of the public sphere of political participation, debate, and opinion-formation of Habermas's lifeworld (Fraser 1985).

System and lifeworld can be further differentiated in terms of the type of action-context operating in each. The system, for example, relies on system-integrated action contexts, where actors coordinate their actions based on functional interdependence and are guided by "self-interested, utility-maximizing calculations" in the media of money and

power (Fraser 1985). Socially integrated action contexts, on the other hand, are associated with the lifeworld, where actors coordinate their actions with one another on the bases of mutual understanding and unforced consensus regarding norms, values and ends (Fraser 1985). Habermas further distinguishes between two types of socially integrated action contexts, i.e., normatively secured and communicatively achieved. Where the former “are actions coordinated on the basis of a conventional, pre-reflective, taken-for-granted consensus about values and ends, consensus rooted in the precritical internalization of socialization and consensus rooted in the precritical internalization of socialization and cultural tradition,” the latter “involve actions coordinated on the basis of explicit, reflective, achieved consensus, consensus reached by unconstrained discussion under conditions of freedom, equality and fairness” (Fraser 1985, p. 108). Although Fraser argues convincingly that Habermas’s conceptualization of the family neglects the ways that the system shapes gendered power structures and dynamics within the family, that critique is beyond the scope of this paper.

Drawing from Max Weber, other scholars distinguish between the system and lifeworld in terms of the type of rationality grounding each. Specifically, where the lifeworld is grounded in “value rationality” or substantive rationality, the system is based on purposive, formal rationality, and abstract, technical, instrumental, and strategic forms of action (Barry et al. 2001). Lifeworld and system also differ in the ways in which relations in each realm are organized or coordinated. Specifically, Habermas views the system as organized through “steering mechanisms” of power and money, and the lifeworld as organized through communicative action, defined as unforced consensus and mutual understanding (Baxter 1987).

2.1.2. Colonization of the Lifeworld and Relations of Ruling

As discussed above, Habermas argues that as Western society has advanced, the system and lifeworld, once connected, have been “uncoupled” as the system has become increasingly autonomous. The next phase of this evolution is that the system comes to dominate the lifeworld, through a process he refers to as “colonization,” that prioritizes the system’s needs and social relations over those of the lifeworld. He views this development as problematic to society at large in that it limits processes of democratic participation in creating social relations and stifles symbolic reproduction that is produced by and supportive of the lifeworld (Kemmis 1998). Fraser, referring to health care, care of the elderly, education, and family law, describes the problem of colonization of the lifeworld thus: “For when bureaucratic and monetary media structure these things, they intrude upon ‘core domains’ of the lifeworld. They turn over symbolic reproduction functions like socialization and solidarity formation to system-integration mechanisms which position people as strategically acting, self-interested monads” (Fraser 1985, p. 120).

Although she does not use the concepts system or lifeworld, Dorothy Smith’s critical feminist theory is highly influenced by Marx. I see her theorization of relations of ruling and objectification as consistent with Habermas’s notion of colonization. Smith describes ruling relations as, “namely, the world that sociology knows as large-scale or formal organization and the market and governmental relations in which such organization is embedded” (Smith 1996, p. 172). She argues that such relations are coordinated through texts that objectify everyday lived experiences and have displaced local and particular relations, such as those that I associate with the lifeworld. Consistent with critical theory more generally, Smith advocates for the value of developing understandings of oppression, or ruling relations, from the perspective of marginalized groups (Smith 1992). She aims to analyze how people’s everyday “doings” are coordinated from afar by ruling relations, a process that has intensified over time (Smith 1992).

Habermas describes the system in late capitalism as reproduced through steering mechanisms of money and power, as well as goals of formal rationality, such as efficiency and objectivity. The lifeworld’s steering mechanisms, for Habermas, are tradition (normatively secured consensus) and civic engagement (communicatively achieved consensus).

Although this conceptualization is helpful in terms of analyzing the ways in which the system has colonized the lifeworld and objectified social relations, I argue that Habermas's notion of the lifeworld as interpreted by various scholars is insufficient in its recognition of the most valuable and powerful aspects of humanity and social life. I suggest that what is missing is a theorization of our capacity for love and mutual care and concern, and our respect for the humanity of all human beings, which can and should be the motivation behind the steering mechanisms of the lifeworld. I discuss this expanded notion of the lifeworld more below.

2.1.3. Self-Articulation

Fraser (1985) promotes Marx's definition of critical theory, i.e., the "self-articulation of the struggles and wishes of the age" (p. 97). This has been further developed into a foundational component of critical theory, i.e., the notion that individuals must actively engage in their own liberation from the system's oppression and exploitation. This idea has been conceptualized and articulated in several ways by both scholars and activists, and it is crucial to the critical sociology I want to promote, one that emphasizes the necessity of enabling people to articulate their own struggles and wishes in their pursuit of more just social relations.

I view Habermas's incorporation of self-articulation into his framework as focused primarily on democratic participation in governance. He advocates for "ideal speech acts," that come from citizens' voices rather than dictated by the system's perspectives and needs (Jackson 1999). He further argues for "communicative action," or civil discourse where social actors work together to come to mutual understandings and agreements (Baur and Abma 2011; Kemmis 1998).

