Rewriting the Sexual Assault Narrative:
Applying the Restorative Justice Framework to Campus Sexual Assault Policy
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Abstract: In 2016, under the pseudonym Emily Doe, a woman now revealed as Chanel Miller released her victim impact statement after Stanford University freshman Brock Turner sexually assaulted her behind a dumpster. Following its publication on Buzzfeed, the "Stanford victim's" letter amassed millions of reads and contributed to a global reckoning around sexual assault. The now-infamous "Stanford sexual assault case" was not an isolated incident: in 2015, the U.S. Department of Education reported that one in five female college students experiences sexual assault, and only 4% of victims ever report their assault. The lack of college investigation into sexual assault, pressures of nondisclosure, and frightening prevalence of campus sexual assault couple with the powerful voice of Miller's victim impact statement to demonstrate the necessity of incorporating victim-centered narratives into campus sexual assault policy.

Current university practices that prioritize their own interests above victims' further victimize survivors, evoke feelings of institutional betrayal, and perpetuate silence, creating a need to move towards viable solutions that recenter victims and prevent further assault. In a research paper framed by Miller's powerful words, I argue that the framework of restorative justice, a cooperative process of repairing harm through education and discussion of perpetrators' impacts on communities, should be applied to campus sexual assault policy. The use of restorative justice will counter rape myths with victims' narratives, regenerate discussion, and focus on systemic issues to halt cycles of sexual violence. To bolster this argument, I discuss the current impact of responses to sexual assault on survivors, before exploring interviews of survivors and perpetrators of crime as well as statistical data on recidivation rates following restorative justice interventions.

I was ten years old when my mom bought me my first pepper spray. It came in a cheerful pink container, accompanied by her cautionary words: *Because you're a girl, you must never walk anywhere alone. Cover yourself. Never let your guard down. If there's a bad guy, use this.* So I grew up shying away from dark streets and short skirts, pepper spray forever embedded in my backpack. On nighttime walks to check the mail or release an intruding spider, my pepper spray remained clenched tightly in my fist. Even years later, a ten-meter radius around my home was not enough security against the "bad guys" whom I feared were lurking in the shadows.

When I was eighteen and packing for college, my mom perched on the edge of my bed. This time, she implored me to watch what I wore, to not give boys bad ideas. She told me she worried about the drinking culture at Stanford, about how I must be careful in turning down a guy because he could become violent — always skirting, circling, shying away from, closing in on but never saying the word “rape”. But even without a name, the worry permeated the air we breathed. I saw the pepper spray staring down at me from atop my dresser. I tucked it into my suitcase.

My mom's deep fear of assault was not unfounded: already when she was on the cusp of applying to college in 1985, Ms. Magazine and Mary R. Koss, then a psychology professor at Kent State University, surveyed over 6,100 undergraduates to unveil that one in four female college students in the United States had an experience meeting the legal definition of rape or attempted rape (Zimmerman, 2016). By 2014, this number had hardly changed, with the U.S. Department of Education reporting that one in five female college students experiences sexual assault (O'Boyle & Li, 2019, p. 432). Complicating these staggering statistics is the fact that only 4% of victims ever report their assault (O'Boyle & Li, 2019, p. 432), and a frightening number of universities refrain from even investigating these few reports (Kingkade, 2017).

These universities' abandonment in the face of such horrifying numbers amplified the necessity of my pepper spray: as of 2015, 52% of U.S. universities did not investigate students' rape complaints (O'Boyle & Li, 2019, p. 436), leaving women with no choice but to fend for themselves. Despite Title IX (a civil rights law prohibiting sex-based discrimination in schools) regulations requiring all federally funded schools to address sexual harassment, in 2016, 124 universities were under investigation for violations (Kingkade, 2017). Specifically, more than 20% of the largest private institutions conducted fewer investigations than incidents reported, with some colleges reporting seven times more incidents than they investigated (Germain, 2016). Since 2016, this failing situation has only worsened: changes to Title IX legislation in 2020 have narrowed the definition of reportable sexual harassment. Colleges are now only required to investigate if reports are made to certain officials, and are only held directly accountable for mishandling complaints if acting with "deliberate indifference" (Slagter, 2020).

