

Social Reactions to Disclosure of Campus Sexual Assault and PTSD Symptoms among Black Female Undergraduates

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Abstract: Black women experience worse PTSD symptoms following campus sexual assault (CSA) compared to their White peers (Ullman & Filipas, 2001). They also receive worse reactions from others upon disclosure of the assault, likely due to rape myths/stereotypes (Lewis et al., 2019). For example, Black women confront the “Jezebel” and “Matriarch” stereotypes, resulting in their being viewed as instigating assaults and not needing support (Olive, 2012). Worse reactions upon disclosure of assault could explain more severe PTSD symptoms among this group of students (Berman et al., 2018). This study examined whether social reactions to disclosure of CSA mediated worse PTSD for Black vs. White students (conceptual model depicted in Figure 1). Female undergraduate students ($N = 73$; 13.7% Black, 80.1% White Non-Hispanic) completed an online survey assessing CSA, social reactions to disclosure of the assault (via the SRQ-S; Ullman, 2000), and PTSD symptoms (via the PCL-5; Weathers et al., 2013). Black victims of CSA reported less positive social reactions ($b = -0.62, p < .05$), though positive reactions did not predict worse PTSD. Black victims did not report more negative social reactions, though social reactions characterized by victim blaming and stigmatizing predicted worse PTSD ($b = 7.03, p < .05$). More data will be collected at the start of the fall semester to increase the sample size and improve statistical power for testing mediation hypotheses. However, this study describes worse social reactions for Black women following CSA, highlighting the need for better support for these women.

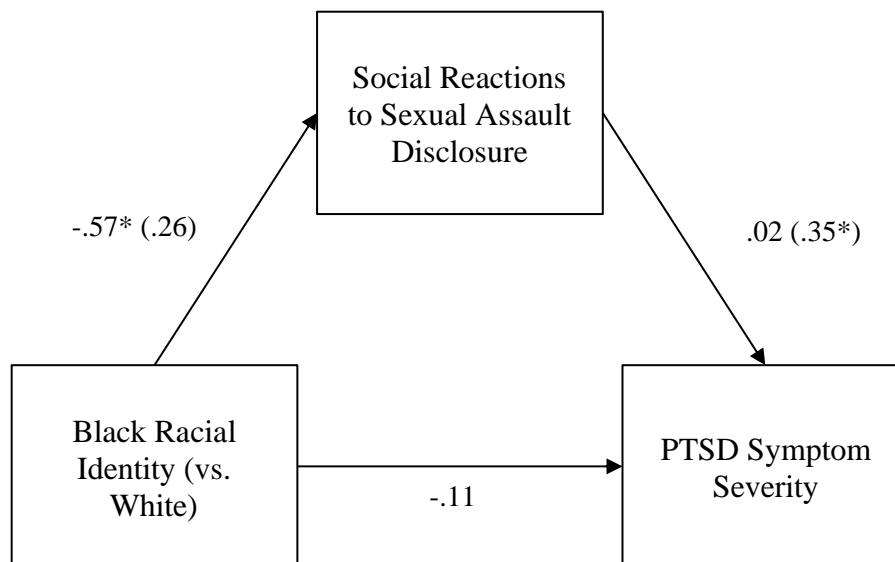


Figure 1. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between Black racial identity and PTSD symptom severity as mediated by social reactions to sexual assault disclosure. The standardized

regression coefficients between Black racial identity and social reactions and between social reactions and PTSD symptom severity are for both positive and negative social reactions, with the coefficients for negative social reactions listed in parentheses.

* $p < .05$