Smith's notion of self-articulation is also relevant to this analysis. Drawing on feminist activism and "consciousness raising," she developed a "sociology for women" (later referred to as a sociology for people), that begins inquiry into relations of ruling at the site of people's everyday lives (Smith 1992, 1996). She promotes a commitment to

[a] sociology from women's standpoint in the local actualities of our everyday lives [that] must be put together quite differently from the traditional objectifying sociologies. Committed to exploring the society from within people's experience of it and rather than objectifying them or explaining their behaviour, it would investigate how that society organizes and shapes the everyday world of experience. Its project is to explicate the actual social relations in which people's lives are embedded and to make these visible to them. (Smith 1996, p. 173)

This prioritization of the lived experiences of those affected by oppression and ruling relations is at the heart of critical theory.

2.2. Summary

I offer a simplified view of the problem of the colonization of the lifeworld drawing from scholars of Habermas and Smith by focusing on two specific aspects of their critiques of modern society. First, colonization of the lifeworld has occurred as system goals and steering mechanisms—money and power—have come to dominate social and communal life through ruling relations of the state and corporations. Second, this domination has objectified the subjective experiences of social actors into abstractions, distancing our understandings of and approaches to social relations from actual lived experiences.

In terms of solutions, consistent with Marx's notion of self-articulation, Habermas argues for the necessity of prioritizing everyday social actors' perspectives, experiences, and understandings of their lives in our efforts to create more just social relations. This goal is essential to developing a critical sociology, but I argue that Habermas's framework relies too heavily on rational processes and neglects essential components of humanity that must be included in our conceptualization of human beings' subjectivity and active participation in liberation. For example, Habermas does attempt to offer strategies for resistance in his call for communicative action that promotes consensus, enhancing democratic participation

in creating systems, but he seems to assume that everyone in a society has equal power and opportunity to participate. I view his recommendation as a necessary but insufficient form of resistance and social change, and I argue that to truly resist the system's colonization of the lifeworld, we need to develop a deeper understanding, enactment, and expansion of the lifeworld as the social domain and organization of social relations that is steered by mechanisms of love, care, and concern.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Question

Although this article is largely concerned with theory development, I draw on data from a larger interpretive, exploratory, empirical study I conducted of campus victim advocates to illustrate major concepts. In this article, I pose the question, *How can framing advocates' perceptions of campus sexual assault through Habermas's colonization of the lifeworld and Smith's sociology for people contribute to stronger understandings of and responses to this problem?*

3.2. Research Design and Analytical Approach

This article reanalyzes data from an empirical study I conducted of campus-based victim advocates in the wake of broad changes to policy and practice prompted by the U.S. Office of Civil Rights' issuing of the *Dear Colleague Letter* in 2011 that applied Title IX legislation to campus policies and processes (Brubaker 2019; Brubaker and Keegan 2019). Here, I provide a brief overview of the design for that study.

3.3. Recruitment and Participants

Participants were recruited through snowball and convenience sampling methods, through their expression of interest to participate as a follow-up to a statewide survey, in response to announcements about the study shared via a campus advocacy list-serve, or word-of-mouth referrals by other participants.

A total of 15 advocates participated in the study. Fourteen participants self-identified as female, women or cisgender women and one identified as a man. Twelve self-identified as White, one as Black, one as Latina, and one as biracial (Hispanic and White). Participants ranged in age from 26 to 50. Eleven identified as straight or heterosexual, and four as queer or bisexual.

Most (73 percent) of the advocates worked on large campuses (defined as greater than 11,000 students); three worked on campuses with between 5000 and 10,000 students, and one worked on a campus with fewer than 5000 students. Ten described their campuses as urban, one as rural, two as suburban, and two as some combination of these types. Ten institutions were public and five were private. Advocates were located across eight states, from every geographic region of the continental U.S. (Brubaker 2019; Brubaker and Keegan 2019).

3.4. Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

The interview guide was developed in consultation with campus advocates and focused on participants' education and experience, philosophical approaches, their campus contexts, and their work as advocates. Questions addressed changes that had occurred to their roles and to campus processes since Title IX was formally applied to this work. The data were collected via semi-structured, one-on-one interviews conducted by the author, that lasted between 30–80 minutes either in person, via telephone, or via teleconference, and they were audio-recorded and transcribed. I shared my experiences and interests in the topic with the participants and confirmed with them that I was capturing and interpreting their perspectives accurately throughout the process to enhance trustworthiness. I protected participants' identities by not using their names or identifying their campus affiliations. I provided resources in the event that reflecting on experiences with sexual assault cases was emotionally difficult.

3.5. Analysis

Initial analysis of the data employed a basic inductive and iterative thematic coding approach through a constant comparison process incorporating open and axial coding and clustering methods and memoing to identify and explore themes. I looked for patterns across themes and identified quotes that helped to support major claims. The analysis yielded thick descriptions of how advocates perceived the changes to their roles in response to Title IX legislation. I published articles on other topics that emerged from the study, but for this paper, I focus on the themes that I coded as the system, lifeworld, and colonization. In addition to analyzing the empirical data collected for the earlier study of advocates, I also examine specific campus policies and their relationship to these concepts.