In fact, the university I was slated to attend held its own infamy regarding sexual assault. In 2016, under the pseudonym Emily Doe, a woman now revealed as Chanel Miller released her victim impact statement after Stanford University freshman Brock Turner sexually assaulted her behind a dumpster. Following its release on Buzzfeed, the "Stanford victim's" letter amassed

millions of reads and contributed to a global reckoning around sexual assault echoing throughout online news outlets, communities, and even the U.S. House of Representatives (Miller, 2019).

I spent the week before I entered Stanford reading Miller's 2019 memoir, *Know My Name*, starting and stopping, tears blurring the letters. In the book, she discussed being victim-blamed by the media, where comment sections would question who was really at fault. She discussed the victimization she experienced at the hands of her attacker's defense team, where her identity and choices were stripped apart. She discussed feelings of betrayal from Stanford as an institution, for prioritizing its reputation over her wellbeing. She discussed the painful frustration that her attacker did not "get it," that what he did was wrong rather than something attributed to alcohol. Most of all, she discussed how sexual assault is not an individual or moral problem but a sociocultural one: one that does not start or stop at the university.

Reading this insight into a victim's experiences, I felt not only afraid, but also seen in my fear. I felt that this was a fear that many other girls have felt. And I felt that this was a burden we must not shoulder in silence. Miller's powerful voice urges us to find the empathy and humanity within these stories that we often do not tell, refusing the common sexual assault narrative of silence and stigma. By doing so, she works against institutional power structures, creating a "counter-narrative or narrative of resistance against the marginalization of women's experiences" (Germain, 2016, p. 106). Where institutions tend to blame and dehumanize survivors, Miller's story advocates for systemic change while reclaiming agency and offering solidarity.

Such victim-centered narratives need to be incorporated into campus sexual assault policy to counter the institutional failures evident both in the staggering rape statistics and in Miller's story. Current university practices that prioritize their own image and center punishment above victims' needs further victimize survivors, evoke feelings of institutional betrayal, and perpetuate silence, creating a need to move toward viable solutions that recenter victims and prevent further assault. To meet these goals, I argue that the general framework of restorative justice, a cooperative process of repairing harm through education and discussion of perpetrators' impacts on communities, should be applied to campus sexual assault policy. The use of restorative justice will counter rape myths with victims' narratives, regenerate discussion, and focus on systemic issues to halt cycles of sexual violence. To bolster this argument, I will discuss the current impact of responses to sexual assault on survivors, before exploring interviews of survivors and perpetrators of crime as well as statistical data on recidivation rates following restorative justice interventions.

Polyvictimization and Institutional Image

> "What were you wearing? Did you drink in college? You said you were a party animal? Are you serious with your boyfriend? Would you ever cheat? What do you mean when you said you wanted to reward him? Do you remember what time you woke up? Do you remember any more from that night? No? Okay, well, we'll let Brock fill it in."
> —Chanel Miller, *Know My Name* (Miller, 2019, p. 346)

When my mom implored me to watch what I wore and did in college, her words echoed the barrage of questions that sexual assault trials unload onto survivors. Society often buys into a concept Germain (2016) labels "rape myths," in which people believe aspects of a woman's behavior absolve perpetrators of guilt. On college campuses, this often manifests in beliefs that female students' engagement in "bad behaviors" such as drinking and promiscuity equates to them practically "asking for" assault, as seen in the invasively irrelevant questions posed in Miller's (2019) trial. These prejudices often make victims hesitant to report assault, a victim's dilemma where survivors must either press charges and face painful rape myths or stay silent without justice (Germain, 2016). Rape myths do not only pose barriers to women reporting assault; even for those who brave the justice process, Germain finds that accusatory questions like those in Miller's trial harm a victim's healing trajectory. Mennicke et al. (2021) label this "polyvictimization," the phenomenon where reporting one's assault gives rise to additional forms of victimization.

Fueling such polyvictimization in rape cases is the depiction of survivors in the media. Through analyzing 500 stories across ten major American newspapers, O'Boyle & Li (2019) found that when reporting on campus sexual assault, the public media most often frames cases in terms of the moral characters of perpetrators and victims. In fact, 72% of the articles attributed sexual assault to individual causes, with 37.4% considering victims responsible and 34.6% blaming perpetrators. The fact that more articles place blame on survivors than perpetrators reveals the intense polyvictimization inflicted on survivors: "Often it seems easier to suffer rape alone, than face the dismembering that comes with seeking support" (Miller, 2019, p. 292).