In the next section, I apply the framework of the system, lifeworld, colonization of the lifeworld, and notions of self-articulation, to the problem of campus sexual assault as demonstrated by current conceptualizations and practices. To support this framing, I incorporate both quotes from my empirical study of campus advocates and insights from scholar-activists. I argue that this scholarly framework from Habermas and Smith helps us to further understand the problem of campus sexual assault, and advocates' philosophies and practice begin to elevate the lifeworld in resistance to the system's colonization of the lifeworld. This resistance both illustrates aspects of Habermas's and Smith's frameworks and expands our understanding of the lifeworld as a domain that is focused on humanity and care.

4. Results and Conceptual Development

In this section, I discuss findings from the original advocate study and situate them within a critical sociology of campus sexual assault. I first demonstrate how the system has colonized the lifeworld of campus sexual assault victims, drawing on rich descriptions from interview data. Next, I support my argument for an expanded understanding and realization of the lifeworld as consensus, self-articulation, and care, based on and illustrated by victim advocates' and abolitionist activists' resistance of the system.

4.1. The System's Colonization of the Lifeworld

Iterations of the system are grounded in the objectification of gender violence as a policy violation, enacted and implemented through formal policies, processes, and procedures. As suggested by Smith, we can view Title IX policies as texts that coordinate action, where the system imposes its language and meanings of sexual assault onto actual lived experiences and shifts practices and processes to achieve system goals. The discourse of these texts objectifies individual survivors of actual violence so that they become *complainants* and the individuals who assault, rape, and traumatize other individuals become *respondents*. The violence becomes a type of conduct code violation, rather than a severely traumatic physical and emotional experience with lasting consequences for survivors' lives.

Such an approach prioritizes the system's needs—efficiency and profit—over survivors' needs for and right to receive support and care in an educational setting. In my study, many advocates viewed the shift toward a Title IX framing of campus sexual assault as prioritizing compliance over serving victims and meeting their needs. As one advocate observed,

The challenges are less about working with the individual than working with the various systems and the systems being focused for example on compliance with Title IX . . . opposed to doing what's right for the individual. . . having to be in compliance is not always conducive to what students need in terms of time and space.

Another advocate explained, "They hire you to work on behalf of survivors and they're mad at you when you do. . . . And you end up seeming like a troublemaker or fighting the system."

After the Office of Civil Rights issued the *Dear Colleague Letter*, institutions' focus on compliance with the law and mandated reporting policies prompted changes to campus processes that had previously provided confidential, safe spaces for survivors to seek sup-

port without having to commit to filing a formal report and participating in an investigation. An advocate reflects on these changes here:

...the majority of campuses that I talk to, they have designated every single person on their campus who is employed as a “responsible employee”, ...this sort of mandated reporter under Title IX, and I don’t think that was really what survivor activists were asking for, right? To have no one to turn to on campus.

This change complied with federal law and formalized the way campuses handled reports, but it was not guided by the needs, preferences or rights of survivors based on their lived experiences. It was not based on values of mutual care or concern for survivors.

Another example of the system’s dominance was that, according to some victim advocates, student respondents (those accused of a sexual assault) were allowed to hire lawyers to advise them during campus hearings, further formalizing the process and aligning it with the criminal legal system. One advocate described how this practice has created an imbalance of power:

[Survivors] are really looking for an educational process and it’s out the window with lawyers. It’s unbelievably contentious and complicated and it’s taking so much longer and it’s so intense for the survivors. I can’t say enough about what a bad call I think they made doing that. (Brubaker 2019, p. 319)

This observation described a shift from a more informal process focused on educational access to further integration of campus response into the legal system, another example of colonization. Another advocate commented on this trend, describing the process of colonization thus: “We’re grassroots folks, we’ve done this work. we’re already being co-opted, other people are providing training in our field, like who are attorneys, and it’s really hard to figure out how do you preserve the social justice nature of the work in settings that are highly corporatized” (Brubaker 2019, p. 318).

Shepp and colleagues (2023) have referred to this shift as a reliance on “carceral logic,” an example of campus control that focuses on individual punishment as accountability. They associate this shift with a “degradation of feminist spaces on campuses, and the increasing neoliberal university” (pp. 10–11). Referring to feminist anti-violence victim advocacy organizations, Shepp and colleagues argue that “pursuing legal reform to address campus [gender-based violence] has actually weakened the power of these feminist organizations to address the harm of GVB on campuses and has reinforced the legitimacy of campus adjudication systems” (pp. 11–12).

An advocate from my study described an example of carceral logic and campus control in the increasing prioritization of the system over the lifeworld in terms of resource allocation that does not always serve the interests of survivors.

...the cops always get the money. Title IX always gets the money. They are constantly getting resources, but if your victims don’t go to them, it doesn’t matter, ... because if your victims don’t trust the system or they don’t get to the system, the system is there for nothing.