When this blame is shifted toward individuals, it is simultaneously shifted away from institutions. O'Boyle & Li (2019) found that only 25.8% of news articles attributed responsibility for sexual assault to academic institutions, 11.6 percentage points fewer than the 37.4% blaming victims. To explain this discrepancy, O'Boyle & Li posit that schools have corporate interests, making a pristine image "vital to attract elite students and government funding" (p. 436). If too much attention is drawn to sexual assault, that campus becomes less attractive, leading colleges to deliberately deflect media attention and hide accounts of rape, as we will discuss in the next section. The prioritization of institutional reputation over students' well-being feels like a betrayal to victims assaulted on their campus.

Institutional Betrayal Breeds Cultures of Silence

> "*On nights when you feel alone, I am with you* … How could you abandon me these last two years, to reappear and take those lines. To hide the damage, then present the polished. I could not give Stanford words of hope when they had not provided me reason to feel any … On nights when you are alone, you are left alone."
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> —Chanel Miller, *Know My Name* (Miller, 2019, p. 315)

To keep up their pristine facade, universities may turn to performative actions that can further alienate and silence victims. Two years after her assault, Stanford reached out to Miller to have a garden and plaque put up in the spot where she had been found. Though Miller sent

several options for the plaque's quote that discussed her irreparable trauma, each was rejected by Stanford, which expressed a wish for a more uplifting message. Instead, they suggested a quote extracted from her victim impact letter: "On nights when you feel alone, I am with you." Such words felt painfully ironic to Miller when Stanford had in fact done little to support her, only contacting her once considerable media attention had forced them into action. Miller declined the quote, and discussion of the plaque came to a standstill. Despite Stanford's continued attention to detail such as the new garden's stone veneer, "there was still no Title IX investigation, no policy review. Still no plaque" (Miller, 2019, p. 315). Through their performative and empty actions, Stanford effectively silenced Miller's words as a survivor searching for justice.

Sharoni et al. (2019) argue that this facade is why colleges often opt for relatively simple solutions to sexual assault, like commemorative gardens or smartphone training apps: they make it easy for colleges to demonstrate a sympathetic image or compliance with guidelines rather than undergoing the difficult work of rooting out structural issues. Sharoni et al. name such performative actions "institutional betrayal," in which wrongdoings are "perpetuated by an institution upon individuals reliant on that institution" (p. 1356). Keeping with this trend, while many college presidents are becoming "more vocal" about sexual assault, fewer than a third reported consistent funding for evaluation efforts of prevention programming, meaning a smaller percentage yet is maximizing resources toward preventing sexual assault (Sharoni et al., 2019). Like Stanford's actions toward Miller, college presidents appear more performative (vocal) than effective (funded or supported). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Germain's (2016) studies found agreement in feelings of institutional betrayal: multiple college-age women mentioned beliefs that universities adjust assault prevalence statistics to make campuses appear safer. Colleges' insistence on untarnished and uplifting facades comes at the expense of students' trust.

Like these simple bandaids over a complex wound, colleges may do the bare minimum in compliance with federal laws, impeding victims' trust in institutions and comfort in disclosure. The creation of federal Title IX regulations that necessitate staff reporting of sexual assault limits faculty's agency in advocating for survivors while dissuading students from confiding in their teachers (Mennicke et al., 2021). In their work on faculty advocacy, Sharoni et al. (2019) argue that the creation of "mandatory reporters" is "a passive role that limits our ability to support students and could drive a wedge between faculty and survivors" (p. 1364). If students confide in their teacher, that teacher effectively betrays their confidence in filing a report. It then becomes difficult to talk candidly with one's professor without incurring the additional logistic and emotional burden created by a formal report. Mennicke et al. quantify this harm, finding that fewer than 6% of students would be "extremely likely" to disclose sexual assault if employees were required to report assaults to the university. In a system of retributive justice, the focus on formal punishment for offenders deemphasizes the comfort and needs of victims.

When staff try to move beyond their role as mandatory reporters, additional barriers arise and dissuade them from continuing advocacy efforts. Sharoni et al. (2019) discuss how such staff are "portrayed as troublemakers who have overstepped their role" (p. 1355) and can face such repercussions as tenure denial, dismissal, and reputational damage. For example, a University of

Oregon therapist was threatened with dismissal after advocating to keep a victim's counseling records confidential (Grinberg, 2015). With students discouraged from disclosing their assault as Mennicke et al. (2021) found, a vicious cycle is created where silence is perpetuated on all sides: students will not confide in staff for fear of mandatory reporting, leaving staff avoidant of the topic of sexual assault without outside advocacy (Sharoni et al., 2019).