The system as it relates to campus sexual assault includes the university’s Title IX office and legal team, campus police, and sometimes, the criminal legal system, and it operates through the values and steering mechanisms of power and formal rationality, individualizing cases of sexual assault and relying on punitive responses to policy violations. The system further operates through the steering mechanism of money, complying with Title IX requirements to receive federal funding and attempting to protect the university’s reputation (to continue to benefit from donors and student tuition) by minimizing awareness and impacts of sexual assault that occurs on campus. These victim advocates’ perspectives demonstrate how the system organizes social relations in ways that prioritize system goals through resource allocation, regulations, requirements, mandates, and formal practices. In the next section, I demonstrate how advocates enact the lifeworld as a potential space of resistance to the system.

4.2. Advocacy as Lifeworld

Advocates' work with survivors engages aspects of the lifeworld as conceptualized by Habermas, and it also adds dimensions of *empathy* and *care* that I argue are missing from many scholars' frameworks but should be explicitly theorized as foundational to the lifeworld. Advocates participate in programs and practices that invoke what Habermas refers to as symbolic interaction and consensus, and they are fundamentally committed to self-articulation. They go beyond Habermas's conceptualization of the lifeworld and resist the system through an ethic of care and respect for humanity. I argue that these latter ideals should be conceptualized and actualized as the steering mechanisms of social relations and should guide our work to address campus sexual assault.

4.2.1. Advocacy as Symbolic Reproduction and Consensus

Habermas conceptualizes the lifeworld as the domain of symbolic reproduction, where cultural beliefs, values and norms are reproduced through socialization largely within families and communities. Ideally, such processes should occur through mutual understanding and unforced consensus among social actors.

Habermas's notion of the lifeworld suggests that symbolic reproduction is coordinated through both normatively secured and communicatively achieved consensus. The former includes taken-for-granted norms and beliefs. For example, in the case of campus sexual assault, these would include traditional gender norms and roles regarding sexual relations based on men's privilege, rights, and perspectives, many of which have contributed to gender violence. Fraser (1985) argues that such normatively secured meanings originated in the lifeworld but have shaped social relations in the system. Institutions of higher education have done little to challenge or change traditional norms that encourage sexual assault, and they have created the contexts that encourage and allow sexual assault to happen. This includes fraternity culture, competitive and highly resourced men's athletics programs, and hierarchical organizational structures. Various grant programs have recognized this critical component of campus sexual assault and called for proposals that aim to create culture change (Dills et al. 2016), but such work requires holistic approaches often at odds with system practices. This advocate describes how compliance with Title IX has subsumed advocates' efforts and diverted them from enacting culture change:

How are we getting to students about what makes a relationship healthy? How are we helping them understand what healthy sexuality is? How are we helping them understand how to engage as a bystander? How are we helping them understand all those kinds of things way back before anything goes amiss to get, to try and curb it? How are we doing culture change on our campus?

Although culture change is typically a goal of prevention efforts on campus, much of the sexual assault prevention focus on college campuses is limited to enhancing knowledge of and compliance with official/formal codes of conduct, facilitated through mandatory training and assessment, rather than on changing norms. While many of these training programs do attempt to educate students about consent and discourage them from engaging in harmful behaviors, the emphasis is largely on avoiding punishment. In this way, compliance with the system dominates efforts toward symbolic reproduction in the lifeworld.

4.2.2. Advocacy as Self-Articulation

I see the space of victim advocacy as operating within the lifeworld where advocates are focused on supporting survivors by prioritizing their rights and needs over those of the system. Such an approach prioritizes survivors' humanity and subjectivity rather than objectifying their experiences and assessing them in economic or "rational" terms.

Relatedly, a primary emphasis in advocacy practice, stemming from the grassroots feminist anti-violence movement, is on victims' and survivors' rights and need to tell their own stories of their experiences and to make their own decisions about how to respond, even in resistance and opposition to the system's dictates. Most advocates, for

example, explicitly utilize an “empowerment model” in their work, based on the idea that survivors of gender violence have had control taken from them when they were assaulted and abused, and that advocates should help them regain a sense of control by allowing them to decide what they need to begin to heal (Brubaker and Keegan 2019; Nichols 2013). This feminist emphasis on survivor-centered practices, embraced by advocates and communicated to other responders such as law enforcement officers, health-care providers and Title IX officers, often means accepting that survivors may not want to participate in formal investigations into what happened to them or to formally punish those who have harmed them.

I describe to students to be sort of neutral territory for them, like to be the only person that is there to help them make the decisions that are best for them, regardless of whatever other investment other people may have in what they decide. Everybody else has a different investment that they prosecute, or that they make a report in certain places, and my job is to help them make whatever decision they need to make for themselves.

As our understanding of trauma has evolved, the emphasis on victims’ and survivors’ experiences has developed into “trauma-informed” practices. This approach moves beyond supporting the survivors’ autonomy and decision-making to recognizing that experiencing trauma can make it difficult for survivors to process what has happened to them or fully grasp the system-dictated choices they must confront in response to the violence. This again emphasizes the subjective, lived experience and humanity of the survivor over the needs of the system, whether that be law enforcement, Title IX, university administration, or health care providers.

4.2.3. Advocacy as Care

In addition to engaging in aspects of the lifeworld described above, i.e., where the goal is consensus, where community members create norms, and where subjectivity is honored and respected, advocates bring particular motivations to their work and ways of participating in social relations that are more in line with the expanded notion of the lifeworld that I want to develop. Specifically, advocates bring empathy, humanity, and care to their work. One advocate, for example, describes the conflict between the system’s formal and objectifying approach and the advocate’s perspective that focuses on the humanity of the survivor. “. . . similar to Title IX, you go so far in the direction of compliance that you lose sight of the fact that there is a girl who is very upset to be in front of you. . . .”

This perspective emphasizes the humanity of survivors and their subjective experience and prioritizes responding to their immediate needs rather than following policy, procedures, and protocols for the sake of compliance. Another advocate similarly emphasized the humanity of victims that is often dismissed or objectified through the development and enactment of formal policies:

But I like to keep in mind that people are behind all these policies, and I think that is important, that these are not just broad sweeping social commentaries. These are 18-year-old children who are away from home for the first time and have just had all their trust and safety and security violated in the worst possible way, so it’s sad that we can’t talk about what it really is.

These advocates’ insights demonstrate the contrast between the system’s framing of campus sexual assault as a policy violation and advocates’ commitment to caring for survivors through a different set of social relations that I associate with an ideal lifeworld. Shepp and colleagues (2023) demonstrate the distinction between the system and advocates’ caring approach when they argue, “the investigatory body of the university does not position itself to identify whether or not harm occurred, but rather is focused solely on whether or not a policy was violated, which are two very different frameworks in their process and their outcomes” (p. 14).

Caring relations require centering the subjective experiences of those who have been harmed. As Smith (1997) has suggested, “Life-support economies, caring for others—the

work that goes into them is not mediated or managed by money and extends beyond the household and kin group into the neighborhood and community in multiple ways” (p. 130). Her argument illustrates the caring work that advocates do in contrast to the ruling relations of the system.

5. Discussion and Implications

My goal in writing this paper is to promote a critical sociology of campus sexual assault that is framed through Habermas’s notion of the system’s colonization of the lifeworld and Smith’s sociology for people, informed by the lived experiences of victim advocates who center the care and humanity of survivors in their work. I argue that we must elevate the lifeworld as a community of care, in resistance to the system, and that feminist advocacy provides a starting point for this work. Viewing campus sexual assault through the lens of Habermas’s colonization of the lifeworld allows us to think about this problem and potential solutions in particular ways.

5.1. *The System’s Colonization*

Recognizing the extent to which the system has come to dominate students’ lives, and the ways that power, rationality, and profit drive the implementation of Title IX policies demonstrates how we are objectifying the lived experiences and subjective humanity of survivors who need our support and care. Advocacy philosophy and practice attempt to enact a lifeworld where communities support survivors through an emphasis on self-articulation, centering their needs and humanity rather than prioritizing the needs of the institution.

In both their article on the carceral logic of universities’ approach to sexual assault (Shepp et al. 2023) and their article in this Special Issue, O’Callaghan and Shepp (2023) critique the ways that higher education has come to structure social relations. They, too, have pointed out the “lack of care extended to the violence” experienced by students and shown that “our humanity was continuously denied” (p. 335). They refer to these processes as “institutional betrayal,” which can also be understood as a consequence of the system’s colonization of the lifeworld of the campus community.

Like O’Callaghan and Shepp (2023), I argue that the current campus control approach to sexual assault, steeped in carceral logic and facilitated through the system’s colonization of the lifeworld, is causing additional harm to survivors while failing to accomplish safety or accountability. We need to shift the logic, structures, and processes back to a focus on creating a caring community that centers the humanity of survivors, what I am promoting as an ideal lifeworld. Such an approach would view sexual assault that occurs on campuses not as a policy violation that threatens the reputation and financial well-being of the institution, but as harm done to a member of the community.

5.2. *Enacting the Lifeworld*

Many advocates are already doing much of the work to elevate and enact the lifeworld. Early in the feminist anti-violence movement, for example, survivors engaged in a form of culture change through consciousness-raising activities, where women would come together and share their experiences of violent victimization. This enabled them to engage in communicatively achieved consensus about the pervasiveness of violence against women. This shift from private and personal to public and political was a major goal and success of the feminist movement and brought awareness of the problem of gender violence to multiple arenas. In the early anti-violence movement, consciousness raising centered women’s lived experiences to create a new vocabulary and way of knowing and understanding gender violence. Activists have worked to integrate these new ways of understanding into popular and professional discourse to define sexual assault as unacceptable.

There are several practices currently occurring on college campuses that I see as exemplifying both Smith’s focus on everyday experiences and Habermas’s notion of consensus building. For example, Take Back the Night (<https://takebackthenight.org/> accessed on 22

December 2023) programs typically feature survivors telling stories of their experiences of violence in their own words (i.e., ideal speech acts) and groups walking through campus, together facing and resisting women's fear of violence through collective action and solidarity to promote consensus around rejecting violence against women as a normal part of our culture and lives.