Not only are staff silenced: institutional policies can also directly silence students. Efforts to increase the confidentiality of alleged perpetrators at Columbia University, Pomona College, and Transylvania University have created what some students consider "gag orders," threatening disciplinary charges if students discuss details of sexual violence incidents with their peers and families (Kingkade, 2015). Just as students cannot confide in staff, the limitation on discussion with peers "makes it difficult to get emotional support … and simply makes victims feel like they are the ones on trial" (Kingkade, 2015). Part of this institutional hush culture around discussing sexual assault proceedings may function as self-protection from legal action. Through defamation lawsuits, perpetrators sometimes pursue legal action against schools for unfavorable Title IX outcomes, further victimizing and retaliating against survivors (Dugan, 2022). To minimize the blow to their image and economic propositions, institutions will often favor keeping victims' loved ones in the dark, further isolating survivors. Miller (2019) corroborates the resulting feelings of betrayal, relating, "It bothered me that coming forward should feel like heading toward a guillotine… Silence means safety. Openness means retaliation" (p. 334). This silencing of survivors by unempathetic institutional policies highlights the necessity of creating policies that renew discussion and recenter victims.

Cyclical Violence and the Need for Victim-Centered Responses

> "I wanted accountability and punishment, but I also hoped he was getting better. I didn't fight to end him, I fought to convert him to my side. I wanted him to understand, to acknowledge the harm his actions had caused and reform himself. If he truly believed his future was ruined and he had nothing to lose, the possibilities were terrifying."
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> —Chanel Miller, *Know My Name* (Miller, 2019, p. 93)

Just as we must examine the cyclic silencing of survivors, we must also examine sexual violence as a whole on a cyclical level. As we look toward college-driven responses, O'Boyle & Li (2019) remind us that campus sexual assault does not exist in a vacuum; "the institutions of higher learning may be training grounds for behavior that eventually affects all of society" (p. 447). Miller (2019) fleshes out this idea by discussing how if her attacker could get away with a light sentence, it would send a message that men could learn to not assault through "trial and error," influencing cyclical violence and the chilling reality of repeat offenders (p. 360).

Miller's fear of repetitive gendered violence developed in the context of a larger history. When Miller attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, a mass shooter released a virulent manifesto lamenting how girls' "deprivation" of his "right" to sex had "forced his hand" in killing several UCSB students (Miller, 2019, p. 92). Miller's memory of this experience amplified her fear of her assaulter, amounting to a recognition that no punishment was adequate

if it did not prevent Turner's violence from graduating to a larger community. To prevent the cyclical violence similarly indicated by my mom's warning to be careful about letting down boys, Miller notes the benefit of teaching and "reforming" rather than harshly punishing perpetrators.

Given the power of such a firsthand testimonial and the pervasiveness of rape culture, Germain (2016) argues why such reforming responses must center discussion with victims like Miller: survivors' stories "shift the paradigm of conversations about campus sexual violence from prescriptive and idealistic to descriptive and truthful" (p. 106). When policies are made without input from the very people they affect, they tend to follow a removed stance and stick to an ineffective status quo of what those in power believe should be done, as evidenced by the decline in confiding in trusted adults following the implementation of mandatory reporters. The words of Miller's memoir offer a counter-narrative. By glimpsing the real physical and psychological toll of not only being assaulted but living in fear of larger-scale violence, we can shift our perspectives to better empathize with victims in creating systemic policies that can reform perpetrators.