Additional prevention practices around campus sexual assault that can be viewed as aiming for communicatively achieved consensus are campaigns promoting consent and bystander intervention programs. Consent campaigns, for example, focus on challenging taken-for-granted, traditional assumptions (or normatively achieved consensus) about how behaviors are interpreted regarding sexual intention. Students are educated about how important it is to not make assumptions about what others want or desire regarding sexual encounters based on their demeanor, behavior, dress, or other non-verbal cues. Instead, they are encouraged to clearly articulate their desires, boundaries, etc., through communicating active consent to engage in sexual relations.

Both Take Back the Night and consent campaigns attempt to change the culture through new, collectively developed, communicatively achieved, shared understandings of sexual assault. They illustrate Habermas's notion of communicative action as critical to symbolic reproduction in the lifeworld. They remain at the level of rationality but do emphasize self-articulation and subjectivity, emerging from lived experience rather than dictated by the system, and could potentially change the culture by redefining social relations.

Another prevention approach that many campuses are implementing are bystander intervention programs that aim to build communities around a mutual commitment to preventing sexual harassment and assault (NSVRC 2018). This approach expands beyond the realm of rational communication to goals of care and concern, which are closer to my overarching notion of elevating the lifeworld, but achieving these within the larger university system is challenging. The goal of bystander intervention programs is for students to see themselves and others as members of a larger community that respects and cares for one another. While this is a positive goal that promotes the lifeworld relations I want to achieve, the programs themselves are implemented and promoted through training individual student participants to watch for and intervene in potentially risky interactions where sexual assault might happen, such as when students are under the influence of alcohol or in unfamiliar settings. The larger goal of creating communities based on mutual care remains largely elusive. As Shepp and colleagues have suggested, such programs "offer few ways to challenge entrenched misogyny, racism, or classism at institutions" (Shepp et al. 2023, p. 13).

Restorative justice is an approach to campus sexual assault (and to broader forms of violence and harm) that invokes several elements of my expanded notion of the lifeworld. This model redefines justice as based on accountability rather than punishment (Koss and Achilles 2008). Like bystander intervention, restorative justice aims to create communities of mutual care that prevent members from harming one another. It also invokes self-actualization by allowing the person who has been harmed to guide the process of restoration and define the terms of their healing. This approach challenges many assumptions of practices characteristic of the system, i.e., those that prioritize efficiency, formal rules and punishments, objectivity, and other elements of formal rationality.

Although more focused on idealized notions of the lifeworld than system, both bystander intervention and restorative justice programs are unlikely to succeed in resisting the colonization of the lifeworld by IHE systems. Both presume and depend upon a larger mutual understanding of and commitment to a kind of community, or lifeworld, that does not exist on college campuses. I argue that these programs' processes and actions cannot work on their own without the broader context of a caring community made up of all students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

In my critique of Habermas's approach, I have argued that he neglects to theorize what I consider to be critical aspects of the lifeworld that must be elevated and enacted through social relations in order to resist the objectifying power of the system. Habermas's general

concern is with full, uncoerced, participation of all citizens in democratic processes and decision-making. I view this concern as worthy of our attention and I support efforts toward this goal, but I want to take our collective response to colonization of the lifeworld further. I want to articulate a critical theory that goes beyond emphasizing rational processes of consensus making and communicative action to one that centers *love* and *care* as steering mechanisms of social relations in the lifeworld.

This dimension of social life has been largely ignored generally by sociologists. While there is a subfield of feminist theory that focuses on caregiving and care work as invisible, undervalued, and unpaid forms of labor carried out largely by women (see, for example, Wharton 2009), this scholarship has not focused as much on care as a motivation for or logic of social relations. Similarly, the subfield of the sociology of emotions analyzes social and cultural influences on, responses to, and meanings of, how humans display emotions (see, for example, Thoits 1989). Neither of these subfields approach care in the way I am proposing. I want to theorize love and care as *motivations for how we act toward each other*, as *logics of social relations*. Other sociologists have argued for the need to theorize about these aspects of human life more fully than has been conducted to date (e.g., Jeffries 2009a, 2009b; Nichols 2009; Rusu 2018), but their work is rarely considered in mainstream sociology.

The findings from my study provide examples of how victim advocates are working to build communities of care that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed and they are working to change the culture and norms around sexual relationships and consent and shared definitions of harassment and violence. As O'Callaghan and Shepp (2023) argue, we need to “shift back to the grassroots organizing that began the anti-violence movement—one that was focused on community care and community support, rather than institutions (Combahee River Collective 2014; Richie 2000)” (p. 338).

5.3. Abolition as Resistance

An important question is the extent to which efforts by advocates can resist the power of the system and campus control, especially within the current structure. Although not all victim advocates identify with or embrace abolitionist activism or ideology, the anti-violence field has begun to engage more with this work in their efforts to resist oppressive systems. Consistent with my view of the lifeworld, Cullers (2021) suggests that “Abolition practice is also about establishing a system rooted in dignity and care for all people” (p. 8). I suggest that much can be learned from abolitionist frameworks and activists about how to resist the system and elevate the lifeworld.