Addressing Retributive Inadequacies with Restorative Justice

> "I told the probation officer I do not want Brock to rot away in prison. I did not say he does not deserve to be behind bars… What I wanted was for Brock to get it, to understand and admit to his wrongdoing… all he has admitted to doing is ingesting alcohol. Someone who cannot take responsibility does not deserve a mitigating sentence."
> —Chanel Miller, *Know My Name* (Miller, 2019, p. 358)

In evaluating survivors' stories, one of the most important factors cited is the hope that their assaulter is held accountable and experiences guilt. But when probation officers asked Chanel Miller her wishes regarding Turner's sentencing, they extracted part of her answer and neglected the rest. Though it was true that she had expressed a desire for Turner to not spend his life behind bars, Miller found on his sentencing day that he had received only six months in county jail, in addition to expressing no true accountability: in his own statement, Turner characterized alcohol as the criminal and the two of them as unfortunate drunks. This lack of accountability was perhaps the most frustrating aspect of the trial for Miller; what she had wanted was for Turner to come to an understanding and break away from the cyclical violence she had seen at UCSB, yet she instead received a new form of polyvictimization with these slaps on Turner's wrist.

In the current system, justice is seen as retributive, where "crime is a violation of the state, defined by lawbreaking and guilt" while "justice determines blame and administers pain in a contest between the offender and the state" (Leung, 1999, p. 2). With crime seen as breaking laws defined by government entities, the system shifts away from recognizing injuries done to individuals. As Leung puts it, "the singular focus on legal guilt, not moral, social, or even factual guilt, further isolates victims" (p. 2). This was certainly the case for Miller (2019), who was by many definitions what Germain (2016) labels the 'perfect victim'—having two witnesses catch

Turner in the act as well as photographic and chemical evidence taken within hours of the assault. The fact that Miller still had to undergo a drawn-out trial casting her accusations into doubt despite this evidence demonstrates how focused retributive justice is on legality (such as the question, was it really rape?) rather than the clear physical and psychological harm at hand.

When Miller's probation officers called her about the sentencing, this action hinted at moving toward the survivor's needs. However, the fact that they took "no rotting away in prison" and translated it to a lighter prison sentence, without helping Turner understand his wrongdoing or repairing the harm done to Miller, demonstrates an inadequacy in the court's approach to enacting justice. Yet Miller ironically called herself one of the lucky ones, as other survivors often are unable to receive concrete consequences at all. For one Indiana University student, Margaux, who found herself in a similar situation, her assaulter experienced no change in attitude after raping her, blaming alcohol as the culprit. Quick to address a breach in the school's honor policy and focus on retributive justice, the hearing officer took drinking as the student's crime rather than electing to deal with the difficult work of examining sexual assault-related offenses, which were far less cut and dry. The student was not expelled and in fact won the sympathy of the teacher running the hearing, as related by Margaux:

> He tells me that my rapist was crying and admitting he's an alcoholic. And I remember him saying, 'I think we really made a breakthrough.' But the fact that I had to sit there and listen to this guy tell me that he was feeling bad for the guy who just raped me, not only raped me but was completely unapologetic. I mean that really just broke me down the most. It made me feel really defeated. (Shapiro, 2010)

The failures of campus sexual assault policy to support victims and change perpetrators' attitudes points to a need for a new justice framework to be worked into the current system. I argue that restorative justice is this framework. In comparison to retributive justice, restorative justice involves problem-solving rather than blame-fixing, repairing rather than counterbalancing injury, centering rather than acknowledging victims, and contextualizing rather than isolating crimes (Leung, 1999). Originating from Indigenous and Christian teachings, restorative justice "involves creating the social conditions that minimize wrongdoing" (Leung, 1999, p. 6). Its main pillars include holding wrongdoers accountable, supporting victims' specific needs, teaching perpetrators the impacts of their actions, and rehabilitating parties into the community.

Most often, restorative justice processes involve victims getting their questions answered and having the space to express the crime's impact to their attacker and broader community. Meanwhile, perpetrators accept responsibility for their actions and gain a further understanding of the issues leading to their wrongdoing. Particular implementations can include perpetrators discussing victim impact statements as well as documenting how communities were harmed by their crime (Kennedy et al., 2019). Much in the same way as Miller's statement, restorative justice acts as a vehicle for counter-narrative: survivors' voices are brought into the conversation, allowing them to communicate perpetrators' harm while reclaiming agency against rape-myth-fueled narratives.

Because of restorative justice's attention to survivors' stories, it is by nature tailored to the specific needs of victims in each situation. Not every case will involve meetings or even be eligible for restorative justice, especially if the perpetrator's crime involves ongoing risks to the victim. In addition, since the process of restorative justice is meant to educate people, often allegations of repeat offenses will not be eligible either, as "if the person is accused of offending again, the education may not have worked" (North, 2019). It also does not necessarily mean a goal of returning relationships to their initial state; rather, it is a process of "righting wrongs" or "healing wounds" (Leung, 1999).