At the heart of abolition philosophy and ideology is a rejection of oppressive systems. While in the U.S., early abolitionists focused on dismantling the oppressive system of slavery, the contemporary focus is eliminating the prison industrial complex specifically, and the criminal legal system's use of state violence as a means of control more generally. In the realm of gender-based violence, abolitionists have challenged the feminist anti-violence movement's reliance on the criminal legal system to respond to intimate partner violence and rape (Richie 2000; Kim 2013). Such critiques apply to many formal practices and policies implemented on college campuses in response to sexual assault as argued by O'Callaghan and Shepp (2023).

Abolitionist scholars and activists argue that participating within existing systems for reform will not result in sufficient change. Abolitionists promote the dismantling of oppressive systems to create something different, a transformational approach (see, for example, Kaba 2021). In this way, abolitionists offer more than a critique of what exists by envisioning and articulating a more just set of social relations. As suggested by Ruth Gilmore, during a webinar conversation with Angela Y. Davis, Mike Davis and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “struggles are part of abolition; not just the absence of cops and prisons, but the presence of everything we need to secure that absence, including the capacity for people to engage in their own production, reproduction, and social reproduction” (Haymarket Books 2021).

6. Conclusions

Despite decades of policies and practices aimed at eliminating sexual assault on college campuses through increasing carceral responses, we have not witnessed lower rates of sexual assault, increased safety for students, or better responses when sexual assault occurs. It is clear that the current systems are not working. We need to develop stronger frameworks for understanding the problem and potential solutions that lead to action that elevates and enacts the social relations and logic of the lifeworld. This means that these efforts must be coordinated through a collective process based in community, where activists, practitioners and academics work together to center and elevate the lived experiences of survivors so that their interests and needs are prioritized. These efforts must be grounded in care, dignity, and respect for humanity. Ultimately, we need to create social relations that enable those most affected by systems to lead the efforts toward social change.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The referenced study was approved by VCU's IRB, reference number HM20005082.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to IRB requirements.

Acknowledgments: The author wishes to thank the victim advocates who participated in interviews for the earlier study, and to thank Bruce Busching for many meaningful conversations about Habermas and the lifeworld.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interests.