Answered Questions and Renewed Flow of Discussion

Although restorative justice has gained attention since its first introduction in the 1970s (Zehr, 2018), discussion of restorative justice is lacking in the realm of campus sexual assault, perhaps in part due to the aforementioned misconceptions. However, restorative justice is in actuality a very effective measure to apply on college campuses because it combats the culture of silence. Rather than making victims hesitant to report their assault, restorative justice encourages them to be more vocal because they can discuss their specific needs and repair specific harms done to them.

In a conversation with an anonymous Stanford student, I learned that she had experienced uncomfortable sexual situations that felt "murky" and full of "grey areas." She had been reluctant to disclose the incidents because she felt the situation was too unclear to merit an investigation—particularly because she was dating the individual and had been drinking. When I explained the idea of restorative justice to her, she expressed that she wished that option had been available for her: the retributive justice system had seemed too formal, when what she wanted was to make clear to her partner why their actions were wrong and better understand the situation. This idea of unwanted complexity is corroborated by other interviewees; as noted by one survivor, "It is unanswered questions that continue to create pain" (Bargen et al., 2018).

Thus, getting questions answered by restorative justice processes has been a major draw for the few survivors for whom the process has been available. Though not campus-involved, the victim-centering found in restorative justice processes can be seen in a BBC interview with L. Coel (2015). As a child, Coel was groomed and sexually assaulted by her stepfather for ten years before finally meeting with him to discuss the impact the abuse had on her life. In the hours-long meeting, the two sat in an environment curated to Coel's preferences, and Coel's stepfather answered her questions. The ability to interact was an important step in moving on; Coel felt a need "to know that he did feel bad for what he did." When asked how she felt following the restorative justice discussion, Coel replied, "Empowered. I felt like I had lots of new information … I didn't want him to feel he had control over making or breaking my life; I wanted to retake that power and I did." Coel's ability to regain feelings of control and power through discussing accountability with her stepfather highlights the necessity of communication in healing.

The significance of an opportunity to center a survivor's needs is additionally clear in the immense reassurance Coel felt afterward that she attests would not be the case had the meeting

not happened. In response to the question of how she would feel otherwise, Coel responded, "I would still carry all this anger and guilt and confusion around with me every day; I can move past it now and focus on my life." Coel echoes the same emotions that Miller (2019) lamented were hounding her attempts to move on; through restorative justice efforts and victim-based discussion, Coel was able to achieve the sense of closure that Miller was deprived of.

Restorative justice, when implemented in schools, can additionally improve the flow of discussion on sexual assault, regenerating trust in institutions to attend to victims' needs. Though still an uncommon response, both the College of New Jersey and Rutgers University have begun offering "alternative resolutions" to sexual assault that examine what the perpetrator needs to "hear, see, complete, or do, to recognize and acknowledge harm, and for that to be repaired" (North, 2019). This can manifest in workshops with therapists on healthy relationships and discussions of victim impact statements. Most notably at Rutgers, there has actually been an increase in the number of sexual assault reports followed by resolution processes since the alternative process was created: prior, most students refused any resolution because of the burdensome trials associated with investigations (North, 2019). This increase emphasizes how restorative justice ensures survivors' comfort in pushing for justice; such a supportive model restores trust in institutions and counteracts silence to shed light on patterns of harm.

Breaking Cycles of Crime

Restorative justice is in turn imperative to breaking cycles of violence. Title IX and criminal procedures are different, however, data on criminal probationers suggests that those who received restorative justice interventions were statistically less likely to recidivate, or relapse, into crime. In a study by Kennedy et al. (2019), those who received an intervention had a 33.16% recidivation rate as opposed to 68.46% of a control group who did not receive an intervention. The difference between these numbers echoes the difference between numbers from Quinn's (1998) study of Washington State criminals, where the recidivation rate with restorative justice interventions was just 9% while without, it was 37%. With 50% fewer victims who participated in restorative justice expressing fear of revictimization, restorative justice curbs crime repetition and creates safer environments for victims and non-victims alike.