References

- Allen, Nicole E., Sadie E. Larsen, and Angela L. Walden. 2011. An overview of community-based services for battered women. In *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women*. Edited by Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson and Raquel Kennedy Bergen. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, pp. 245–66.
- Amar, Angela F., Tania D. Strout, Somatra Simpson, Maria Cardiello, and Sonia Beckford. 2014. Administrators' perceptions of college campus protocols, response, and student prevention efforts for sexual assault. *Violence and Victims* 29: 579–93. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- ATIXA. 2015. *ATIXA Position Statement on the Need for Victim Advocates on College Campuses*. Berwyn: ATIXA.
- Barry, Christine A., Fiona A. Stevenson, Nicky Britten, Nick Barber, and Colin P. Bradley. 2001. Giving voice to the lifeworld. More humane, more effective medical care? A qualitative study of doctor–patient communication in general practice. *Social Science & Medicine* 53: 487–505.
- Baur, Vivianne E., and Tineke A. Abma. 2011. Resident councils between lifeworld and system: Is there room for communicative action? *Journal of Aging Studies* 25: 390–96. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Baxter, Hugh. 1987. System and life-world in Habermas's "Theory of Communicative Action". *Theory and Society* 16: 39–86. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Brubaker, Sarah Jane. 2019. Campus-based sexual assault victim advocacy and Title IX: Revisiting tensions between grassroots activism and the criminal justice system. *Feminist Criminology* 14: 307–29. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Brubaker, Sarah Jane, and Brittany Keegan. 2019. "Suddenly everyone's an expert in our field": Campus victim advocates and the promise and perils of professionalization. *Violence Against Women* 25: 1116–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Campbell, Rebecca. 2006. Rape survivors' experiences with the legal and medical systems: Do rape victim advocates make a difference? *Violence Against Women* 12: 30–45. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Carmody, Dianne, Jessica Ekhomu, and Brian K. Payne. 2009. Needs of sexual assault advocates in campus-based sexual assault centers. *College Student Journal* 43: 507–13.
- Combahee River Collective. 2014. A Black feminist statement. *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42: 271–80. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cullers, Patrisse. 2021. *An Abolitionist's Handbook: 12 Steps to Changing Yourself and the World*. New York: St. Martin's Publishing Group.
- Davies, Jill, and Eleanor Lyon. 2013. *Domestic Violence Advocacy: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Dills, Jenny, Dawn Fowler, and Gayle Payne. 2016. *Sexual Violence on Campus: Strategies for Prevention*; Atlanta: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Fairlough, Gerald H. 1991. Habermas' concept of "Lifeworld". *Systems Practice* 4: 547–63. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fraser, Nancy. 1985. What's critical about critical theory? The case of Habermas and gender. *New German Critique* 35: 97–131. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Froggatt, Katherin, Joe Hockley, Deborah Parker, and Kevin Brazil. 2011. A system lifeworld perspective on dying in long term care settings for older people: Contested states in contested places. *Health & Place* 17: 263–68.
- Geuss, Raymond. 1981. *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas & the Frankfurt School*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Haymarket Books. 2021. Abolition, Cultural Freedom, Liberation. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLO0UuSnPzU&t=2206s> (accessed on 22 December 2023).
- Jackson, Neil. 1999. The council tenants' forum: A liminal public space between lifeworld and system? *Urban Studies* 36: 43–58. [CrossRef]
- Jeffries, Vincent. 2009a. Redefining the nature and future of sociology: Toward a holistic sociology. In *Handbook of Public Sociology*. Edited by Vincent Jeffries. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 1–26.
- Jeffries, Vincent. 2009b. The scientific system of public sociology: The exemplar of Pitirim A. Sorokin's social thought. In *Handbook of Public Sociology*. Edited by Vincent Jeffries. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 107–20.
- Kaba, Miriame. 2021. *We Do this' til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, vol. 1.
- Kasper, Barbara. 2004. Campus-based women's centers: A review of problems and practices. *Affilia* 19: 185–98. [CrossRef]
- Kemmis, Stephen. 1998. System and lifeworld, and the conditions of learning in late modernity. *Curriculum Studies* 6: 269–305. [CrossRef]
- Kim, Mimi E. 2013. Challenging the pursuit of criminalisation in an era of mass incarceration: The limitations of social work responses to domestic violence in the USA. *British Journal of Social Work* 43: 1276–93. [CrossRef]
- Know Your IX. n.d. Available online: <https://knowyourix.org/college-resources/hands-off-ix/> (accessed on 26 December 2023).
- Koss, Mary, and Mary Achilles. 2008. Restorative justice approaches to sexual assault. In *Applied Research Forum*. National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women: Available online: <https://vawnet.org/material/restorative-justice-responses-sexual-assault> (accessed on 14 February 2024).
- Lombardi, Kristen. 2017. The college judicial system leaves rape victims feeling victimized again. In *Campus Sexual Violence*. Edited by Elizabeth Schmermund. New York: Greenhaven Publishing, pp. 115–33.
- Martin, Patricia Yancey. 2005. *Rape Work: Victims, Gender, and Emotions in Organization and Community Context*. New York: Routledge.
- Moylan, Carrie A. 2017. "I fear I'm a checkbox": College and university victim advocates' perspectives of campus rape reforms. *Violence Against Women* 23: 1122–39. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center. 2018. Bystander Intervention Tips and Strategies. Available online: https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/publications_nsvrc_tip-sheet_bystander-intervention-tips-and-strategies_1.pdf (accessed on 14 February 2024).
- Nichols, Lawrence T. 2009. Burawoy's holistic sociology and Sorokin's integralism: A conversation of ideas. In *Handbook of Public Sociology*. Edited by Vincent Jeffries. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 27–46.
- Nichols, Andrea J. 2013. Meaning-making and domestic violence victim advocacy: An examination of feminist identities, ideologies, and practices. *Feminist Criminology* 8: 177–201. [CrossRef]
- Nichols, Andrea J. 2014. No-drop prosecution in domestic violence cases: Survivor-defined and social change approaches to victim advocacy. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 29: 2114–42. [CrossRef]
- Nightingale, Sarah D. 2023. Perceptions of institutional response to sexual assault amongst college-based victim advocates. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38. [CrossRef]
- O'Callaghan, Erin, and Veronica Shepp. 2023. Only we can protect us: Labor and anti-harassment organizing within the neoliberal university. *Social Sciences* 12: 330. [CrossRef]
- Payne, Brian K. 2008. Challenges responding to sexual violence: Differences between college campuses and communities. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 36: 224–30. [CrossRef]
- Richie, Beth E. 2000. A Black feminist reflection on the antiviolence movement. *Signs* 25: 1133–37. [CrossRef]
- Rusu, Mihai Stelian. 2018. Theorising love in sociological thought: Classical contributions to a sociology of love. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 18: 3–20. [CrossRef]
- Shepp, Veronica, Erin O'Callaghan, and Anne Kirkner. 2023. The carceral logic of Title IX. *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education* 16: 4–24. [CrossRef]
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1992. Sociology from women's experience: A reaffirmation. *Sociological Theory* 10: 88–98. [CrossRef]
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1996. The relations of ruling: A feminist inquiry. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies* 2: 171–90. [CrossRef]
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1997. From the margins: Women's standpoint as a method of inquiry in the social sciences. *Gender, Technology and Development* 1: 113–35.
- Strout, Tania, Angela Frederick Amar, and Krystal Astwood. 2014. Women's center staff perceptions of the campus climate on sexual violence. *Journal of Forensic Nursing* 10: 135–43. [CrossRef]
- Thoits, Peggy A. 1989. The sociology of emotions. *Annual Review of Sociology* 15: 317–42. [CrossRef]
- U.S. Department of Education. 2021. Available online: https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html (accessed on 14 February 2024).
- Wharton, Amy S. 2009. The sociology of emotional labor. *Annual Review of Sociology* 35: 147–65. [CrossRef]
- Zweig, Janine M., and Martha R. Burt. 2007. Predicting women's perceptions of domestic violence and sexual assault agency helpfulness: What matters to program clients? *Violence Against Women* 13: 1149–78. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.