In halting cycles of crime, restorative justice processes effectively help perpetrators to gain empathy and perspective on the harm they cause to others. Evaluating 39 serious crimes, including robbery, rape, and homicide in British Columbia, Quinn (1998) found unanimous support for restorative justice following dialogue between survivors and offenders; "Offenders reported a sense of personal growth, and victims a sense of closure" (Quinn, 1998, p. 13). Fleshing out this sense of empathy, interviews were conducted with probationers who received an eight-hour session intervention on the impact of their crime (Kennedy et al., 2019). This session included discussing victim impact statements and effects on communities, as well as writing apology letters. In these interviews, there is a consensus of growth and understanding:

Restorative justice helped me understand the harm we caused to our victims.
It helped me see that I hurt others.

It opened my eyes. I learned about myself.
It made me understand the victim's point of view. I understand that everyone has value.
It helped me understand my problems, situation, anger, and emotion.
It helped me process my feelings and prepare for future mistakes. (Kennedy et al., 2019)

The fact that perpetrators felt more cognizant of their impact on victims speaks to the empathic and healing effects of restorative justice. By educating those who commit crimes about their impacts, this process can prevent future acts of violence. The counter-narrative established by victim impact statements creates a more delicate balance that accommodates the nuances of cases rather than the retributive justice system, which puts victims under duress through adversarial trials. By examining victims' specific needs and impacts, restorative justice advocates for a future catered to supporting victims and regenerating discussion around how assault impacts all parts of a community.

Conclusion

Through these glimpses into the stories of several survivors and perpetrators, we see how restorative justice processes can possibly regenerate institutional courage and open up discussion in campus communities. From both Miller and Margaux, we saw the intense frustration of survivors when assaulters fail to understand the pain they have wreaked; from two anonymous survivors, we saw that unanswered questions generate both pain and reluctance to report an assault. From Coel and Rutgers, we saw the other side of the coin: through restorative justice interventions, these questions can be answered and follow-up procedures can happen, leaving survivors with a sense of closure, empowerment, and institutional courage. We also saw both quantitatively and qualitatively that restorative justice interventions can greatly lessen cycles of continued crime: recidivation rates dropped with the usage of restorative justice, and perpetrators who underwent such processes reported increased feelings of empathy, understanding, and morality.

These findings highlight the necessity of implementing restorative justice into campus sexual assault policies. Through alternative justice options where perpetrators devote extensive time to understanding their impacts on victims and communities, campuses will become safer spaces. While most current literature points out the harm in current policies and the need for victim-centered and culture-focused solutions, discussion of using restorative justice is lacking when in fact such policies accomplish these very goals. This gap may be attributed in part to concerns that restorative justice may create unwanted connection between victims and perpetrators, or have privacy issues if working with a community. However, these issues lie more in how restorative justice is implemented than in the actual framework. If restorative justice practices are given as a choice alongside retributive practices, they only create discussion between victim and perpetrator if the victim so desires, making the process truly victim-centered. Similarly, if restorative justice practices focus on educating the community about sexual assault with anonymity for the parties involved, privacy issues should not arise. Still, some issues remain to be explored: if, like Miller's and Margaux's assaulters, a perpetrator refuses to

acknowledge guilt, it would be helpful for more options to be available than retributive justice practices as the only fallback. More research should be undertaken into other alternatives to retributive justice if a perpetrator refuses to participate in restorative justice and/or accept their responsibility.

Of course, sexual assault is an incredibly complex and painful issue that restorative justice can only begin to address, and it is an issue that exists long before and after the university. But by honing in on the microcosm of a college campus, sexual misconduct appears on full display, with substance-laden parties often exposing the rape culture and institutional inactions that plague all of society. During the months I have lived in Stanford's microcosm, my mom's worries have manifested in full form. When I go out at night, passing the same fraternities where Miller was assaulted, my pepper spray remains clipped to my lanyard. I see this same fear echoing in the pink cylinders hung around the necks of the powerful women surrounding me. At Stanford's convocation, I witnessed the clear lack of institutional courage: students protested Stanford's new alcohol policy for neglecting to guarantee that "students who report sexual violence involving underage drinking would not face disciplinary action" (Nayudu & Zheng, 2021).

Although my mom and I still fear walking alone at night, this burden should not be on girls to be on guard at all hours, to "cover ourselves," to carry a self-defense weapon. The way forward needs to include rewriting the sexual assault narrative with survivors' stories and breaking cycles of sexual violence — and applying restorative justice is the first step.

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